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A Blueprint for Strengthening the Music Teacher Profession

Executive Summary

This document is a report of the Music Teacher Profession Initiative’s work concerning music teacher educators’ perceptions of barriers to and through the profession, as well as mitigations to those barriers. The project was undertaken with the perspective of widening the path to the profession by cultivating and strengthening more inclusive and equitable processes in recruiting, teaching, and nurturing a robust music teacher workforce. This report describes our process, outcomes, and recommendations for action. The report reveals the deeply complex nature of tackling evolution in music teaching and learning. The issues addressed are not easily remedied. We call on educators and administrators who have a vested interest in music teaching and learning to take an active role in moving our culture forward in ways that are inspiring, impactful, and inclusive.

Our work exposes problems and barriers within music teacher education, beginning with the cycle of PK–12 experiences, prospective music educators’ entrance into and work within college and university preparation programs, and their transition into music classrooms across the United States. Passionate and meaningful discussions from the perspective of music-teacher-educator faculty provide information about the landscape of current music teacher education curricula and the need to address a changing demographic in the PK–12 classroom, as well as within higher education.

Providing a framework for how music educators can formally address these challenges compelled us to acknowledge serious concerns that the profession has not had the courage or resources to adequately address. The unwitting result of our previous failure to address these concerns has been an indiscriminate continuation of teaching in the manner we were taught for generations. As troubling as that is, it is equally disquieting to know that although the demographics of students in PK–12 classrooms have changed, the demographics of teachers awarded certification to teach in the schools have not. While we are reliant upon and support the place of importance large ensembles occupy in our curricula, additional and varied musical experiences to address the needs of a shifting community and student population necessitate substantive improvements in our profession, beginning with the path to and through music teacher education.

The MTPI engaged focus groups from a diverse pool of music teacher education programs. Degree programs at these colleges and universities, each with a mission unique to their institution, share the common goal of preparing the next generations of music educators. Anonymity of respondents provided for candid discussions. Discussions regarding experiences before the degree focused on PK–12 resources, funding, and curricula, as well as admission and audition procedures. Those focused on experiences during the degree provided input on the singularity of music programs, equity and access, credit limitations, Eurocentrism, and funding. Discussions concerning experiences after degree completion and during the first five years of professional life related to the resources/funding, quality of life, cultural relevance, relationships, professional development, and recruitment.

Participants provided strategies for mitigating the challenges regarding the identification of diverse candidate pools for music teacher education, preparation of music educators to teach all students, and pedagogies that promote equity in music education. Each priority enables specific stakeholders to better understand the possible paths forward for improving teacher preparation and the resources to support this vision.

Our summary provides significant takeaways, which serve as catalysts for action. The complexities inherent in meeting our challenges naturally led us to identify partners whose positions can assist with advocacy. We outline how we might work with those who can enable comprehensive change in music educator
preparation by ensuring equity, promoting retention, and stimulating growth in the music teacher community. The MTPI recognizes the weight and intricacies of the challenges delineated in this document. Through our work with colleagues across the United States, we present action items that stand as a blueprint for strengthening the future of music education in all its forms, beginning with the music teacher profession.

The following summation outlines the primary points found in the Blueprint document. The summation provides only a succinct snapshot; therefore, the MTPI urges readers to avail themselves of the entire document to gain unabridged context. The full document provides greater detail, with connections to the research literature.

BEFORE THE DEGREE PROGRAM

CHALLENGES

- Inequitable distribution of funding
- Inequitable distribution of human and physical resources
- Participation expenses
- Private instruction expenses
- Access to affordable transportation
- Limited music curricular offerings
- Development of a singular music literacy
- Negative perceptions of the teaching profession
- Marginalized students’ feelings of apprehension and mistrust
- Narrowly defined and exclusionary audition requirements
- Cost of audition/application process

MITIGATIONS

- Reduce or remove costs of participation in school music programs
- Develop sustainable philanthropic programs with corporate and community partners
- Partner with local universities and private music instructors to provide affordable access to private instruction
- Create flexible scheduling options
- Provide greater awareness of options to student music and music education at the collegiate level
- Help students prepare for college admission
- Extend recruiting to include younger students, not just high school juniors and seniors
- Provide music offerings that speak to those who may not see themselves in the large-ensemble path
- Mobilize the power of music clubs and organizations (e.g., Tri-M© Music Honor Society) to enhance the focus on music and music teaching
- Redesign the process by which students are admitted to music degree program.
- Revise undergraduate music education curricula to ensure a breadth of diversity in developing musicianship and pedagogical skills
- Support recruitment that reaches into elementary and middle schools
DURING THE DEGREE PROGRAM

CHALLENGES

- Emphasis on performance skills
- Lack of alignment between university program content and professional expectations in PK-12 instruction
- Lack of systematic cultural responsiveness in curricular content
- Need to determine role of the institution in reflecting and valuing the community
- Credit limitations that impact student well-being and hamper curricular revision efforts
- Persistent inequities in how students are recruited, auditioned, and enrolled
- Lack of financial support to meet students' needs
- Scholarship limitations
- Turnstile examinations that are often exclusionary for marginalized students

MITIGATIONS

- Recognize the need for including a wider range of students from diverse backgrounds
- Prioritize cultural competence and relevance by structuring programs to engage with community and culture bearers
- Prioritize what it means to be a well-prepared music teacher today
- Music teacher education curricular revisions must reflect these priorities
- Open dialogue concerning true curricular revision in which all can feel safe in expressing concerns about the preparation of music teacher educators
- Broaden the concept of musicianship skills
- Faculty laxity in addressing barriers, especially for marginalized students
- Lack of nurturing environment in rigorous, credit-laden program
- Eurocentric curricula
- No apparent systematic review to encourage offerings that may reflect communities served by prospective music educators
- Delivering course content and processes without regard to topics related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access
- Lack of diversity in university faculty
- Budget limitations keep departmental size small and prevent financial assistance to those in need
- Faculty load limits program offerings for students
- Allow and value multiple forms of pedagogy
- Recognize that institutional differences may be key in identifying places where music teacher education is the primary focus
- Revise music teacher education curricula to reflect a greater perspective that takes into account music and practices of the people of the communities that teachers serve
- Various university faculty, including those outside of music education, should work in tandem to create meaningful changes in music teacher preparation programs to meet the needs of all students
- Preservice teachers will benefit from a cohesive, holistic approach to curriculum
DURING THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL LIFE

CHALLENGES

- Low teacher pay relevant to cost of living leading to high turnover rate, especially at schools with few financial resources or who serve marginalized student populations
- Low teacher pay relevant to cost of living leading to leaving the profession altogether
- Professional expenses, including college debt, are a burden for new teachers
- Costs associated with retaining a teaching certificate
- Isolation stemming from being the only or one of only a few music teachers in a building, or from geographical distance from other music educators
- Lack of time leading to difficulty in creating a healthful work-life balance and contributing to feelings of burnout
- Perceived disconnect between personal values and experiences and those of the community they serve
- Feeling undervalued
- Lack of cultural relevance
- Jobs may dissuade or disallow offering novel and innovative music offerings
- Lack of administrative concern, funding, and/or time for meaningful mentoring
- Failure to retain connections with the degree-granting institution
- Professional development is not regularly scheduled and is rarely area-specific
- Preservice teachers leaving degree programs prior to graduation

MITIGATIONS

- Advance lobbying for livable salaries and regular raises by committed colleagues
- Signing bonuses for those who choose to work in schools serving marginalized student populations
- Greater funding opportunities to support novice teachers’ professional development
- Regularly scheduled professional development with topics germane to and valued by the novice music educator
- Professional development provided at free or reduced costs
- Purposeful identification of workshop leaders who reflect a plethora of lived experiences, with particular attention to those who are members of marginalized populations
- Greater opportunities for professional development to include live streaming and video presentations at reduced costs
- Purposeful, regular, active engagement with fellow music educators, to include both formal and informal interactions
- Purposeful regular interactions between degree-granting institutions and recent graduates
- Purposeful regular interactions between novice teachers and other members of the community
- Purposeful and meaningful advocacy efforts on behalf of new and novice music educators
- Establishment of support groups specific to their area of expertise
- Institute safe space affinity groups
- Establish a stronger position in valuing a healthful work-life balance
- Actively widen the path to robust music education by developing and offering school musical experiences that reflect the values and lived experiences of various communities
- Partners (e.g., local, community, higher education) take an active role in supporting new and novice teachers
- Experienced music educators must intentionally and demonstrably support their younger, less-experienced colleagues
- Development of sustainable mentoring programs, built into the contracted position to include local and community partners, as well as peers and colleagues
- Development of sustainable mentoring programs administered by state Music Education/Educators Associations (MEAs) and NAFME that include partnerships with discipline-specific organizations

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Introduction

Nearly a quarter-century after the predictions and recommendations of the Housewright Symposium and the resulting document, *Vision 2020* (Madsen, 2000), the music teaching profession is at a consequential moment in our history. The future was laid bare in the Housewright Declaration:

>Society and technological changes will have an enormous impact for the future of music education. Changing demographics and increased technological advancements are inexorable and will have profound influences on the ways that music is experienced for both students and teachers. (Madsen, 2000, p. 219)

The authors of *Vision 2020* charged us with the understanding that all humans deserve to participate fully in dynamic musical experiences and that music educators should take the lead in this endeavor. They averred that all music is viable and has a place in music curricula and that music educators must actively engage in expanding views and practices of musical content. They acknowledged the oncoming avalanche of technological developments that we had only just begun to see and that music educators are key to creatively implementing these tools. They determined that the scope of music education must be augmented to include community, industry, and all types of institutions, and that music educators’ role should be at the forefront of coordinating, promoting, and nurturing these important relationships. They saw the need for widening the pipeline to the profession by expanding the definition of the music educator to be more inclusive and insisted that music educators were responsible for identifying prospective music teachers of all backgrounds and providing fertile, welcoming environments in which these new teachers could grow. They underscored the ever-growing imperative for empirical research to further support and advocate for the profession from a place of data and knowledge, as well as that music educators must consistently and vigorously engage in and disseminate research to bolster music education’s place as critical. They tasked music educators with identifying barriers to fully realizing these charges and with doing whatever is necessary to overcome them.

As the profession dutifully crept toward meeting these charges, social tumult was brewing in the United States and globally. By the time the COVID-19 pandemic became a worldwide calamity in 2020, issues of social injustice were climbing to fever pitch. With the murder of George Floyd as a somber catalyst, a leisurely approach to the advancement of our profession was no longer an option. After systematic introspection, the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) was poised to expose and address its own shortcomings. The findings and recommendations of the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Access Current State Study (Cook Ross, 2019), which outlined barriers to DEIA in NAfME, led to many efforts toward righting the ship. This has included, but is not limited to, increasing visible diversity in leadership; aligning the mission between state affiliates and the national association; encouraging and supporting greater cultural competence within the profession and particularly in the leadership; inspiring shifts in curricula to better reflect changes in
populations and giving voice to those who have been marginalized; and providing strong philosophical and physical supports for various processes of music engagement that can stand alongside the more established forms of music participation.

Further exacerbating the state of the profession were challenges faced due to the 2020 global pandemic. Fallout for educators, including music teachers, was severe. As attrition rates grew, enrollment in music teacher degree programs declined. The teaching profession at large became an easy mark for scorn, disrespect, and denigration (McMurdock, 2022). The persistent challenge of low pay was augmented by frustration, burnout, and exhaustion. For music education, barriers to DEIA were magnified as the country engaged in “...an escalating culture war that has seen many districts and states pass policies and laws restricting what teachers can say about US history, race, racism, gender, and sexual orientation, as well as LGBTQ issues” (Natanson, 2022).

Throughout the fall of 2020, NAfME held a series of online town hall meetings during which its members from across the United States could attend and speak up regarding the issues and concerns of equity in our profession. The voices of the constituency, while each unique and individual, communicated commonalities that made clear the need for action steps to be taken to correct our course. Out of these town hall meetings, the concept of the MTPI was launched. This committee, appointed by then-NAfME-President Mackie V. Spradley (2020-2022), was charged with identifying ways to continue to ascertain barriers to the music teacher profession and address the charge of the Housewright Declaration that we must expand what it means to be a music educator to be more inclusive and to open wide the pipeline to the profession in the name of justice and equity. With the additional concerns of teacher attrition, the focus was expanded to grapple with music teacher recruitment and retention through the lens of equity.

This document is a report of our process, outcomes, and recommendations for further action. The issues that we address are not easily remedied. We call on all music educators—indeed, all of those people who have a vested interest in music teaching and learning—to take an active role in moving our culture forward in ways that are inspiring, impactful, and inclusive.
Exposing the Problem

Strengthening the music teaching profession with an eye toward equity and abatement of attrition has long been a matter of significance (e.g., Ritschel, 1985; Winslow, 1949). Winslow’s observations (1949) could be mistaken for being ripped from today’s headlines:

“... can’t we find ways and means of appealing early and directly to these potential leaders [highly qualified music educators] ...?”

“... the yearly mass exodus of capable teachers ... is seriously detrimental to the growth, continuity, and quality of education programs everywhere ...”

“... the great mobility of teachers causes not only recruitment problems, but creates unbalance of supply-demand and seriously impairs continuity in school programs” (p. 13).

The Music Educators National Conference, in its 1972 final report on teacher education in music, urged comprehensive study for prospective music educators, including musical materials that represented societies from around the world instead of 18th- and 19th-century Western art music, tailoring instruction and study to meet the needs of individual preservice teachers (MENC, 1972). Early-career music teachers’ success leading to effective music instruction and retention is often dependent on preservice instruction that helps them understand the realities of the position, continued guidance and mentorship, peer relationships, and professional development (e.g., Baker, 2007; Conway, 2015; Draves, 2011; Gallo, 2018; Legette, 2013). At a time in American history when the deleterious effects of a vitriolic political landscape reach into the ranks of education, music teachers are not immune. Processes of identifying high-quality music teacher candidates through equitable preparation and recruitment practices, admitting and shepherding music teacher candidates through music teacher education degree programs that are designed to meet the needs of current student populations, and seeking and implementing practices for the express purpose of fostering retention are critical matters that deserve systematic attention, inquiry, and facilitation.

Need and Purpose

Music teachers are essential to ensuring that students have access to dynamic, holistic, culturally responsive, and meaningful music-learning experiences in schools. Without music teachers, there is no music education. In recent years, there have been concerns about the lack of candidates available to fill teaching positions in schools (Natanson, 2022). In many regions of the United States, music administrators and school-level administrators have expressed these same concerns. In order to increase the numbers of viable candidates prepared to fill music teacher positions, we first need to know what may prevent people from entering the field.

In addition to addressing music-teacher recruitment in general, there are concerns with the lack of racial and ethnic diversity in the music teaching force (Elpus, 2015; Fitzpatrick et al., 2014). This lack of diversity is also reflected in the students who elect to participate in secondary school music programs (Alegrado & Winsler, 2020; Elpus & Abril, 2019), which is logical since the majority of music education students are recruited from secondary school music programs. The need for a more racially and ethnically diverse teaching force stems from the idea that teachers should reflect their students’ backgrounds, and when they do, they will be better prepared to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student bodies. In focusing on developing a diverse teaching force, it may be that we are better able to respond to the musical interests and needs of students and communities being served. Music teachers with a diversity of backgrounds may be best suited to reenvision courses and curricula in school music.

The process of preparing music educators to meet the needs of a nation with rich diverse needs, cultures, and resources embodies the challenges
colleges and universities must recognize to improve candidate readiness to enter and thrive in any community. This will strengthen the probability of providing equitable, broad, and relevant music education experiences. Such experiences will enable every student to explore the musics of the nation and learn from and contribute to the musical fabric of their local communities and cultures. Music educators who are prepared in this way will be primed to lead and actualize any number of impactful music-making experiences, from the more traditional of our large ensembles to those that are highly reflective of students’ lived experiences and backgrounds.

In order to have an action plan for recruiting and retaining music teachers, it is critical to determine what barriers stand in the way. These barriers, which might include limitations from the financial to the curricular, are not found in only one place. They arise at various stages on the long path to becoming a music teacher: before the degree (as a PK–12 music student), when seeking admissions to a degree program housed in a collegiate music unit, during the degree, and after the degree as a music teacher. In this document, we seek to illuminate and amplify the challenges that stand in the path to becoming a music teacher, as well as the first years in the position.

Ideas for mitigating the problems are also crucial. In this document, we go beyond the multiple barriers along the path by drawing on some of the best ideas for mitigating these barriers from experts across the United States. We provide a comprehensive overview of the barriers to becoming a music teacher and present possible solutions to mitigate these problems. By understanding the barriers and possible solutions, policymakers, educators, administrators, music-teacher educators, and others with vested interest (including gatekeepers) can develop or deploy strategies to remove barriers so that we might create a more musically and culturally diverse force of music teachers in schools.

In 2021, under the leadership of MTPI Chair and NAfME President-Elect Deborah A. Confredo, NAfME charged a group of educators to identify barriers related to equity in music education and to look deeply into how recruitment, education, and retention of music educators are affected by the process through which students are prepared for a career as a music educator.

The MPTI set out to collect views and ideas that would lead to the development of a framework for rethinking music-teacher preparation with the goals of greater diversification and retention in the profession to better meet the needs of a shifting student population with a focus on equity and inclusion at each stage of the development of a music educator.

We believe that this will happen through

- meaningful structural changes in music-teacher-preparation curricula,
- a commitment to sustainable support for new and novice music educators,
- community and school outreach, and
- advancing dialogue among those who have impact in music teacher preparation.

“The process of preparing music educators to meet the needs of a nation with rich diverse needs, cultures, and resources embodies the challenges colleges and universities must recognize to improve candidate readiness to enter and thrive in any community.”
During the early fall of 2021, members of the MTPI team began to lead focus-group discussions with a diverse pool of music education faculty across the United States. Each group was charged with creating an environment where college/university music faculty could openly discuss current models of teacher preparation housed in their institutions and offer suggestions about the potential changes needed to meet the needs of the current PK–12 environment and the future classrooms their teaching candidates would enter. Through these candid focus-group discussions, the MTPI accrued broad perspectives of faculty views regarding the path to degree-program entry in relation to readiness for the rigors of a higher education in music, the current preparation offered to preservice music educators (including hurdles embedded in their own institutions), and gaps in continued support of the young professionals as they enter the field and during the first critical five years of a career in U.S. schools.

Initially, the MTPI targeted 100 institutes of higher learning to participate. Working within the parameters of the COVID-19 pandemic, time limitations of members of this volunteer working group, and a palpable sense of urgency for the execution of the project given the political landscape shaped and stressed by the Black Lives Matter movement, as well as the growing national concern over teacher attrition, we approached 24 institutions, of which eight were minority-serving institutions (Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic-Serving Institutions). Every NAfME division was represented in the 24-institution sample. All institutions (see Acknowledgments) provided an undergraduate degree program in music education. Those who participated in focus groups were primarily music education faculty; however, some faculty members from other areas (performance, conducting, theory, history, administration) also participated.

Discussions were conducted via Zoom and were audio- and video-recorded with the permission of the participants. These focus-group discussions were led by a member of the MTPI or a colleague who represented either one of the two NAfME societies: the Society for Music Teacher Education and the Society for Research in Music Education. There was one exception: at that institution, faculty conducted their own session using the guiding questions used by all others. All MTPI discussants were given written and video instructions on the process. Following discussions, recordings were sent to the MTPI leadership for transcription and analysis.

The focus-group process began with a clear explanation to each participating faculty as to why we sought their input, the mechanics of the process, an understanding of the anonymity of each participant, and potential deliverables as outcomes of the project. Guiding questions were shared with each faculty team in advance of the scheduled session. Discussion guides used the questions to facilitate sessions. Recorded sessions averaged 1 hour, 43 minutes.

The focus-group organization fell into three discussion segments that focused on barriers to the profession (1) before entrance to the degree program, (2) during the degree program, and (3) in the critical first five years of being in the profession. Questions used to guide discussion are included on the following page.

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1This process did not undergo institutional review-board evaluation. It was meant to offer music teacher educators and a few other constituents a platform on which to share their perceptions. Our method was carefully planned and executed according to research-paradigm schema, and participants engaged willingly in the process. That we did not work under the aegis of an institutional review board should, in no way, disqualify or diminish findings garnered from the undertaking.
BEFORE ENTRANCE TO THE DEGREE PROGRAM

- What are barriers to equity in music education during the PK–12 years?
- What are some ways that these barriers can be mitigated?
- What do you see as barriers or roadblocks on the path between high school and the music teacher education programs? Examples could include tests, audition expectations, private instruction.
- What are some ways that these barriers can be mitigated?
- Relating to inclusion and equity, how are you recruiting students?
- What barriers are you experiencing when trying to recruit students to your music teacher education program as it relates to inclusion and equity?
- Who are those with vested interest at this stage and how do we get them in the conversation?

DURING THE DEGREE PROGRAM

- Let’s talk about the Music Teacher Preparation curriculum. We know that there are several factors at play in how curriculum is developed, and courses are distributed:
  - State requirements for licensure
  - University requirements for general education (core) courses
  - University credit hour caps
  - College of Education requirements
  - School/Division/Department of Music requirements (music core: history, theory, keyboard, conducting, applied lessons, ensembles)
  - Courses in the major
- Of these factors, what do you see as critical to music teacher preparation and why?
- In your view, what can/should be revised and why?
- How would these revisions aid in developing music educators who can better meet the needs of a shifting student population?
- What are the challenges of making these changes in curriculum?
- How can NAfME help?
- If you had no barriers or challenges to recreating the music teacher preparation degree program, what would that curriculum look like, and why?
- What are you doing in your program to be mindful of cultural diversity that reflects community, schools, families, and neighborhoods?
- Who are those with vested interest at this stage, and how do we get them in the conversation?

AFTER THE DEGREE PROGRAM AND DURING THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL LIFE

- How do you remain connected with your students postgraduation?
- If you were able to create a postgraduation mentorship program for your students as they enter the workforce, what would that look like?
- Who would the partners be, and why?
- What role would the partners play?
- Who are those with vested interest at this stage and how do we get them in the conversation?
The MTPI team transcribed focus group discussions and began initial reviews of the transcripts. The three areas of organization (before, during, after the degree) served as an initial framework for analysis. After initial analysis, it seemed helpful to separate the admission process as a subset of before the degree program because it was positioned in a space between secondary and tertiary school programs and because so much of the discussion from our focus groups focused on this period. Members of the MTPI then analyzed data searching for large, overarching themes, subthemes, and ideas. Direct quotes were pulled out of the transcripts to support the themes and subthemes. After the initial pass, several MTPI members returned to the data to evaluate the strength and logic of identified themes and subthemes. As a result, themes and subthemes were either consolidated or divided, clarified or questioned. Finally, we reviewed the findings that had been sharpened in the second pass to derive a narrative that would be comprehensible and would serve as a solid foundation on which our suggestions for transformation would stand.

In the fall of 2022, small subgroups of the MTPI provided status updates. One occurred at the annual meeting of the Society for Music Teacher Education, and the other at the biennial NAfME Music Research and Teacher Education Conference. One additional update was provided in early 2023 via a NAfME-sponsored webinar. These updates gave NAfME members the opportunity to learn about the MTPI, the project, and progress to date.

Upon conclusion of data analysis, the MTPI was poised to complete the report. In the next section, data from respondent discussions are presented, as well as support from the literature that underscores thoughts on challenges, needs, and ways to mitigate moving forward.

Challenges to the Profession: Before the Degree Program

Discussions focused on the period of time prior to entrance into the degree program were separated into two parts: (1) in high school, leading up to the audition/admissions and (2) the audition/admission process itself. Discussions with music teacher educator focus groups from across the United States revealed numerous factors that could discourage, limit, or prevent students from pursuing degrees in music education. While these limitations can be applied to any students, some seemed to be particularly true for students from marginalized populations. In the time leading up to the audition/admissions, emergent themes were: (a) resources necessary to participate and thrive; (b) school/district level inequities, (c) music education paradigm, and (d) perceptions of college. The themes that emerged for the audition/admissions period included: (e) performance constraints, and (f) financial resources.

NECESSARY RESOURCES TO PARTICIPATE AND THRIVE

Participation in school ensembles can be a costly endeavor for students and their families. This is especially true for instrumental music courses (band and orchestra), which happen to be among the most commonly offered courses in secondary schools (Abril & Gault, 2008; Elpus & Abril, 2019). Students and their families are expected to bear the brunt of these costs. The cost of instruments can be a barrier for many, making it difficult (if not impossible) for some students to participate in instrumental music (Kinney, 2008). Expenses include costs related to instrument rentals/purchases, maintenance of instruments (e.g., repairs, reeds), and general participation fees (e.g., uniform, travel). In many cases, these expenses are a requirement of enrolling in high school instrumental programs.
Students are often encouraged to seek private music instruction. Once again, families are also expected to bear this financial obligation. Students without financial means for private instruction (including instructor fees, musical materials, and transportation) are at a disadvantage. While not a requirement for participation, private lessons are essential to eventually meet the standards of the college audition process. Students who are unable to enroll in private lessons are disadvantaged compared to their peers without financial hardships. While marginalized students may have emotionally supportive families, their families are often unable to finance private lessons (Fitzpatrick et al., 2014). Many focus-group participants shared that the need for private lessons, which are out of reach for many lower socioeconomic students and families, was a major obstacle to attaining admissions into a collegiate music unit housing most music teacher preparation programs. Family financial burdens do not affect just those who want to pursue a degree in music education; it affects anyone who wants to learn music. One participant offered that “... when participation is tied to costs, students will not choose to participate.” These observations are supported by the research literature (e.g., Bates, 2012; Beveridge, 2022; Costa-Giomi & Chappell, 2007; Elpus & Abril, 2019).

Transportation can also pose a challenge for high school students participating in music programs. Many high school music programs require students to attend rehearsals and performances outside of regular school hours, which can be time-consuming and expensive for families who need to arrange transportation. The same concern exists for programs that operate a portion of all of its music programs on an extracurricular (i.e., before or after regular school hours) schedule. This is particularly challenging for students living in rural communities or in large urban districts, where travel distances are significant, and safety can be a concern. These distances may prevent students from attending supplementary music events or programs such as honor music festivals or youth symphonies, as well as attending private music lessons. These transportation barriers can discourage and disadvantage students who may have otherwise considered pursuing a degree or career in music or music education.

Participants shared their ideas regarding resources required for participation:

“Providing activity buses takes money.”
“Too many inner city schools lack the resources and teacher support to provide music … there is a lack of school infrastructure.”
“If music education looks like having to own an alto saxophone, or if music education looks like having to pay to go on this trip with everyone or if music education looks like having to have private lessons to be able to keep up with everyone in the ensemble then if we’re talking about financial perspective on equity, we’re not in line with English, or Math, or any other subjects in K-12 education that’s supposed to be free and equally available to everyone.”

INEQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES IN A SCHOOL OR SCHOOL DISTRICT

Another prevalent theme in our discussions was the inequitable distribution of resources across school districts and schools. Schools have varying degrees of musical and human resources. Schools in lower socioeconomic communities often have fewer resources to support students (Costa-Giomi & Chappell, 2007; Docker, 2012). This includes physical resources such as instruments, music, classroom facilities, and technology. It also includes human resources such as music teachers and other support personnel to teach courses and/or provide specialized teaching. Distribution of human resources is far from equitable. Studies supporting the theme of inequitable distribution of resources reported that lower-income schools had significantly fewer music course offerings and were less likely to offer music than their higher-income counterparts (e.g., Abril & Gault, 2008; Palmer, 2011; Parasad & Spiegelman, 2012). Some focus-group members spoke of districts that offered elective music courses only
at the high school level, citing that high school is usually too late to develop the necessary musical competencies that will be expected in a university music audition. These choices and policies of a district reflect their values, which can either support or hamper students’ interest in pursuing the study of music education. As a result, students do not have the same level of access, instruction, guidance, or support as their peers at other schools or in other school districts do.

“There is nothing consistent in funding. It becomes exhausting. We have to go up every year to reaffirm our worth.”

“There is a constant battle for money and that gets exhausting.”

THE MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAM

The prevalent paradigm of music education has been viewed as a challenge that prevents a more diverse pool of students from ever considering a career in music education. Historically, music education has focused on performance within large ensembles and the development of a singular music literacy. This remains true today where band and choirs are the most prevalent forms of music education in high schools across the U.S. (Elpus & Abril, 2019). This model has served many students well for over half a century. This singular paradigm, however, could be incompatible with the musical cultures and traditions of an increasing number of students and contemporary society (Williams, 2011), thus becoming an obstacle because students do not elect to participate in school music or may not have interest in pursuing a career as a music educator. A shift in the music education paradigm toward greater inclusivity, particularly as it reflects community and familial culture, has been strongly touted by music education professionals (Madsen, 2000; Transforming Music Study, 2016). Music teacher educators who see this as necessary are also cognizant of the challenges inherent in change, including the lack of teacher autonomy in some places: “There’s a handful (of districts) that do buy a curriculum for the music teachers and they all teach from that same curriculum, which could put a barrier on not only who teaches it but who receives it and how that music education is maybe not as equitable or accessible to people of all different types of interests.” Others suggest a gradual approach: “...going beyond to also represent culture of the world, this is so lofty because we only have 180 school days so we’re not going to obviously teach everything but to start with a culture that is there, within the school and start incorporating that type of music ...” Still others underscore the need for creativity to be a central focus, which will allow various musics to be incorporated:

“There’s got to be alternative ways of teaching in terms of not teaching exactly how you’ve been taught, so the educators had to be taught how to be creative in their teaching ... I don’t mean only creative in terms of culturally relevant or culturally responsive or any of the cultural multicultural teachings, but how do you engage students creatively.”

Music that is reflective of culture, and especially the music that supports and celebrates the lived experiences of students, automatically embraces principles of diversity and equity. A narrowly-defined approach to school music education caters to a small subset of students who see themselves in the large-ensemble model and effectively siphons off students whose musical talents and passions lie elsewhere. There exists a preponderance of students who often do not choose school music because of limited curricular offerings in which their musical identities are not appreciated or who are excluded from the processes facilitated by the school music educator, the very person who is in a position to assist in the college admission/audition process. A participant pondered aloud:

“There’s like a huge percentage of students who are African American and Latino, but they’re not in that top orchestra. Do the children not see themselves represented in the curriculum that’s being performed? Do they also just not see themselves in that space and there’s no one in that space that looks like them? Does that make them less interested?”
Another offered:

“Virtually all students are interested in music and ... are passionate about music and have a musical life and musical identity and want to share music. However most students aren’t interested in “school music” because school music is such a narrow sliver of the larger music experience that the majority of students don’t see themselves, or their interests, reflected in the school music experience.”

These are the students we miss.

**PERCEPTIONS**

Participants described the perceptions of the teaching profession to be an obstacle to studying music education. One participant questioned why a teacher would “want to sign up for this” when “teachers are being vilified.” Although these perceptions are shaped by public rhetoric from the media and politicians, current and former teachers are sometimes reticent to endorse music teaching as a viable profession: “Former teachers have a big influence on going into music and right now it’s a terrible time to be a teacher and teachers are not encouraging kids to be teachers.” Perceptions include anecdotes about limited career advancement, bureaucracy, lack of respect, high stress, and low pay.

Focus-group outcomes revealed that students from marginalized populations may be apprehensive about how they will feel in college. Some wondered whether they would find people who “looked” like them and that might be more likely to understand them. There seemed to be a view that students may distrust or not know whom they can trust once they arrive in college.

**THE AUDITION**

The challenges of the admissions and audition process are closely related to some of the subthemes in the section on the music education paradigm. One major challenge is that most college auditions require performance on instruments and voices that are associated with Western classical music. This requirement is said to exclude other vocal styles or instruments, as well as other forms of demonstrating one's musicianship or musical achievements. Additionally, specific pieces or études on one instrument that are included in audition guidelines can pose a challenge to some who might otherwise excel in a music education program. In fact, the strength of a music educator might lie in their ability to play a wide variety of instruments or sing in multiple styles, rather than only specializing in one. While there is some evidence that certain universities recognize the value of a flexible approach (Payne & Ward, 2020), auditions and admissions requirements in most universities do not.

At the collegiate level, it is often the large ensemble that dictates how many of what instrument/voice can be admitted to a given year (Payne & Ward, 2020). While music teacher educators seem to understand that quotas are necessary to sustain school ensembles, they stated that creating solutions toward greater inclusivity was worth considering, especially in the case of music education students.

Finally, limited financial resources pose a challenge to the audition and admissions. In addition to the private lessons/instruments that are essential to developing the technique necessary to meet the audition standards, the costs of applying and auditioning, such as travel and fees, can prevent some students from ever making it to the audition. These barriers further limit the pool of students who might be interested in a career as a music educator (Abramo & Bernard, 2020; Albertson, 2015; Fitzpatrick et al., 2014).
Challenges to the Profession: During the Degree Program

Respondents within focus groups from various preparation programs provided their input as to some of the challenges related to what occurs during the degree program. Their responses focus on themes related to: (1) singularity, (2) equity and access, (3) credit limitations, (4) Eurocentrism, and (5) funding.

**SINGULARITY**

The theme of singularity is reflected in participants’ responses related to narrowly-focused public school music programs. Performance courses remain largely conventional and reflect band-orchestra-choir (BOC) models, with some also offering jazz (J) performance experiences (collectively BOCJ). Performance-focused courses have long served as the core of public school music programs for generations: “It gets back to this issue that we were talking about earlier about a very singular focus by people out in the world on if you’re going to be a music major, it has to be all about your music performance skills.” New and innovative offerings for students looking for options beyond BOCJ continue to be broadly viewed as “other,” “extra,” “unique,” or “unusual.” This singularity creates a disconnect between music teacher educator curricula and what PK–12 music educators are charged to implement in their communities.

Respondents indicated that as interest grows in providing school music experiences beyond typical large ensembles, the lack of alignment between PK–12 instruction and degree requirements in preparation programs becomes more obvious. The broad gulf in course offerings was noted as a lack of cultural responsiveness in preparation considering the shifting demographics in the communities where PK–12 teachers serve (Welch et al., 2010). Respondents shared that it is necessary to review what we are teaching and why, to take a hard and honest look at where our values are as they relate to our personal lives and students’ lives. They cited that most of us have yet to determine the role of the institution in reflecting the community from a cultural perspective, and how we demonstrate valuing the culture that universities are part of. Also cited were numerous musings regarding relevance of current curricular requirements, including perceived onerous emphases placed on areas such as keyboard skills, theory, and history, to name a few. They lamented that other areas of study and interest that, in their view, would be more meaningful to 21st-century music educators are nearly impossible to include because of other areas’ stranglehold on the music education degree program:

“[My music education majors] thought that everybody should take music in special education because it was a really important way to incorporate those people into your classrooms, whether it be my son who is legally blind, somebody with autism, whatever. They need to be able to deal with that.”

“Our entire school is looking to ‘blow up’ the core and reshape the curriculum … [this is an] opportunity for music education, to make these courses more viable for today’s society.”

“As interest grows in providing school music experiences beyond typical large ensembles, the lack of alignment between PK–12 instruction and degree requirements in preparation programs becomes more obvious.”
While respondents acknowledged this divide, they also recognized the hurdles to resolution. They voiced challenges addressed through the College Music Society (CMS) Manifesto (Transforming Music Study, 2016), questioning the proposition that music teacher educators can devise a program that “teaches everything to everybody.” With equity as a foundation, respondents offered that music teacher educator curricula must provide preservice teachers with tools by which they can independently determine the most effective processes and content for their future students. This aligns with CMS calls for streamlining and integration and supports teaching for transfer. Such an approach is necessary in light of credit limitations, another of the chief themes that emerged in this portion of our discussions.

**EQUITY AND ACCESS**

A theme of equity and access emerged when respondents stated their concerns about how students were recruited, auditioned, and enrolled into college/university degree preparation programs, a finding that has been cited previously in the research literature (DeAngelis, 2022; Koza, 2008). The manner in which students are selected for admission to collegiate music departments has undergone little change, as much of the focus is placed on filling the ensembles present within the departments. The testing of sight-reading ability and theory knowledge, often included as part of the admission process (Austin, 2009; Hime et al., 2014), may eliminate candidates whose strength may lie in their performance skill. Respondents were concerned as to how high school grade point average (GPA) and the type of advising provided to student applicants might better prepare students to meet the challenges related to admission into various music departments. The current requirements and/or practices are noted by respondents as some of the hurdles preventing departments from diversifying their pool of potential candidates to music education degree programs. One respondent shared: “The commercial music program has helped to open doors to students with nontraditional backgrounds [but it’s] harder to do this in music education.” The other issue raised by those who participated was the lack of financial support to applicants who might otherwise meet the criteria for admission, but do not have the means to pay tuition. College and university preparation faculty also mentioned these challenges, as their budgets for scholarships limit their ability to attract many candidates (Koza, 2008). Testing (of various types including admission to the major through colleges of education, edTPA, praxis and other manner of licensure testing) is another concern for many of their students and was especially noted for students of color.
Finally, some faculty talked about their own shortcomings as they try to address barriers in the degree program, especially for marginalized students, in addition to guarding against the checklist mentality of addressing diversity in music teacher education programs:

“There is a certain naivete of whiteness. All of my lived experience comes through my lens of being White in the world and I think that I still get surprised when I hear about the experiences of some of my students who have particular backgrounds such as a person who is non-binary or a Black student or Hispanic student in our program. As much as I’m trying to attend to the particular needs of those students I find that I’m just not as aware as I would like to be because things come up and I’m like “oh, shit” that’s a thing, right, like that happened to you on our campus! I’m trying to tune myself in more to what it means to be of a different background whether that means from a socioeconomic perspective or racial perspective or from a religious perspective or from a gender-diversity perspective.”

“But bringing in students of color does not decrease the whiteness of the program, does not decrease the whiteness of the campus or the culture at a place like [this] university and there are very particular challenges for both first generation and students of color coming to our campus … it’s just challenging finding a community.”

CREDIT LIMITATIONS

Related to credit limitations, the current requirements present challenges in making changes to current degree programs offered in many music education preparation programs. Students’ well-being was considered as music teacher educators had concerns regarding the number of courses required for degree completion compared to other music majors within a school of music. Packed curricula were characterized by a medley of add-on requirements outside of music education, including other areas of music study (e.g., theory, history, conducting, studio, keyboard), university core classes, and state courses required for licensure. This additive approach was seen as risky and unnecessary for preservice music educators in terms of time, professional development, well-being, and finances. For minority students, these requirements were also considered paralyzing:

“Financial aid only pays for a certain amount of credits and the state core requirements eat up a lot of that.”

“I’ve had minority students take college algebra seven, eight times because maybe they didn’t get the kind of advising they should have.”

“As an example, I have students that want to be in general music … and if you look at our training from their standpoint, ‘I want to be an elementary general music ed teacher’—they get one class. We get a three-credit class because they have to do so many other options and that, to me, is ridiculous training. And then we assume like, ‘Okay, well, I guess we’ll get it all via student teaching.’”

“We would really love to build in some experiences in world musics, but there is no appetite for that here and, frankly, no room in the current curriculum. Our kids have no elective hours, either.”

“If we feel like they’re talented enough and if we can get them here, how can we then nurture them in a way where they’re going to be able to get through all of these school of music requirements so that they can be successful?”

“One of the big challenges is, we are trying to do too much with too little, trying to fit what really needs to be a five year program within the constraints of a four year program. This is also exacerbated by students needing to work to put themselves through school. In addition to the fact when you’re thinking about students, try to have a more inclusive student body. Some students come to us, and they need remedial work, what you can expect [them to] finish it four years.”
The lack of a nurturing environment for these candidates in relation to the support needed to complete such a long and rigorous program of study needs to be revised to match the demands of the profession these candidates will be expected to manage when they enter the field full-time. Respondents repeatedly insisted that assistance from professional organizations like NAfME, NASM, and CAEP/NCATE is needed (Gavin, 2016).

**EUROCENTRISM**

Eurocentrism is viewed by the respondents as the narrow prism for the curriculum offered in degree preparation outlined by the colleges/universities and modeled by PK–12 communities that frame their course offerings by the collegiate benchmarks. The ensembles are mirrored at both levels as is the repertoire offered to those enrolled. There seems to be a lack of reform or systematic review that would encourage offerings that reflect the cultures of the communities served. Some cited a lack of world music, arranging, songwriting, or production courses, along with a bias toward music-reading literacy over aural music literacy:

> “I teach at an HSI [Hispanic Serving Institution] and, I think it’s 60% now of the student population in the university identifies as Hispanic, and within our department, I’d say at least 80%. We do not have a single course that talks about Latin American music, Hispanic music, Mexican music. We do not have a single course.”

> “We’re just really highlighting the visual people who can read and write music, but we’re not allowing all these other types of musical literacies to be accepted into music programs.”

In support, authors of the CMS Manifesto suggested that there is little “cultivation of a genuine global artistry identity …underscored by the fact that music majors commonly spend many years on campus without even a nod to the multicultural communities surrounding them …” (Transforming Music Study, 2016), the very communities in which preservice music educators will eventually practice their craft. One respondent amplified this notion:

> “I question whether or not it [Western classical music] should be an option or should be required simply because the requirement of the Western canon implies that all students who come to us are going to be the same type of musician … and are going to go back to a population of Western European music and perpetuate that.”

Topics related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access are often absent from music teacher education curricula. Lack of embedding such topics into course requirements weakens the prospect of equipping candidates for the eventualities of a diverse PK–12 student population experienced during fieldwork. Respondents shared that issues of DEIA are addressed in how curriculum is approached. Including musics and practices that reflect a multiplicity of peoples is seen as lacking and needed. Music teacher educators lamented that there is rarely emphasis on vernacular music (“... a term that includes lots of musical traditions and ways of music understanding”) or

> “There is great value in students of color seeing faculty who look like them.”
a curriculum that is based on musical elements that are transferable to a plethora of cultures and styles rather than the singularity that Eurocentrism presents. Providing access to these tools would offer preparation programs additional ways to meet the needs of a more diverse public-school population with varied interests (Wilson et al., 2021). Some respondents shared that music teacher education courses delivered through a lens of DEIA would go a long way in producing graduates who would then bring these premises into the music classroom and into their professional lives, and with more music teachers holding DEIA as central to their work, perhaps cycles of bias and singularity can be upended. Finally, in addition to these curricular concerns, lack of diversity in university faculty is at issue; there is great value in students of color seeing faculty who look like them.

**FUNDING**

There were concerns related to funding as respondents noted the limitations related to their department size and the budgets allotted to manage their programs or to offer financial assistance to those enrolled. Some music teacher educators described how their programs were not always controlled by the music school itself, but through a partnership with the college/university school of education. Faculty assignments were also a direct reflection of their assigned loads, and these limitations were realized in the number of adjuncts hired, as well as the variety of courses a preparation program could offer their candidates.

Challenges to the Profession: During the First Five Years of Professional Life

Respondents offered thoughts that were generated from experience, firsthand knowledge, and informed speculation and assumption. Like their perspectives regarding before and during the degree program, challenges identified during the first five years of professional life gave way to hopeful and enthusiastic recommendations for mitigation. Challenges are organized in themes that focus on: (1) resources/funding, (2) quality of life, (3) cultural relevance, (4) relationships, (5) professional development and, (6) recruitment.

**RESOURCES/FUNDING**

While funding for school music education programs is a constant unabating concern (Abril & Bannerman, 2015; Elpus & Grisé, 2019; Give A Note Foundation, 2017; Harris, 2019), funding and resources matters are especially relevant in retaining a well-qualified, diverse music teacher workforce (Abril & Gault, 2008; Smith et al., 2018), particularly during the critical first five years of professional life (Calloway, 2009; Costa-Giomi, 2008; Shaw, 2018). Respondents stated that there was a divide between cost of living and beginning-teacher salaries. Closely correlated with job satisfaction (Granger et al., 2022), low teacher salaries sometimes lead to regular turnover in a music position as young people leave to find jobs with salaries that are more commensurate with the cost of living. This likely happens more often with novice teachers working in schools that are impoverished or serve marginalized populations (Docker, 2012). Such movement, or migration, is sought when it is perceived that leaving one position to move to another can result in a more favorable lifestyle (Hancock, 2016; Taft et al., 2022). Music educators who choose to migrate unwittingly contribute to high turnover rates in schools serving marginalized student populations. Leaving the profession altogether contributes to the multiple difficulties caused by attrition.

Professional expenses incurred by music teachers can be impactful, especially in the beginning years. Costs of professional development, graduate coursework, professional organization membership, and conference attendance, all designed to assist the music educator in growing
skills and knowledge (a critical matter for all, and especially for young teachers), can be daunting if not out of reach for novice teachers. This adversely affects retention of many early-career teachers and is particularly of concern for teachers in schools serving marginalized populations, affecting diversification in the profession (Carver-Thomas, 2018). States across the country have laws governing the attainment of permanent or advanced certification that are often connected with acquisition of professional development and/or an advanced degree. The cost of retaining a teaching certificate has been identified as yet another challenge for young music educators. Additionally, the cost of obtaining the provisional certificate has risen over the past decade, contributing to college debt owed in the first five years of teaching and beyond. The burden is often larger for teachers of color compared to others (Carver-Thomas, 2018).

QUALITY OF LIFE

In searching for ways to build a workforce that reflects and supports the needs of school students, it is essential to review issues of quality of life that can function as barriers to professional longevity (Doyle, 2013, 2014; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Taft et al., 2022). Sometimes music teachers work in isolation in a school building, often being the only person with expertise in the discipline. They can work as itinerants, moving between multiple buildings over the course of a week, rarely having the opportunity to feel grounded in any one space or situation. Others find themselves feeling isolated because of physical geography or working in small schools. This isolation, stemming from any or all these factors, can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and may contribute to teacher attrition or migration (Gardner, 2010).

Time is a rare commodity for new music educators. As they try to meet the charge of their position, they must also work to develop a healthful work-life balance. This can be difficult even for seasoned music educators; indeed, the profession often seems to place great value in overextending well beyond the contracted hours. Young teachers entering this type of professional culture can find themselves inundated by the weight of ever-growing teaching responsibilities, leaving them feeling overworked, overwhelmed, and victims of burnout.

New teachers, particularly those who are teaching in communities different from their previous experiences, may perceive a disconnect between their own values and experiences and that of the community they serve. Feeling at odds with the community can be uncomfortable. Time needed to become accustomed to community, ideals may come at a premium, and young educators may not be able to deftly engage in acculturation.
Feeling valued as a professional can be elusive for new and novice music educators. A variety of reasons contribute to this factor including physical isolation in a building, being regarded as necessary only to provide classroom teachers time to meet or have a break, poor physical working conditions, a paucity of professional resources, and working in an environment in which the arts in general, and music specifically, are not respected or treated as legitimate areas of study. One respondent said, “There seems to be a divide between the way that society looks at professionalism and the way they look at teaching as a profession. Other professions get paid well for graduate degrees, but in our profession, the focus is on service and not always professionalism.” Discussing support and workload, both of which factor into feelings of value, Taft and colleagues (2022) indicated that “… teachers probably cannot attend to job fit until their basic needs are fulfilled” (p. 39).

CULTURAL RELEVANCE

In addressing challenges to creating a more inclusive music teaching and learning community, music teacher educators shared that the cycle of tradition for tradition’s sake, to the exclusion of progressive processes, must be interrupted and, in doing so, must address the importance of cultural relevance. This means a greater awareness of and attention to students whose communities are marginalized. This tradition-laden cycle persists, at least in part, by a need to populate university ensembles and applied music studios with music from the Western European musical canon as the centerpiece. From there, music education degree programs requirements follow. This would suggest that, unlike the nearly 63% of all K-12 teachers who report having taken at least one course in serving students from diverse economic backgrounds (Taie & Lewis, 2022), those in music teacher preparation programs may not have the benefit of this foundation. Prospective teachers complete auditions that win them a place in a studio and/or an ensemble. They enter into a degree program with requirements that compel them to continue membership in both as they study methods and practices of music education that perpetuate the cycle of ensemble dominance and a Western, White, Eurocentric musical canon, with other methods of learning and performing music that may be considered more culturally relevant existing only as ancillary experiences, if at all (Butler et al., 2007; Doyle, 2014). Music teacher educators expressed frustration for newly-minted teachers who may be excited about expanding the definition of school music education only to find themselves facing jobs that allow no room for novel and innovative musical practices that focus primarily on the culture of the community they serve. A respondent underscored this frustration: “If we provide the instruction we got, then we will never make any progress … teaching how we were taught will keep an archaic system … we are still preparing students for traditional ensembles when we see that tradition is not as inclusive as we would like.”

The student population that music educators serve, like the general population, has changed over time. The National Center for Education Statistics indicates that by 2030, the percentage of Black and Brown children in schools will be larger than the population of White children. While recent demographics of college graduates and teachers indicate modifications toward more representative racial balance (deBrey et al., 2021; Redding & Nguyen, 2020), the demographic distribution among inservice and preservice music educators is largely unchanged, remaining primarily White (DeAngelis, 2022; DeLorenzo & Silverman, 2016; Elpus, 2015, 2016; Legette, 2003; McKoy, 2013). The contents of music teacher education curricula also remain substantially traditional, thus further expanding the schism between teacher preparation and meeting the needs of today’s student population (Kindall-Smith, 2004; Legette, 2003).

RELATIONSHIPS

One of the primary areas of concern voiced by music teacher educators was that of developing and maintaining relationships. This was discussed primarily in terms of mentorship experiences. Efforts in mentoring young teachers were said to be thwarted by a lack of administrative concern, funds, and time. Failure to retain connections with the degree-granting institution was also cited as a barrier to success in the first five years of professional life. One respondent shared, “Anything helps, I believe, in that first semester. I felt very disconnected when I graduated from undergrad … it was just like There you go! See you later and hope you do well,” while another proclaimed, “We want a sense of community.” Neglecting relationship
development was coupled with a scarcity of time as well as the lack of creating trust among colleagues and administrators. Participants added that this contributes to feelings of loneliness and isolation and dissuades clarity of personal purpose and mission. The lack of emphasis on relationship development prevents new and novice teachers from realizing potential among peers and may stymie the promise of leadership growth.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
This aspect has been touched on previously, as it is interwoven into concerns of resources and quality of life. Its reach, however, goes farther. It was noted that new and beginning teachers rarely exit the degree program with a deep cache of knowledge, given the breadth and scope of teacher training that has been charged to music teacher educators. Teachers may come to a new position with enough knowledge and skills to help them survive in the first year, but thriving in that position may be in doubt. This could be a reflection of the unreasonably staggering breadth of licensure; it is impossible for young teachers to attain everything necessary for complete success given huge expectations of the license and position. Therefore, professional development (PD) is critical. Young teachers often find that PD is not regularly scheduled or that it is rarely content-specific. They must often engage in PD that has been chosen for them rather than being provided skills training that is offered based on their stated wants and needs. Professional development comes at a financial cost that new and novice teachers may not be able to afford, and they may not be permitted time in a heavy teaching schedule to take advantage of professional development when it is offered.

RECRUITMENT
Participants shared candid concerns with cultivating the next generation of music educators, given the obstacles that young professionals must navigate. They cited that attrition often follows placement of first-year and non-White teachers in schools with high turnover rates, a circumstance that is borne out in research (e.g., Docker, 2012; Redding & Nguyen, 2020). As preservice teachers learn about the concerns of young and developing music educators, especially when they leave the field, seeds of doubt about the profession are planted, endangering the growth of a robust, diverse music teacher workforce. The reduction of music teacher attrition and the recruitment of well-qualified music teacher candidates are hampered when preservice teachers opt out of music teacher education degree programs and novice teachers exit the profession.

Ideas for Change: Before the Degree Program
Various ideas were generated from our discussions with music educators across the United States. These are organized around particular themes that correspond to those found in the challenges section of this white paper.

AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL: MITIGATING FINANCIAL CHALLENGES
Mitigating strategies cited by focus group participants were varied. Instruments and private lessons were described as a major challenge to studying music in college. Creating programs where students from lower-income families are provided instruments from the school to borrow or rent at a nominal fee may be helpful toward attaining greater equity. Districts can work with partner organizations (e.g., Save the Music) to develop programs that are sustainable and reach those in greatest need so that the cost of renting an instrument and other musical materials are not obstacles standing in students’ way. Schools where there are many students with financial needs may be able to partner with local universities or other organizations to find people who can offer private or semiprivate lessons to students. This might serve as an opportunity for music teacher education students to bank hours of clinical observation for their certification or
can be part of a university-school partnership where college students are compensated in some way. This could similarly benefit students in performance pedagogy programs. It was suggested that private music instructors be encouraged to provide pro bono work. This process could be facilitated by NAfME, in conjunction with the state MEAs and university music teacher educators, who could do outreach to engage private instructors and could also identify students in need. While some parts of a school music program may necessitate extracurricular options (which many do, and we are not arguing against these), schools should consider offering at least some option that allows students to participate without significant outside-of-class hours. This would alleviate transportation concerns and could be beneficial to families who count on older children to be responsible in the household during after-school hours.

Music teachers, especially those who work in rural or urban schools where transportation is an issue might consider flexible-scheduling options. The family or work obligations of some students should not stand in the way of their participation in music classes. If time is needed outside of school hours, does before or after school better accommodate students’ needs? Are weekends or virtual spaces other viable options worth exploring?

**AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL: RECRUITING**

It is vital that students be made aware of the option to study music and music education at the collegiate level and how to prepare for university music. It is particularly important if the quest to diversify the music teacher workforce is sincere. “The recruitment of future music teachers of color is inexorably linked to the participation of students of color in school music programs” (DeAngelis, 2022, p. 33). Students in some communities may be less aware of the process and preparation needed to be admitted into a music program. Recruiting efforts can happen at the school level with teachers offering students who show promise experiences to lead the class or assist. They might also be partnerships where a university professor or university students share experiences surrounding the life of a music education student at a college or university. Some have suggested we cannot limit recruiting efforts to 11th or 12th grade, as the end of high school may be too late, especially when it comes to recruiting from a more diverse pool of students. Recruiting efforts might consider targeting students in elementary or middle school. This is not a new strategy. In 1949, Winslow said that recruitment, selection, and training of music teachers “… should permeate the elementary, secondary, collegiate, church, and home life … the earlier these processes are initiated the better [emphasis original]” (p. 13). While not a new idea, it is worth repeating because so many recruiting efforts target students in the last years of high school.

Music teachers who are prepared to be more inclusive and culturally responsive may be better equipped to support all students in their music classes. These practices may serve to make students of diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic identities relate to music teaching and see themselves as potential music educators. Music teachers might also consider the possibility of offering new courses in music. Diversifying course offerings in music may also invite students who would not participate in music otherwise. While courses in songwriting or popular music may not seem like a path toward a career in music education, changing the infrastructure within schools may lead
to changes in the nature of music programs. There are already some undergraduate music education programs (e.g., Berklee, University of Miami) where students are able to audition through a portfolio and performance on contemporary instruments/media (e.g., electric guitar, DJ) and where they are able to study popular music and major in music education. Clubs and organizations (e.g., Tri-M©) can be used as a way for students to learn more about music and music teaching. They might be provided with teaching experience or be able to assist with teaching in some way. Participating in such activities can help students develop teaching skills and gain experience that could be considered in an audition.

**AT THE COLLEGIATE LEVEL**

One mitigation strategy in the hands of collegiate music programs is to reconsider how students are admitted. College and university music education programs should consider the following questions: What are measures of musical achievement? Can these be expanded to include other forms of literacy besides reading notation? What instruments or voice styles should be recognized as measures of musicality? Consider what a music education audition should entail. The audition for the music education major may look considerably different from auditions for other music degrees. Audition processes should be shaped to reflect the uniqueness of the music education degree program, differentiating it from other music degrees in its program objectives.
Ideas for Change: During the Degree Program

PRIORITIZE CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

A need to identify how schools and communities can work together was of great concern. A strong thread of discussion emerged around the need to be inclusive of a wider range of students from diverse backgrounds. With these prospective teachers in the pipeline, their presence and understanding of the local communities would enable the preparation programs to better interact and work together to meet the needs of all who would like to learn music. Each community has unique needs, and preparation programs have the resources to structure degree programs to better engage with those familiar with the strengths and challenges of all with vested interest. Further in this document is greater information regarding the roles of those with vested interest in the nurturing and development of a greater and more diverse music teacher education workforce, including community members and culture bearers. Additional concerns focused on the need to provide better preparation to address music learners with unique needs, including accessibility issues in their schools and communities.

SHIFT THE TEACHING PERSPECTIVE

Conversations focused on the possibility of offering a wider range of musical course offerings for diverse music traditions and backgrounds. Suggestions for revised teacher preparation related to broadening musicianship skills through a multitude of musics and creating

“Music teacher educators must prioritize what it means to be a well-prepared music teacher today, including greater emphasis on creativity, cultural competency and relevance, community accountability, and multiple means of engagement with music.”

PRIORITIZE MOST IMPORTANT/SALENT ELEMENTS

Although threads in our discussions stressed the perception that there may be resistance and pushback to broad changes in curricula, there were opinions that having an open dialogue is key so that all who would like to share their voices can be provided space to do so. Hearing each other in a safe and respectful dialogue could shift perceptions of what is actually needed for a successful PK–12 musical experience and preparation of the educator who will enter these classrooms.
greater cultural awareness, competence, and responsiveness. Having these and other discussions would allow both preparation programs and PK–12 educators to reflect on what has been taught in relation to Eurocentric music traditions, what aspects of current curricula should be retained, and what should be explored to include musical traditions of the communities these institutions serve. These educators wanted to look at multiple forms of pedagogy and the various ways students learn music, regardless of genre or geographic/ethnic association.

**RE-EVALUATE AND REVISE CURRICULA AND MATERIALS**

The discussion focused on the students of today and their interests in connecting with the communities they serve. It was noted that the current curricula offerings focus on the needs of past generations, preserving a rich history of the past, yet not reflecting the music of today or the ways in which musicianship may differ from community to community. Abramo and Bernard (2020) stated, “Schools of music requirements and values insert themselves into these local values, disrupting the potential of creating a more urban and more ethnically and culturally diverse music education workforce” (pp. 21-22). There is a need to revamp and broaden the preparation of music educators in a broad array of teaching competencies. Although these genres are less frequently part of current curricula, participants said they would like to see more popular musics and other musics from outside the Western tradition included. Given the recommendation for revision within the real constraints of credit limits imposed by state departments of education and universities, substantive change may appear elusive.

Shifts in university music teacher preparation curricula should not occur only from within departments of music education. The interconnectedness of related and unrelated disciplines that the undergraduate music education degree program comprises demands that various university faculty work together. Music teacher educators must prioritize what it means to be a well-prepared music teacher today, including greater emphasis on creativity, cultural competency and relevance, community accountability, and multiple means of engagement with music. The curriculum should reflect these priorities; music teacher educators must educate their colleagues regarding these priorities and the best path to their attainment. In already-packed music teacher degree program curricula, the solution for reform is not additive, but integrative. Based on concept and skills prioritization, best paths to attainment will likely look quite different from many contemporary programs. A more cohesive, holistic approach will benefit preservice teachers. As concepts of music theories, movement, performance, history, and pedagogy are considered, fractured and compartmentalized experiences should give way to those that are more comprehensive, with greater focus on transferable skills and knowledge with expectations of higher-order thinking. This design is espoused in the CMS Manifesto in their appeal to all university music faculty to rethink music study (Transforming Music Study, 2016). These changes are necessary if music teacher preparation programs are to become and remain culturally relevant to PK–12 communities.
Ideas for Change: During the First Five Years of Professional Life

RESOURCES/FUNDING
Participants were hopeful that the divide between cost of living and beginning-teacher salaries could be lessened with the strength of committed colleagues who lobby for livable salaries and regular raises to match the rate of inflation. The voices of young teachers are sometimes unheard, particularly if they are part-time faculty or untenured. Seasoned music educators should be partners not just in name but in action. Participants also called for signing bonuses, especially for young teachers who opt to work in schools serving marginalized student populations and those with high teacher-turnover rates. Similarly, there was a call for loyalty bonuses that would reward multiyear service to a school and district.

It was proposed that young teachers be funded for conference attendance that would promote professional development and that conference attendance be elevated as a meaningful professional act supported by allowable absence from regular school duties. Participants were keen to suggest a revision of conference and professional development opportunities that would promote the development of community relationships to further inform teaching. To offset time away from school duties when attending conferences, it was recommended that live streaming and video professional development offerings be afforded to new and novice music educators at reduced costs. All these proposals would help new music teachers grow their skills and attain permanent or advanced certification, bolstering the probability of their longevity in the field.

QUALITY OF LIFE
While music educators may be adversely affected by not being able to work together with other music teachers in a school building or are relegated to a solitary nomadic schedule as an itinerant teacher (Gardner, 2010), there are various ways to mitigate feelings of isolation. Active engagement with other music educators in a school district is, of course, a good first step. This can include curriculum planning, methods and strategy development, and regular check-ins that are both formal and informal. Extending beyond the district, music educators can strengthen their identity in the profession by connecting with already-established support groups with memberships specific to their areas of expertise. These may include in-person and virtual meetings. Administrators, too, play an important role in helping “... young teachers move from merely surviving to thriving” (Barnes, 2010, p. 74). State and national music educators’ associations can promote the institution of affinity groups to serve as safe spaces in which members’ identities are reflected and wherein open and honest discourse is fostered. Universities can play a role in helping new and novice teachers feel less isolated by remaining connected with their recent graduates in any number of ways, such as email, phone calls, site visits, and postal mail. Those who work in small schools or who are separated geographically may be heartened through regular interactions with others across the country with similar teaching circumstances. These interactions can result not only in shared ideas about processes, practices, and outcomes, but may also produce a community of music educators who can educate others about the nuances of these specific teaching situations. Such interactions, particularly those perceived as supportive and lead to assuaging fear and isolation, are suggested by and supported through research (e.g., Huling-Austin, 1987; Madsen & Hancock, 2002).

The profession must take a stronger position in valuing a healthful work-life balance on the premise that such equilibrium will benefit educators and their families in the home and educators and their students in the music classroom. This shift will mean developing clear expectations for musical goals, objectives, and processes throughout the school years. It entails an honest review of school music education to streamline content, focus on the benefits of skills and knowledge transfer, and an end to a culture of “piling on” which contributes to instances of burnout (Burrack et al., 2014; Gardner, 2010; Transforming Music Study, 2016). Indeed, this
concern is not limited to music educators but is clearly evident in the teaching profession as a whole, with PK–12 educators spending an average of 52 hours in a typical work week, well beyond the average of 38.5 contractual hours (Taie & Lewis, 2022). Tools for self-care can be useful. This can come from within discipline through professional development, shepherded and supported by music education member groups at district, community, county, parish, state, and national levels. If this focus is prioritized by member groups, awareness and value will grow within the profession.

Efforts to become a contributing member of the communities that music educators serve must be intentional. Taking part in the community can begin with listening and observing to learn about its members and culture. Young and novice teachers can reach out to community leaders for help in respectfully navigating their new environs. Engaging people through the music program can serve to reflect community culture and values.

Valuing music in education requires constant vigilance and sustained advocacy. By extension, valuing music educators must follow (Doyle, 2013, 2014). This can be evidenced in how music education is discussed, the position it holds in school curricula, and, of course, the funding it receives. The quality of teachers’ lives is affected positively when music is centered as necessary in children’s lives. Music educators must engage in purposeful and specific advocacy efforts to continue to educate those with power in determining school curricula. Current relevant research grounds the argument for music’s importance; empirical evidence drives rationale for providing resources and equipment that enable music educators to successfully meet their charge.

**CULTURAL RELEVANCE**

Interrupting a narrowly defined cycle of tradition in American music education is no small task; music teacher educators agreed that this is a complex, multifaceted matter. These issues, addressed in previous sections of this document, continue beyond the degree program into the first five years of professional life, during which the cycle can either be perpetuated or given a new direction. New and novice music educators looking to redefine school music education who also find themselves in conventional music-teaching positions can move forward by creating just one new offering that can begin the process of diversification. An offering that reflects the values and lived experiences of the community can be beneficial. Extending outreach into the community in the form of youth music programs can help to unburden music educators who feel constrained by the dictates of established curriculum and common practice. As these programs take hold and begin to grow, revision of a school music curriculum based on community culture may prove to be more attainable and perhaps even expected.

New and novice music educators need the support, in words and action, of their more experienced colleagues, university partners, and school leaders (Gardner, 2010). The heavy lifting that will be required for a cultural shift in school music education cannot be borne by the young people alone. Their enthusiasm and energy will quickly wane if they perceive themselves to be alone in this charge. Reprioritizing music teacher education curricula to meet the needs of a changing society is a call that is heard from the music education novitiate. They not only see firsthand how music teaching and learning can be restructured; they are also participants in the changing culture. As we press to diversify the music-teaching workforce and retain well-qualified educators, experienced influential music teachers must intentionally and honestly account for shifts in student population, recognizing the importance of cultural values and lived experiences and understanding that “… teachers from diverse backgrounds and experiences can benefit all students, regardless of race, to succeed in an increasingly global society” (NASSP, 2022).

The music-teacher workforce, partnering with music teacher educators, can review, revise, and recraft music teacher preparation curricula so that a large, teacher-led, ensemble-based culture moves toward greater inclusivity, standing proudly alongside curricula that embrace cultural responsiveness and is marked by inclusivity of style, process, and context (e.g., Abril, 2013; Shaw, 2015, 2018).
RELATIONSHIPS

Developing and maintaining relationships can assist new and novice teachers realize their potential and may reinforce greater longevity in the field (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Connecting back to their alma mater is essential and can be actualized in various ways, including through social media, email, and personal interactions. Seen by many music teacher educators as a reasonable extension of music teacher preparation work, engaging in outreach with recent graduates, especially during the first semester of professional life, is desirable. Growing relationships can assist both the new teacher and prospective teachers when first-year professionals return to campus to engage with preservice teachers. It is important to engage all new teachers, and especially those who represent marginalized populations. In so doing, the value of new and novice teachers is underscored (DeLorenzo & Silverman, 2016).

Music teacher preparation curricula can reflect current and ongoing needs in school music education by asking new and novice music teachers what they now feel they need in the field that they may not have received during the degree program. Music teacher educators, through these interactions, can learn firsthand about facets of the culture and community that are foundational for today’s school students. These data can inform music teacher education instruction and experiences. Connections between universities and their recent graduates can be formal or informal, regularly scheduled or periodical. These might include online engagements, face-to-face meetings, clinics and discussions, or even happy hours. Beginning this habit before preservice teachers have graduated will help to ensure that the practice thrives once they become part of the workforce.

In addition to relationships with their alma mater, young professionals can be well-served with relationships that are built among cohorts of colleagues. This might include working together with music educators in specialty areas that match their own, or might even include working with teachers outside of music. Efforts can be made to connect public school educators with those in private and religious schools as well as International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. State music educators’ associations (MEAs) can assist by providing a meeting room at conferences for young educators to drop in to have coffee and talk with others, creating a searchable new music teacher directory, and initiating meet-and-greets. Connecting all factions of the relationship structure—new teachers, preservice teachers, music teacher educators, and state MEAs—will fortify information-sharing and keep new music educators at the forefront as individuals deserving of nurturing as young and promising professionals.

Systematically developing professional relationships can occur through mentorship programs (Benson, 2008). Currently, several worthy models exist, and those seeking to design a mentoring process would do well to emulate such models (see Baumgartner, 2020). National and state music education associations can undertake the identification of model programs and provide contact information for those interested in learning more about initiating their own. Longevity incentives can be offered for current mentorship programs through state Music Education/Educators Associations.

Care must be taken to build mentoring into faculty load rather than letting it exist as a nonessential supplement so as not to contribute to the already-prevalent culture of “piling on” which, as previously discussed, is a key factor in stress that can lead to burnout. In addition to allotting time into teaching schedules for mentoring, mentors should be paid for their services. The mentor ultimately contributes to the professional development, health, well-being, and retention of well-qualified music educators, thereby enhancing the robustness of the profession. Structured guidance and training, informed by myriad helpful resources, is appropriate. Release time for mentors to visit young teachers and for new teachers to visit and observe other classrooms should be rolled into job expectations and descriptions.

Partners in the mentorship process can be as local or as national as desired or needed. Beyond the obvious participants (new and beginning teachers, mid-career teachers, music teacher educators), partners can include other school personnel such as administrators and school board members. Civic, community, and business leaders can be involved, as can those from places of worship. Outreach to and connections
with private music teachers and community music organizations will help new and novice teachers realize the full scope of music teaching and learning. National organizations that serve discipline-specific areas [e.g., American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), American Orff-Schulwerk Association (AOSA), American String Teachers Association (ASTA), Organization of American Kodály Educators (OAKE), National Band Association (NBA), etc.] can be tapped for superior knowledge and understanding of specific areas of music and music performance. Mentorship can reach beyond music organizations to include other arts disciplines. State MEAs and NAfME Councils and Societies can serve as mentoring hubs for music teachers. These professional connections will support beginning teachers in any number of areas, and their impact permeates the research (e.g., Fitzpatrick et al., 2014; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Sorenson, 2019). They can provide a safe space to discuss and vent frustrations. They can be collaborative teams. They can be characterized as friendship groups. They can exist to bolster knowledge and skills, provide positive role models, support music educators’ mental health, and ensure accessibility and equity for preservice teachers. Mentoring programs can make the difference between remaining in or leaving the field.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development (PD) is critical to advancing new and beginning music teachers’ knowledge and skills to optimize probability of professional success and retention in the field. PD must be regularly scheduled and considered as essential to the job as teaching. PD topics must be considered carefully, and areas that are of specific interest to new and early-career teachers will promote feelings of being valued and address needs that might be very different from mid and late career teachers. Given the breadth and expectations of licensure, it is fair to say that no undergraduate degree program can possibly prepare young music educators for all teaching responsibilities. PD can be targeted to fill content-knowledge gaps and provide experiences that new teachers lack. To best determine these areas, new and early-career teachers should be polled on a regular basis. They should be given a voice in these experiences. To support retention in the profession as well as nurture the next generation’s growth, PD that focuses on leadership for young teachers should be fundamental. State music education associations and universities can be tapped to provide assistance at local levels. As has been previously proposed (Give a Note Foundation, 2017), NAfME should work to provide space for online and in-person communities among teachers of color who must manage in a profession that is, at the time of this writing, primarily White. Professional development can also help young teachers connect with teachers who can help them build cross-cultural competence.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Although recruitment of music educators is often targeted at high school juniors and seniors, music teacher educators contend that the process must exist at every level of students’ school music experiences, throughout the degree program, and continue into the early years of professional life. Recruiting a well-qualified and diverse music teaching workforce entails planting seeds early in life, growing them through the school years, nurturing and harvesting them during the degree program, and celebrating the yield in early-career teachers (Miller et al., 2021). This cycle of attention and nourishing will stimulate growth and diversification in the profession at a critical juncture when, currently, the teacher population is markedly homogenous, with more than 80% identifying as White/non-Hispanic and nearly 80% female (Taie & Lewis, 2022), with a chronic division between racial distributions in student populations compared to teacher populations (Ingersoll & May, 2011).

First-year and novice teachers must be given all opportunities to develop significance in their position lest they fall victim to attrition. Different from success that is often externally defined, a focus on significance affords the novice teacher an internal measure of the importance of their work. Matching candidate with job is prudent, practical, and can motivate retention in the field (Docker, 2012). Candidates should be knowledgeable about schools with high turnover rates, reviewing root causes and determining whether they can be satisfied and productive in such a position. State MEAs and NAfME must
be purposeful in identifying highly qualified early-career music educators who can share knowledge and passion with prospective music educators in a constant effort to underscore the mission of the profession.

As preservice music educators work diligently to learn their craft in curricula that are overflowing with requirements, there is little time to learn the realities—the intricacies and idiosyncrasies—of teaching music in the schools. Fieldwork and internships help to prepare them, but these experiences are often coupled with the pressures of oversight and evaluation. The state MEAs and NAfME should strive to provide informational webinars, free of cost, to preservice and first-year music educators to help them learn these specifics as a matter of learning without the burden of judgment.

University and local school partners can play an important role in assisting with the retention of new and novice music educators, particularly those who represent marginalized populations, through workshops. In doing so, we must be careful to avoid costs for young teachers and provide assistance as a service that will keep the profession healthy. Workshop leaders should be composed of role model representatives from marginalized populations, including consideration of race, gender, sexual identity, and ability (e.g., DeLorenzo & Silverman, 2016; Fitzpatrick et al., 2014).
Summary

Mitigation strategies before the degree program fall into six chief categories:
- Resources/Funding
- School/District Level Inequities
- Limitations of the School Music Program
- Perceptions of College
- Auditions: Performance Constraints
- Auditions: Financial Resources

Mitigation strategies during the degree program fall into five chief categories:
- Singularity
- Equity and Access
- Credit Limitations
- Eurocentrism
- Resources/Funding

Mitigation strategies during the first five years of professional life fall into six chief categories:
- Resources/Funding
- Quality of Life
- Cultural Relevance
- Relationships
- Professional Development
- Recruitment and Retention
Support at the PK–12 Level: Takeaways

If You’re a School District/Arts Administrator

- Create innovative programs for free or highly subsidized instrument rentals.
- Partner with foundations or other external organizations that focus on providing equipment for students in music.
- Find schools in a district that are not using/need instruments and other equipment to reallocate to a school in need.
- Offer free or reduced-price instrument or voice lessons for students from low-income families.
- Partner with foundations, community arts providers, or universities to ensure that all students have access to private lessons regardless of background or family income.
- Offer summer enrichment activities for music students.
- Access remaining ESSER funding or Title I and Title IV-A funding, which can all be used to support a well-rounded education that includes music.

If You’re a Music Teacher

- Be flexible.
  - Work with students to mitigate financial and transportation challenges.
  - Work with students so they can participate and also meet familial obligations, such as work.
- Create new courses to engage different segments of the student population.
  - New courses such as songwriting, music technology, producing, composition.
- Expand curricular offerings beyond band, orchestra, choir, and jazz.
- Rethink pedagogies and practices within commonly offered elective music courses.
  - Course content
  - Repertoire
  - Instructional styles and approaches
- Offer students at all school levels opportunities to demonstrate leadership and teaching skills and to learn about the music education profession.

If You’re a Higher Education Leader

- Expand audition/interview requirements to be more inclusive of diverse ways of being musical and demonstrating musical knowledge.
- Partner with underserved schools and marginalized students to better prepare students for applications and auditions.
- Partner with primary and middle schools to awaken students understanding of viable career/educational paths in music.

If You’re a Federal, State, or District Leader

- Increase funding for Titles I and IV-A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to ensure students have equitable access to a well-rounded education that includes music.
- Adopt legislation to clarify how states can support and encourage music and arts education; conduct additional research on arts education; and reinstate the National Assessment of Educational Progress in dance, music, theater, and visual arts.
Support at the Collegiate Level: Takeaways

If You’re a Federal, State, District Leader

- Increase funding for the Teacher Quality Partnership program and the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence to support comprehensive teacher preparation programs at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other Minority-Serving Institutions.
- Reauthorize the Higher Education Act and ensure that teacher preparation programs include strong clinical experience, rigorous requirements and training for mentors, and ongoing mentoring and support for new educators, which research shows increase educator retention and effectiveness.

If You’re a Higher Education Leader

- Revise music education curriculum to be more culturally sustaining, equitable, and reflective of the needs of schools and communities.
- Partner with local school districts to examine community needs, and recruit prospective candidates who meet those needs.
- Offer scholarships and other financial supports to help students complete their program.
- Offer stipends for students to participate in practicum field experiences and other school-based learning opportunities.

- Reduce financial barriers to entering music education preparation programs by increasing funding for the TEACH grants and including the costs of clinical experiences in the overall cost of attendance when awarding financial aid.
- Increase state funding and support for high-quality music education programs at colleges and universities that serve large numbers of students of color.
- Provide state and local funding for high schools to implement teacher cadet programs and curricula designed to encourage students of color to explore the music teaching profession.
- Provide professional development for higher education faculty on culturally responsive practices and other instructional strategies to meet the changing needs of the PK-12 student population.
- Embed topics related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access into music teacher education curricula.
Support in Early Career: Takeaways

If You’re a Federal, State, District Leader
- Position salaries, raises, and bonus structures, tax credits, and other financial incentives to entice new music teachers into the field.
- Offer loan forgiveness for music educators who serve in high-need or hard-to-staff schools.
- Increase funding for Title II of ESSA, which can be used for job-embedded professional learning opportunities and mentoring for music educators.

If You’re a School District/Arts Administrator
- Provide continual and free (or highly subsidized) professional development experiences for music educators.
- Cross-cultural competence should be prioritized.
- Provide district-level safe spaces for music educators to feel connected to one another, as a way to counter feelings of isolation.

If You’re a Higher Education Leader
- Create meaningful spaces where music teacher educators and new music educators can gather for collaboration, discussion, mentorship, and brainstorming.
- Create professional development programs for local music educators to keep them engaged and connected to the collegiate program and the profession.
- Account for these mentoring activities as part of a faculty load, and pay mentors for their services.

If You’re a State or National Music Education Organization Leader
- Prioritize programs, professional development and conferences for new-career music educators.
- Subsidize conference registrations and other fees that can be a burden for a beginning teacher.
- Offer relevant professional learning opportunities virtually and on demand to reduce barriers of travel and time constraints.
- Promote the institution of affinity groups to serve as safe spaces in which educators’ identities are reflected and open and honest discourse is fostered.
Engaging Organizational Leaders, Policy Makers, Colleagues, and Students

The growth and development of qualified music educators has long been the charge of multiple partners with vested interest in the education and success of prospective music teachers. Our position, to address the concerns of this document collaboratively, from within and outside of music teacher education, is not unique. The complexities of such change were acknowledged in the CMS Manifesto (Transforming Music Study, 2016). Speaking more broadly to reshaping university music study, the authors petitioned a multitude of others to assist in the large task: “Curricular overhaul cannot occur in isolation; it must involve the many populations that influence and are influenced by it” (p. 7). And so it is with creating a blueprint for a better path to and through music teacher education. Our allies and associates, with their varied functions in the process, can contribute to constructing a fresh approach to music teacher education that is better suited to reflect music learners in today’s society, and we call on them to take a prominent role.

We recognize the charge of the Housewright Declaration (Madsen, 2000), to expand what it means to be a music educator to be more inclusive and open wide the pipeline to the profession in the name of justice and equity, is meant as a collective task that requires a confraternity of committed individuals and groups who are resolute toward actualizing these objectives. Through the efforts of the MTPI, a number of partners whose input and feedback we seek as we continue to delineate ways to successfully address the evolution of music teacher education have been identified. They include (but are not limited to):

- Music Program Leaders
- School Administrative Officers (e.g., department heads, principals, superintendents)
- University Administrative Officers (e.g., department heads, directors, deans)
- University Music Faculty Outside of Music Education (e.g., conducting, theory, history, therapy, keyboard, ensembles, studio instruction)
- Teachers
- Students
- Community Members, Leaders, and Families (e.g., leaders in places of worship, members of local government, business owners, parents)
- State Government Officials (e.g., Secretaries of Education, Governors, Legislators)
- Professional Music Education Associations

SCHOOL-LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS

The MTPI recommends that, with the guidance of NAfME Division leadership, each of the six NAfME Divisions (Eastern, North Central, Northwest, Southern, Southwestern, Western) create an alliance of members and school administrative officers to consider the mitigations that have been identified in this report. We further advise that key music education leaders in each state of the NAfME Divisions put forward names of school administrative officers who are willing and able to work together with Division representatives to create viable tools and courses of action that will lead to: more inclusive music practices in the schools; an attractive and unobstructed path for students who choose music and music teaching as a possible career, and; improved professional experiences that prioritize a positive work-life balance for all music educators and especially those in the first five years of professional life. These discussions and searches for solutions must focus on possibilities in resources and financing, including salary and bonus structures that will position the music teaching profession as attractive.
We are reliant on your coming together in solidarity to examine current curricula in school music and working to recast content, processes, and methods of evaluation to emphasize the values and lived experiences of the children in our communities, with an eye toward expanding their scope of musical understanding through a large cache of materials that is not limited to Eurocentric models. We hold that mentorship, as a regular and structured entity, should be an integral and valid portion of the duties of new and early career music educators. As such, we are optimistic that collectively you will create plans for how these processes can be made feasible and will include methods for bringing novice teachers together with seasoned music educators to occur as a regular and paid portion of the professional duties. Given your position of power in school hierarchy and operations, and that some of you are instrumental in human resources and budgeting decisions, we ask that you work with each other to produce tangible ways to meet the needs of young teachers as they seek professional development by making it inexpensive or free, and considering it a valid part of their load, even when it requires time away from campus.

UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION AND FACULTY OUTSIDE OF MUSIC EDUCATION

The MTPI recommends that the findings of this report be made available to university administrative officers and faculty outside of music education so they may be informed as to the current challenges facing music teacher education and all possibilities toward enacting consequential metamorphosis of the degree program. Although music teacher education degree programs include an array of disciplines and experiences that involve various departments and areas across the university, in many cases these curricula fall short of helping prospective teachers develop skills and processes necessary to be successful and relevant in today’s society, given the changing nature of the school-age student body and cultural impacts on schools and communities. We strongly advise that, in tandem with music teacher education faculty, these university partners work to identify priorities for contemporary music education for those in PK–12 schools and, indeed, for lifelong music learners, to create curricula that appropriately reflect and meet the needs of all students, prioritizing culture and community throughout. We maintain
that the measures of success in the audition/admission process for those stating a desire to study music teacher education be reevaluated to reflect the mission and priorities of the music teaching profession in contemporary society, and that this is embodied in an innovative approach to how prospective preservice music educators are approved for the degree program. We argue for broadening teaching competencies so as to move beyond classically-focused paradigms and Eurocentrism to embrace musics of the vernacular and the community. We assert that changes in music teacher education curricula should be characterized by streamlining content and process, rather than increasing requirements in already overcrowded arrays of study. We further advise that experiences during the degree program should be student-centered; prospective teachers must be able to engage in musical endeavors that will prepare them to provide optimal and varied experiences for all students, rather than only for the approximately 20% who have historically opted for traditional ensemble electives. Furthermore, we encourage all university personnel who have power in creating and executing music teacher education degree processes to review obstacles to passage through and success within the program. This includes all manner of barrier examinations and experiences throughout the degree program. Such barriers should be reviewed through a lens of equity and appropriateness and revised in conjunction with the evolution of the music teacher preparation curricula as previously noted. Finally, we urge these partners to work together with music teacher educators to create a culture of valuing music teacher education insofar as those who graduate as music educators serve as the primary providers of musical skills and knowledge for future generations, many of whom will populate degree programs in these very institutions of higher education. Valuing can come in many forms, of course. We advocate for reasonable workloads that include time for mentoring newly graduated alumni, the early career teachers who are often placed in difficult teaching circumstances, who can benefit from continued interaction with the alma mater in systematic and meaningful ways.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS, LEADERS, AND FAMILIES

The MTPI recommends purposeful alliances between music educators, music teacher educators, and local community leaders to create, build, and solidify relationships that place family, community, and culture at the forefront of the music education experience. Through these relationships, we expect that a greater knowledge of communal identity will result. This is especially important in places where universities with music teacher education degree programs exist. We recommend moving away from an isolation model in which the university exists as an insular entity that is seen as “other than community”; rather, we urge that the isolation model be replaced with an inclusion model in which the university is an active partner. We propose that the time and effort necessary to forge such important relationships be regarded as a viable portion of the academic’s workload since the outcomes can only aid in the positive growth of the town-gown alliance. Through open discussion and invitation, community members, leaders, and families should be included in helping music educators to cultivate culturally relevant music experiences of all kinds. We recommend that music educators include members of the community and its leaders in professional development to provide insight into advancing and sustaining relationships among all community members, including school children. We further urge these members of the community and music educators to work together to identify how the community may be able to assist

“Preparation for teaching shifting populations and diverse communities must match options for meaningful music experiences in the schools that meet the needs of all students.”
schools with limited resources in providing children with critical music experiences. We task music educators with providing their expertise as members of the community in music experiences that exist outside of school music and to help develop sustainable community youth music programs that serve to celebrate and enhance cultural and communal identity. We underscore the great need for music educators to consider, honor, and embrace cultures of students’ communities and families as central to music education experiences.

**STATE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

The MTPI recommends that it task itself with the responsibility of regularly researching and reporting on all state licensure processes and qualifications, including testing (e.g., Praxis, edTPA, SBE content exams), fees, internships, and degree-program certification requirements (in and out of state). This should be done at least on a biennial basis, if not more often. We also contend that the MTPI should have spokesperson authority in each state when called on by state MEA leadership and members. Ideally, the MTPI should have representatives from each NAfME Division who can work with state MEA leadership and music teacher educators to assist with state government official interactions, particularly with those in Departments of Education. While states have autonomy, we feel it will be beneficial to assign NAfME leaders the task of remaining knowledgeable about state expectations and how these impact our work toward diversifying the music teacher education workforce and supporting early career teachers, particularly those who represent marginalized populations. Establishing the MTPI as a permanent standing committee in the National Association for Music Education demonstrates our ongoing commitment to equity in identifying, educating, and supporting young professionals who are reflective of the communities in which they serve through political advocacy. The MTPI, in its permanent iteration, will remain apprised of changes and movements in educational policy at the state and local levels. This is especially important when it becomes evident that such changes may adversely affect the recruitment and retention of quality music educators. NAfME’s strength is its power to speak for a nation of music educators. We proffer that this powerful position can assist in the development of or responses to educational policy on an as-needed basis with our federated state affiliates and membership.
Professional music education associations (see above) are critical to the advancement of the music teacher profession, especially as it pertains to eliminating obstacles in the path to entering teacher preparation programs and supporting new and novice teachers in the early career. We call on music education organizations at every level—local, state, regional, and national—to generate practical ways to create a more robust music teaching workforce that is borne out of and reflects equity. We petition you to act intentionally in developing viable and sustainable options that are targeted specifically at these objectives. Use the strength of your membership and leadership to extend the spotlight of music teacher recruitment to both elementary and middle schools. Through conference and town hall offerings, share ideas and craft implementable plans for a plethora of school music experiences that can exist alongside traditional ensembles. Work together with school officials and music educators to solve scheduling concerns so that all who wish to participate in school music may do so without constraint. Share your ideas, plans, and solutions with others in your area, across your state, and throughout the country.

We ask for affordable and timely professional development so that new and novice teachers can continue to advance teaching skills and knowledge. As you engage in this process, invite early career music teachers to share their ideas concerning what they feel they need in professional development and listen to their voices by reflecting their needs in the offerings you provide. Find ways that professional development can be made inexpensive or free for young teachers, especially those who have made the commitment to teach students in schools with limited resources. So that new and novice teachers may continue to see themselves as important contributors to the profession, we advise that workshop leaders should reflect the diversity of our communities and intentionally be composed of role model representatives from all populations and especially those who are marginalized, including consideration of race, gender, sexual identity, and ability.

Identify in-person or virtual safe spaces for young professionals to gather and engage in honest discourse without fear of judgment or retribution. This is especially important for teachers of color who are navigating in a profession that, at the time of this writing, is largely White (NASSP, 2022). Maintain these spaces and make them a permanent part of your associations’ commitment to music teaching and learning.

We pose that you identify qualified members who can serve in leadership with the objective of organizing and managing processes by which early career and established music educators can connect. Through such personal and professional engagements, we may stave off feelings of isolation and devaluing, thereby guaranteeing the sustainability of our investment in young professionals.

Professional and corporate partners are extremely important to addressing the future of music teaching and learning. While some partners (see page 46) have clear educational objectives, others may espouse missions that are more tangentially related. We consider these professional associations and corporate partners as allies; their areas of focus often have significant impact in music teaching and learning. These include but are not limited to professional and adult performance areas, early childhood development, print and digital materials of music learning, instrumental equipment and related accessories, travel, degree oversight, and advocacy, to name but a few. These supporting entities play an essential role in helping music educators create meaningful and comprehensive experiences that often shape and inform music into and through adulthood. We need our colleagues to assist in the further development of equitable music education since they are uniquely poised, through association and business practices, to help music educators identify and pave paths of access for those who experience barriers due to a multitude of discriminating variables that include race, gender, sexual identity, and poverty.

We invite our colleagues to not only sit at the table at which these formidable concerns are discussed but also demonstrate positive partnership through tangible forms of outreach that can serve all, especially the marginalized. Through your generosity of various types of resources, we may be able to bridge gaps evident in school music education which are manifested in generation after generation of those who pursue a career in music education and those who are turned away. You are poised to be consequential in shaping music teaching and
learning through your national and, sometimes, international presence and power. From a perch of strength, your philanthropy will help facilitate a future in music education that we strive to attain but cannot reach alone. We commit to long term collaboration, engaging in innovative practices that can uplift the music teacher profession. We are keen to view music teaching and learning. In doing so, we broaden perspectives and possibilities.

STUDENTS

Students are central to this project and to our focus on reform, including school (PK–12) students and preservice teachers. The MTPI recommends that their voices be heard in the process of revision. They are recipients of instruction, participants in music engagement, prospective consumers of music, and prospective music educators. They are the youthful members of society who are widely influenced by the social cultures of their communities. They understand and experience their lives from a vantage point that may differ from those of music teachers and our allies. While the music teacher and music teacher education community are informed, intentional connections with students with a genuine interest in who they are and what they need can figure meaningfully in developing more relevant curricular elements.

The Future of Music Education in the Hands of Music Educators

Barriers to the music teacher profession are many, especially for those who have traditionally been marginalized—people of color, English language learners, LGBTQ+, disabled communities, and those from a low socioeconomic status. The equally abundant solution strategies presented in this document remind us that we do not have to accept long-established biased and exclusionary practices. The MTPI chose to initially address this by systematically engaging music teacher educators in meaningful discussions, the outcomes of which are the essence of the Blueprint. In unity with music teacher educators, we now petition those with vested interest in human musical growth and development to play a role in strengthening the music teacher profession for the sake of all. We especially emphasize the responsibility of current music educators. The processes of reform outlined herein are concomitantly inspirational and demanding. The tasks ahead are formidable but not impossible; we are confident that they are attainable through ardent grassroots efforts of music educators and music teacher educators across the United States. Buoyed by a growing call to social activism, we must be galvanized in dismantling barriers to and through the profession.

For true and lasting reform that addresses diversity, creation of and respect for a culture of community, and sustainable support toward more enlightened recruitment and retention in the music teacher profession, we must be assertive and tenacious in moving forward. Music educators’ experiences and wisdom from the field will demonstrate disparities between current practice and the policy recommendations of the
Housewright Declaration (Madsen, 2000) and the CMS Manifesto (Transforming Music Study, 2016). Music educators are well-positioned to respond to the findings of the MTPI and provide guidance in practicable ways to bolstering music teaching and learning experiences with an eye toward greater diversity, equity, access, inclusion and belonging. Similar to our recommendation of forming a NAFME task force to assist music teacher educators with state licensure processes and facilitate state government interactions, we recommend forming a substantive task force with select members of the MTPI as well as committed music educators who are willing to develop implementable revision strategies based on Blueprint mitigation concepts. This task force should engage state music education leadership to ensure that disparate voices from across the country are heard and recognized throughout the development of such strategies. As music teacher educators set out to review and revise expectations and processes of music education degree programs, so must music educators take control of shaping music education to fit the 21st-century imperative.

With the NAFME Strategic Plan (2022) as a foundation, we recommend that all music educators review the tenets of the Housewright Declaration (Madsen, 2000) while attending to how the CMS Manifesto proposals could be reflected and realized in school music experiences. Music teacher preparation reform is only as effective as the culture of music education into which new teachers enter. If that culture remains exclusive, reform of the teacher preparation process is unlikely to make an impactful difference. The two must be addressed and shaped concurrently; preparation for teaching shifting populations and diverse communities must match options for meaningful music experiences in the schools that meet the needs of all students.

The MTPI acknowledges the importance and influence of large ensembles and strongly supports their place in school music. We are equally supportive of the development of additional music offerings that speak to the fundamental needs and aspirations of students who may not identify with the large-ensemble culture. The authors of the CMS Manifesto recognized the relevance of creative musical skills as central to advanced musical development: “… TFUMM [Task Force on the Undergraduate Music Major] seeks to restore improvisation and composition to their rightful, foundational status … by rendering the entire scope of music study as a creative and highly-skilled endeavor” (Transforming Music Study, 2016, p. 5). We concur and seek to make creative engagement with music a cornerstone of music in the schools. We recommend that the music educator task force pursue avenues for creativity in school music that embrace cultures of youth, family, and community. Furthermore, the CMS Manifesto authors’ call for diversity is bedrock to our own objectives. They stand firm in the assertion that a widening of the parameters of music study in universities is vital: “TFUMM urges that engagement occur within a cultural expanse that is as broad as possible” (p. 5). We assert that opportunities in school music should follow suit. We propose that the music educator task force identify multiple executable possibilities for broadening the cultural expanse in school music curricula. We maintain that music educators must work with music teacher educators and community leaders to relieve financial burdens for school students who aspire to a music education degree. Music educators must be part of discussions concerning music literacies as they pertain to the admission and audition process and advocate for students whose path to a music education degree program may be divergent from traditional routes, all the while urging university faculty to reshape their thinking about music teacher education so such advocacy might become unnecessary.

The time for this activism is now. The Blueprint for Strengthening the Music Teacher Profession lays the framework. We call on all music educators to commit to taking up the mantle, to lead, and to bravely blaze the trail for the future of music education in the United States.
MUSIC EDUCATION POLICY ROUNDTABLE

The Music Education Policy Roundtable is a public policy coalition led by the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) that advocates for a high-quality music education for all students. The following professional associations and corporate partners have been invited to collaborate on next steps on the project, as their areas of focus have significant impact in music teaching and learning but have not officially endorsed or sponsored this report.

Alfred/Make Music
American Composers Forum
American Orff-Schulwerk Association
American School Band Directors Association
American String Teachers Association
Americans for the Arts
Artsy & Me
Association for Popular Music Education
Barbershop Harmony Society
Beacock Music
Chorus America
College Band Directors National Association
Conn Selmer
Connect Through Music
CMA Foundation
Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico
DeMoulin Brothers & Company
Drum Corps International
Education through Music
Educational Tours Inc.
Florida State University College of Music
Gia Publications, Inc.
Gordan Institute for Music Learning
Guitar & Accessories Marketing Association
Hal Leonard
Harmony Helper
Hawaii Youth Symphony
HBCU National Band and Orchestra Directors’ Consortium
The HBCU Recruitment Center, PSC
Hip Hop Association of Advancement and Education
Hip-Hop Education Center
Institute for Composer Diversity
Jazz at Lincoln Center
Jazz Education Network
JazzSLAM
JW Pepper
Kindermusik International
Lang Lang International Foundation
League of American Orchestras
Macie Publishing Company
Manhattan School of Music
Metropolitan Opera Guild
Music Publisher’s Association
Music and the Brain
Music Teachers National Association
Music For All
Music Inclusion Coalition
Music Together Worldwide
Music Travel Consultants
Music Will
National Association for Music Manufacturers
National Association for the Study and Performance of African American Music
National Concerts
National Federation of State High School Associations
National Museum of African American Music
National Music Council
New Harmony Line Music
Organization of American Kodaly Educators
Opera on Tap
Percussive Arts Society
Phi Beta Mu International Bandmasters Fraternity
Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia Fraternity of America
Prodigious Music Concepts, LLC
Quadrant Research
QuaverEd
Recording Academy
Rock and Soul Forever Foundation
Sankofa Songs
Save The Music Foundation
Servant Leadership Association for Music
Silkroad
Sphinx Organization
St. Louis Symphony Orchestra
Stage Accents
Strathmore
Sweet Adelines
Vanderbilt Blair School of Music
Winter Guard International (WGI)
Wurrly, LLC
Yamaha Corporation of America
References


### First-Year and Early-Career Music Teachers


Mentoring


Quality of Life


Recruitment, Retention, Attrition


A Blueprint for Strengthening the Music Teacher Profession


**Cultural Relevance**


**Resources/Funding**


