

## **A Review of Literature Pertaining to Student Dropout from Instrumental Music Programs**

Student dropout from instrumental music programs is a perpetual issue of concern for band directors, students, and parents. Hoffer's (1980) overview of enrollment trends in school music classes reveals that band directors were losing students to other courses and electives. Directors take time and parents invest money for a student's musical endeavors. These investments, along with the desire to keep as many young people as possible involved with music, make retention a goal in instrumental music programs. This goal has been so widespread that no fewer than four dozen researchers have undertaken studies of student retention in as many years.

This review is organized into five sections. The first section will present previous reviews of literature as a prelude to the current review. The following four sections will review research documents in chronologically ordered groupings. The delineation of these four periods is not arbitrary; rather, they begin with the more extensive, oft-cited works. After the first period, there is a definite tendency for the researchers of each period to draw primarily from the sources of the previous periods. In each section, highly regarded works will be reviewed first, followed by the other works of the period.

- 1.1951-63. The earliest work found was completed in 1951. Thirteen research documents from this period will be mentioned, with particular emphasis on Bergan (1957).
- 2.1964-73. The first years of this period saw four major studies: Casey (1964), Kruth (1964), Martignetti (1965), and Pruitt (1966). In all, eleven studies and one literature review from this period will be included.
- 3.1974-81. Anthony (1974) and Herendeen (1974, 1976) are major studies from this period, out of which nine works will be included.
- 4.1982-2001. Brown (1982, 1985) completed extensive studies commissioned by Gemeinhardt. These studies, along with the frequently cited works of Frakes (1984) and Solly (1986),

set the stage for the current period of research in this area. Thirteen studies in all will be included from this period, as will three literature reviews.

It is the goal of this review to be as complete as possible, without critical selection or extensive comment. Previous reviews—Duerkson (1972), Cannava (1986), Weerts (1992), and Humphreys, May, and Nelson (1992)—have been selective or representative rather than comprehensive. These reviews, as well as those found as within dissertations, also contain discrepancies in author spellings and dates. This review resolves those discrepancies. Finally, no published review contains the recent studies of Hartley (1991, 1996), Sandene (1994), Boyle, DeCarbo, and Jordan (1994), Brakel (1997), Durante (1998), or Hallam (1998). This review seeks to be comprehensive, accurate, and current.

The word “dropout” may strike the reader as a harsh label. While “attrition” or “retention” might seem to be appropriate words, the body of literature almost universally uses the term “dropout”. An interesting exception is Mawbey (1973), who uses the term “wastage,” unique, perhaps, to his native Britain. To be consistent, “dropout” shall be used as a label for students who drop out of instrumental study. The word “dropout” may also refer globally to the issue. “Dropout” may be an adjective, as in “dropout student.” If the compound word is separated into its components—drop out—it is considered a verb describing the act of dropping out.

### **Literature Reviews Pertaining to Dropout**

Previous attempts to review the body of literature are sparse and incomplete. Duerkson (1972) simply summarized six studies out of the twenty or more available. Cannava (1986) summarized and presented the research by Herendeen (1974, 1976), Anthony (1974), Hoffer (1980), and Brown (1982, 1985). He also included references to some other articles from topical sources. By the time Cannava wrote his article, at least three dozen studies relating to the issue had been performed. While there is nothing wrong with selecting a few studies to summarize for a topical source as these authors did, works such as these should not be considered rigorous reviews of the literature.

Weerts (1992) and Humphreys et al (1992) included dropout as an issue amongst larger topics. Weerts provided an overview of instrumental teaching research and its implications for the classroom. His segment on the dropout issue briefly reviewed Kruth (1964), Anthony (1974), Martignetti (1965), Solly (1986), Rawlins (1979), and Brown (1982, 1985). Humphreys et al (1992) focused on research pertaining to music ensembles. The dropout section summarized Klinedinst (1989), McCarthy (1980), Young (1971), Bailey (1975), Mawbey (1973), Frakes (1984), and Anthony (1974). In both of these reviews, studies were presented without editorial comment.

Most studies contain a review of literature. The completeness and accuracy of each range from Bailey's (1975), which is brief and contains errors in spelling and dates, to Solly's (1986) and Hartley's (1991) comprehensive reviews. To date, however, no review has endeavored to be as complete as this effort, which aims to serve as a "one-stop" resource for researchers who seek sources on this topic.

### **The First Period, 1951 to 1963**

Early research utilized surveys and questionnaires to identify causes of dropout. While many of these studies focused on perceptions of teachers and parents, Bergan (1957) studied students in five Michigan high schools. The responses of 148 dropouts and 147 non-dropouts were analyzed to ascertain reasons for discontinuing activity in instrumental music. He found that students tended to drop out when parents were not acquainted with the teacher and when fathers held a "laboring" occupation. After ninth grade graduation (the high schools were 10-12 facilities), students tended to drop out. Students also tended to drop out if they changed instruments or were classified as weaker players. Bergan recommended that the teacher make more of an effort to get to know parents and students and take more care when selecting students and aiding in instrument transfers. The completeness of his research and recommendations makes Bergan an oft-cited study by later researchers.

Kinnison (1951) provided the earliest study on the dropout issue. He surveyed 153 directors to explore attrition of beginning instrumentalists. Main reasons cited were schedule conflicts and athletic participation.

Heller (1954) questioned former students, principals, and band directors from two elementary schools and one junior high school in Baltimore. He concluded that greater intelligence and musical aptitude on the part of the student tended to improve retention. Dropout decreased when the teacher exhibited more proficiency on the student's instrument and greater efficiency in teaching.

Copeland (1956) conducted an experiment in which 100 students participated. Fifty were involved with instrumental music, while the other half (matched to the first in IQ, gender, and grade) were not. The *Kuder Preference Record*, *Seashore Measures of Musical Talent*, and *Bernreuter Personality Inventory* were administered to both groups. No significant differences were found, leading Copeland to the conclusion that tests cannot be used as predictors of success or continuation in instrumental music.

Klotman (1956) studied several school music programs. He found that cities with greater populations tended to experience more dropout and that dropout rates were lower in grades ten to twelve.

Morris (1957) surveyed school music programs to determine the average rate of dropout among first-year band students and to determine relationships between organizational factors and dropout rate. He found rates ranging from zero to 50 percent, with an average of 16 percent. Schools with pre-band instrument programs tended to have less dropout. Instructors with over ten years of experience tended to have more dropout.

Junior high students in Lawrence, Kansas were the focus of a study by Sobieski (1957), who confirmed that higher intelligence and musical aptitude were indicators of likely continuation. Factors found to have no effect on dropout included home practice conditions, class versus private instruction, ownership of the instrument, and quality and/or condition of the

instrument. Reasons for dropout cited by the students included loss of interest, participation in other activities, schedule conflicts, trouble with teachers, and parents who urged students to quit.

Many of these findings were echoed in the work of Duerkson and Boye (1959), who studied junior high students in Wichita, Kansas. The students cited: schedule, work, and counseling conflicts; conflict with vocal music or other school and outside activities; loss of interest or non-ownership of instrument studied; and difficulties with the instructor. Inadequate communication between director, students, and parents was also noted as a concern.

Schweitzer (1960) administered questionnaires and interviews to music supervisors and dropouts. He found that most students who dropped out did so in earlier years of participation and that dropouts tended to be less concerned with individual skill development away from the performing group. Dropouts gave varied reasons for withdrawal that were consistent with earlier research: conflict with work or other activities, schedule difficulties, and dislike of the teacher. Schweitzer recommended that more opportunities for advanced study be provided and that schedule difficulties be resolved with communication and cooperation. He also urged music educators to become educated in the basics of human relationships and develop sensitivity to students and their interests.

Warren (1961) focused his study on 667 academically talented students who withdrew from high school band programs in Florida, partially in response to the widely held notion that academically talented students tended to remain in band. He found that students in this population were affected negatively by demands of college preparatory course work and entrance requirements, lack of diversity of instruction in most music courses, conflicts with other activities, and the personality and/or classroom management practices of the teacher.

Jacobsen (1962) also found that most high school students who discontinued band upon entrance into high school were overwhelmed by the “array of subjects that are required, or that [the students] would like to explore.”

It is typical for a study which examines the dropout issue from more than one perspective, including students, teachers, parents, music dealers, and administrators, to reveal

differences in perceptions. Tate (1962) studied 138 sixth-grade students in two Omaha schools to determine rates and reasons for dropout. She found that 24% of students discontinued band; interviews with those students indicated four reasons: lack of interest, lack of time, health, and lack of ability. However, teachers felt that limited contact time contributed to dropout because of the lack of opportunity to motivate students.

Boye (1964) studied 173 Wichita students who failed to return to band in the tenth grade. Boye surveyed both students and parents to identify reasons for dropout. Lack of time, desire to switch to vocal music, and scheduling concerns were cited by both students and parents as the primary reasons for dropout. Students also cited loss of interest, trouble with the instrument, and not liking the instructor. Parents cited conflicts with sports and art, lack of interest, and financial difficulties. Parents of children who dropped out in elementary school cited the major cause as instructor-centered; 35 percent of parents said their child disliked the instructor, 41 percent perceived a lack of caring from the instructor, and 26.5 percent felt the instructor did not approach students at their level of understanding.

### **The Second Period, 1964 to 1973**

Five studies were completed in the first three years of this period. Four of them have been cited frequently in subsequent work and are regarded as some of the most substantial early research on this topic. Kruth (1964) selected the public schools of Oakland because of their long history of community and administrative support. The study was designed to measure the degree, nature, and causes of dropout. Kruth developed questionnaires for dropout students, band students, some members of the general student body, and band directors. Significant findings included:

- 31.5% of dropout occurred between ninth and tenth grade.
- Students with lower IQ scores were more likely to drop out.
- More girls than boys dropped instrumental music.
- Teacher's capability in teaching and counseling was reflected in dropout.
- Father's occupation was a factor; children of skilled workers exhibited more dropout.

- Dropouts tended to be more involved in non-music extracurricular activities.
- Dropouts indicated difficulty in scheduling band in high school.
- Lack of teacher communication with parents was evident.

Kruth's primary recommendations for the practitioner included emphasis on student-parent relationships, improving effectiveness of teaching and counseling, and special attention to the academically talented.

Casey (1964) studied the instrumental dropout problem in Moline, Illinois. He studied dropouts and active students in grades five through twelve. Reasons for dropout were: loss of student interest; scheduling conflicts and the inability to keep up; inability to achieve the level of performance necessary for membership in performance organizations; and dislike for the teacher. Casey also found that dropout occurred most frequently in eighth or ninth grade and there was little difference in IQ scores or grade point averages between dropouts and non-dropouts. Further, most dropouts did not start music because of interest, but rather teacher, peer, and/or parental pressure. This study is notable for the broad range of age groups studied and for the emphasis on student points of view.

Martignetti (1965) studied three elementary programs in Bergen County, New Jersey using a combination of questionnaires and interviews. He used questionnaires with elementary music educators in Bergen County and interviewed dropout elementary students and their parents. He sought to identify factors leading to dropout, with a special interest in parental influences and attitudes. Martignetti reported that teachers perceived the primary cause of elementary student dropout was loss of interest due to parental indifference. Other causes perceived by directors included lack of perseverance, lack of ability, and conflicts with multiple activities. When interviewing children, Martignetti found that about two-thirds had difficulty playing their chosen instrument. Another major reason was lack of time to practice due to involvement in other activities. Other reasons given were difficulty keeping up in academic subjects and parental dislike of the instrument. Parental perceptions differed from the reasons given by their children. The principal cause of dropout according to the parents was lack of

sufficient time to practice. Other major reasons given by parents were instrument difficulty and inability to keep up academically. Martignetti pointed to the discrepancy in the three groups as an indicator that the teacher needed to ensure regular communication with the home and the parents needed to take a more active interest in the students' progress.

Pruitt (1966) performed a yearlong study of withdrawal from the beginning instrumental program in Greenville County, South Carolina. Enrollment at the start of the study numbered 799, 286 of whom dropped out during the year. Pruitt found that the number of students and length of class periods were not factors in dropout, but the number of class meetings held per week was a significant factor. Instrumental music programs that met daily had less attrition than the programs that met two to three times per week. He also found greater dropout among males than females, and noted that aptitude test scores were a good predictor of retention. While communication between parents and director was not found to be a factor, dropout decreased with improved communication between director and students. A nice feature of this dissertation is the relatively complete review of previous surveys.

Lax (1966) researched the factors influencing dropout in the Detroit schools. Loss of interest due to academic pressure and extra activities was found to be the major cause of dropout. He also found that scheduling conflicts in the upper grades accounted for some attrition.

Wolfe (1969) investigated the relationship between beginning grade level and dropout in the Cincinnati public schools. Students who began instrumental music at or above the seventh-grade level were more apt to continue band than those who began earlier. Wolfe also determined that most dropout occurred within the first two years of study and at transition points (elementary to junior high, junior high to high school).

Farruggia (1969) investigated dropout in four high schools of varying size in California. He sought distinctions in rates and reasons for dropout in small schools versus large schools. Questionnaires were used to determine socioeconomic status, attitude toward band, and feelings about parents, teachers, and peers in relation to the band experience. He found no difference in reasons for dropout between the schools, though dropout was more severe in the small school

than in the large school. He did find some predictors of dropout: the need for college preparation courses, lack of exposure to music in the home, lack of communication between parents and director, peer pressure to quit, lack of parental pressure to stay involved, personality of the director, lack of frequent performance opportunities, lack of enjoyment of performance, and the need to maintain an after-school job.

Mercer (1970) wrote a book after traveling the country interviewing 222 band directors. While Mercer's work is exhaustive and rigorous, it is presented in an accessible manner. The book covered many topics of practical relevance to band directors and included a chapter on dropout. In this chapter, Mercer presented several findings from his travels. Directors reported losing students for the following reasons:

- Scheduling conflicts with college preparatory classes.
- Interference with academic study time.
- Perception that band was too time-consuming.
- Loss of interest.
- Lack of parental support, particularly when the band program was too time-intensive.
- Interference with athletic activities.
- Lack of student initiative to practice.

Directors also offered several suggestions, which included group incentives such as accomplishments and recognition for parade participation and high ratings. Individual incentives such as honors and awards for personal achievement or contributions to the program could be beneficial. The least tangible but most helpful motivator identified was that of quality interpersonal relationships between students and directors.

Young (1971) was more concerned with predicting achievement than dropout, but withdrawal was examined as a concomitant set of findings in his study. Tests of aptitude and intelligence were administered to find predictors of success in instrumental music. After a seven-month study of 709 elementary students in suburban Chicago, Young found that intelligence was

not a factor in determining dropout, but low scores in the areas of academic achievement and rhythmic aptitude indicated a greater propensity toward withdrawal.

Jensen (1972) administered a questionnaire to junior and senior high school students to determine whether or not personality type played a role in a student's decision to drop out. He also explored student-declared reasons for not continuing in band. He found no difference in personality type and concluded from student responses that dropout was not predictable, as a wide variety of factors contributed to dropout. Mawbey (1973) studied 448 students of ages 7 to 15 who started on wind and string instruments in an unspecified school system. His hypothesis that students drop out because they are not carefully selected was supported by his research. His interest seemed limited to ensuring as close to an ideal performance group as possible, without regard to the benefits a student might draw from participation. He stated that dropouts "[demonstrate] their unsuitability by failing to continue" and that rather than working to keep students involved, the director should incorporate "a much more rigorous process of initial selection."

### **The Third Period, 1974 to 1981**

Anthony's (1974) work is referred to frequently in subsequent research and is regarded as one of the better designed studies available on dropout in large high schools. He studied dropout in Iowa public schools in districts with at least 10,000 students by selecting random samples of active and formerly active students from seven school districts and evaluating decisions to continue or discontinue band. Students who dropped out of band identified several factors which influenced their decision: performance enjoyment, enjoyment of the music performed, attitude toward memorizing music for performance, scheduling practices, self-assessment of musical ability, sources of motivation, and the attitude of the director toward students and toward the band program. Although the dropouts indicated the influence of these factors in their decision to discontinue in the program, many of the students who remained in the program expressed similar sentiments in all of these areas except for one: the student's perception of the band director's attitude toward students. Anthony concluded that few factors could be regarded as universal

causes of dropout, indicating the difficulty in determining an individual student's reasons for not continuing in a program. His recommendations for practitioners included: make more of an effort to treat students fairly, provide a greater variety of activities, and work closely with school personnel to construct a schedule which minimizes conflicts. He also recommended replication of his study in smaller schools, as he believed that larger schools might have different causes of dropout than smaller schools.

A pair of studies that have also been influential in this area of research are Herendeen's surveys (1974, 1976), which were commissioned by the American School Band Directors Association. The first focused on elementary band dropouts and the second examined the impact of the first study and touched on the problem at other grade levels. Herendeen's (1974) first study compiled many statistics about elementary band programs, focusing on dropout problems. Some of the more significant observations include:

- Dropout rates were lower for students who started in later grades.
- Programs where the band met more frequently had less dropout.
- Instrument classes along with full group instruction effectively retained students.
- Adequate student testing before instrument assignment tended to ensure retention.
- The perception that academic progress suffered due to pullout lessons may have hurt retention.
- Mursell's theory that frequency of instruction is more valuable than total time of instruction was supported by the study; more frequent instruction resulted in less dropout.
- Treating the students of lesser ability with greater sensitivity was important, as children who feel inadequate compared to their peers tended to leave the program.
- Frequent performance opportunities tended to improve student enthusiasm.

The article noted that ASBDA members had fewer dropout problems than non-members, suggesting that experienced directors have developed the skills necessary to keep student interest high. Herendeen's (1976) second study sought director-proven methods of correcting dropout problems and delved into the issue of high school retention. Directors emphasized the need to

provide extra help to slow learners. Opinions varied on the competitive “challenge” system of chair placement; many students were motivated by this system, while lower-ability students are not helped by this approach. Frequent performances build enthusiasm for the program. There was widespread expression that band must be made more interesting, more creative, and more fun. Parent-teacher communication can also prevent trouble. Among older students, a preferred method of encouraging retention was counseling and conferences with individuals and groups of students. Directors at the upper levels also pointed out that focusing on the “big picture” and constantly improving the program took care of dropout problems. This study also touched on the timing of student dropouts. The most dropout occurred at the end of the instrument rental period and at the end of seventh grade. Most secondary level directors indicated that personality clashes between director and student led to dropout. Another major cause cited was the demand on students’ time. Also, directors felt that negative peer pressure resulted in some dropout problems. This second study was broad in scope, but many of the recommendations and observations focused on the paramount importance of open communication and good relationships between directors, parents, and students.

Henson (1974) investigated dropouts from Atlanta and Fulton County schools in Georgia and found primary reasons to be lack of interest, moving from school to school, and scheduling conflicts.

Bailey (1975) researched the relationship between scores on achievement tests, academic achievement tests, IQ, and success in instrumental music for sixth grade students in Prince William County, Virginia. He also compared scores between dropouts and continuing students. He found a significant relationship between high test scores and the propensity of students to remain in band. He also determined that higher IQ students were more likely to begin in the program.

Groeling (1975) sought to determine whether a beginning instrumental student taught in a discovery setting differed in any way from one taught in a skill-oriented class lesson. The study involved 22 students randomly assigned to control and experimental groups. While the

development of abilities was equivalent at the end of twelve weeks, the students in the control group dropped out at a rate of 30 percent as opposed to no dropout in the experimental group and showed declining interest over the course, while the experimental group displayed a much higher level of enthusiasm.

Silliman (1977) investigated enrollment and retention among fifth and sixth grade students in Frederick County, Maryland. He found that when students started instrument study in sixth grade rather than fifth, they tended not to drop out.

Rawlins (1979) interviewed students, teachers, and administrators in the public schools of Lincoln, Nebraska and found that scheduling conflicts were the main reason for withdrawal, along with conflict with the teacher, low confidence in musical ability, peer pressure, expense, parental pressure, and health problems.

In a study by McCarthy (1980), fifth and sixth grade band students from an unspecified urban school system were studied to find relationships between individual instruction, group instruction, performance tests, demographic variable, and attrition. McCarthy noted that race, gender, and teacher personality were not factors in predicting dropout. Further, individualized versus group instruction had no predictive effect on retention. Students who continued had higher test scores than students who dropped out.

#### **The Fourth Period, 1982 to 1998**

The Gemeinhardt Company commissioned studies by Brown (1982, 1985) to examine issues related to recruitment and retention of band students. While the first of these studies dealt primarily with the issue of student recruitment, the second dealt with student retention. Both studies involved focus groups, surveys, and interviews with band directors, administrators, parents, students, and music dealers.

The first study (Brown, 1982) found that teachers, students, and parents often have differing views on the major problems in band programs. The only area in which the three groups had significant agreement was scheduling conflicts with other courses and activities. Music dealers appeared to be the most concerned about the state of band programs, particularly at the

elementary level. Recommendations of this report focused on issues of better communication concerning awareness of the rental program, awareness of the band program, better perception of the program, and greater appreciation for the band program. In his second study, Brown (1995) found that the interest groups had different perceptions on dropout. Music dealers were concerned about directors and their enthusiasm for the job as well as a lack of individual attention for students. Directors believed that conflicting activities were a major contributing factor. Students and parents cited fear of failure and undue time commitment as the main reasons for dropout. This second report made three specific recommendations for reducing dropout: minimize scheduling conflicts between band and other classes; present a better perception of the band program; decrease fear of failure on the part of the students. Other important factors mentioned included the following: enthusiasm of the director, effective communication among all parties, frequent rehearsals, opportunities for beginners to perform, extra help for slow students, and pride in the program.

The American School Band Directors Association also commissioned a study (Gerheart, et al, 1984) dealing with recruitment and retention at the beginning band level. In this survey of directors, support was found for the use of awards, challenges, and contests to motivate and retain students. Further, the study group recommended that elementary instrumental programs begin in the fifth grade and meet every day for 40 minutes, with two public performances per year for these groups.

Frakes (1984) conducted a study using music and academic test scores and student-expressed opinions to develop profiles differentiating middle school band participants, band dropouts, and nonparticipants. The characteristics of participants included the following: academically able, musically proficient, liked and respect music teachers, perceived personal interest or music teachers, enjoyed strong family support, and had peers who were participants. Characteristics of dropouts included the following: Less musically skilled than participants, lower academic achievement than participants, enjoyed music, liked music teachers, lacked

family support, doubted their musical abilities, believed they did not contribute to a performing group. From these profiles, Frakes was able to draw the following implications:

- The years up to seventh grade were critical for a student's decision-making process.
- Students who chose to continue music study had a positive self-perception.
- The role of general music teachers in influencing this process was critical.
- Junior high music teachers must be aware of these profiles and self-concept concerns.
- Music classes at all levels should be "exciting, challenging, and satisfying."

Solly (1986) examined factors influencing dropout at all grade levels (four through twelve) to find ways to reduce attrition by examining dropouts in the Cherry Hill, New Jersey public schools. She used questionnaires to survey dropout students, students who stayed in the program, and parents of dropout students. Solly discovered three major reasons for dropout in this district. First, most students dropped out because they lost interest in the program. Second, most students were never contacted and urged to continue study by secondary level instructors while they were at lower levels, suggesting that active recruitment would have improved retention. Third, junior high school students and parents cited before-school rehearsals as a major problem due to lack of transportation.

Klinedinst (1989, 1991) studied 205 beginning band students from Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania to examine the ability of eleven selected variables to predict student musical achievement and retention. While musical performance achievement was best predicted by scholastic ability, retention was best predicted by socioeconomic status, positive self-concept of musical ability, and scholastic ability. Klinedinst recommended that recruitment efforts focus on students of high scholastic ability and that instructors focus on methods that build positive self-concept of musical ability.

Hartley (1991, 1996) researched 2,249 elementary, middle, and junior high school students from Indiana, Ohio, and Virginia to find a difference in seventh grade enrollment and retention between schools that started in fifth grade and those that began in sixth grade. While

more attrition occurred in situations with a fifth grade start, there were smaller enrollments in sixth grade beginning programs, resulting in generally similar seventh grade enrollment patterns.

The National Association of Music Merchants (1991) published the results of a survey of parents of dropouts. Major causes indicated were students losing interest, conflict with the teacher, and stronger outside interests. Parents elaborated on the reasons for lost interest, which included missed and canceled lessons, insufficient contact time, and poor facilities. Prophylactic measures suggested by the researchers included better communication between parents and teachers and between dealers and parents. This suggestion was supported by the fact that most parents of dropouts never received a progress report from teachers or personal follow-up from the dealers.

Sandene (1994) studied 110 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders to determine whether certain personality variables could predict dropout. While dropout students had a greater external locus of control, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups.

Boyle, DeCarbo, and Jordan (1994) surveyed 50 Florida band directors to determine their perceptions of dropout causes. The most frequently cited reason was “lack of commitment to work.” Other reasons frequently mentioned included loss of interest, scheduling conflicts, lack of parental support, and conflicts with athletic activities.

Brakel (1997) examined the relationships between teaching style, school size, band size, percentage of school population enrolled in band, the teacher’s years of experience, the teacher’s years in current school, gender of the teacher, and student dropout. Teaching style, teacher characteristics, and school/program characteristics were also examined. Teaching style had a negative effect on student retention.

In a study of 109 string students ages 7 to 16, Hallam (1998) sought predictors of achievement and dropout. In addition to the positive effect of academic strength on retention, she found attitudinal factors as well; students who did not intend to practice or did not enjoy practice tended to drop out. While the influence of family and friends was not significant, the attitude and influence of the teacher did have an effect. In her discussion of the project, Hallam stated:

The findings from this study suggest that the factors contributing to attainment and persistence in playing a musical instrument are complex and probably interact with each other. Univariate models, as in other areas of psychological research, are not good predictors of either achievement or dropout and researchers need to develop appropriate multivariate models with greater explanatory value.

Durante (1998) developed and is currently testing such a model, which is based on variables previously researched. At the end of his review of the literature, he stated:

No single factor accounts for differences in band enrollment. An individual student's election or rejection of participation in band class appears to be a result of a combination of ... influences identified in this review of literature. The failure of one these items to continue to play a part in the life of the student and the subsequent failure to continue with a band program is of prime interest ... Do the theories and assumptions described in the literature contribute to a working model? The current investigation attempted to assemble a working model based on the factors that caused a student to dropout as cited in the literature. The direct application of the working model is focused toward band dropout.

Durante's model combines student background characteristics, selected school characteristics, and personal attributes.

### **Conclusion**

The position of Durante and Hallam, that the body of research in this area fails to point to easily generalized causes of dropout, is an accurate one. Of the forty-six studies in this area, not one represents a replication of previous work. While one could compile a "laundry list" of all identified causes of dropout, it is more useful for this review to mention generalizations that can be drawn.

Researchers explored the dropout issue by studying and/or surveying one or more of the following groups: students, directors, parents, music dealers, and administrators. When more than one of these groups was examined, the researcher generally found disparate responses among groups, leading to the conclusion that perceptions differed among groups and that communication between the parents, the student, and the director required improvement. Studies that focused on reasons given by students and parents identify undesirable attitude, lack of caring, and/or dislike of the director as major causes of dropout. However, studies that focused

on director responses point rather to the lack of student prioritization, scheduling conflicts, or other external forces. In the future, replication of previous work and the investigation of the discrepancy between student- and director-cited causes would make valuable contributions to the literature.

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