Music Education as a Strategy to Narrow the Achievement Gap: A Causal-Comparative Analysis of Band and Choir Enrollment and Academic Achievement of Low Socioeconomic Status Students

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Place: TLC – Boeing Auditorium

Abstract
There is a gap in the knowledge pertaining to socioeconomic status as a variable in academic achievement among those who enroll in band and/or choir in public high schools in America. Research has shown that students who engage in music study consistently show higher levels of academic achievement in other subjects compared to their non-music study peers. It is necessary to study those who typically do not perform at the same academic levels as their peers (low socioeconomic status (SES) students) and determine if the formal study of music alone can serve as a strategy to contribute to closing the achievement gap between low SES music study students and average/above average SES non-music study students.

Building on existing work in understanding causal comparative relationships with music study and achievement, three questions are asked; Do low-SES music students score higher than their low-SES non-music study peers? Do low-SES music students score higher than their average/above average-SES peers? Can music enrollment narrow the achievement gap between low SES students and their peers?

Statistical analysis was completed on a data set containing enrollment and assessment score information for a rural school district. The results indicate no significant direct correlation to higher achievement scores of low-SES music study students and as such no significant narrowing of the gap is seen. The research did confirm previous reports that music study students overall score significantly higher on core subject assessments. On this basis, it is recommended that further research is needed to understand if the reported scores are a result of music’s impact on learning or if students with more potential are attracted to music; as well as the reasons for the research findings.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
Keith Miller, Ph.D., Chairperson
Charles Granger, Ph.D.
Helene Sherman, Ed.D.