Attitudes and Perspectives of Pre-College Guitar Students:

A Study to Help Explain Difficulty with Note-Reading in Class Guitar

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examined attitudes and perspectives of classroom guitar students toward the reading of staff notation in music. The purpose of this qualitative research was to reveal these perceptions in the student's own words, and compare them to those of orchestra and band students of comparable experience. Forty-seven students from four suburban middle and high schools on the east coast were selected through purposeful sampling techniques. Research instruments included a Musical Background Questionnaire and a thirty-five question Student Survey. Follow-up interviews were conducted with students to clarify or expound upon collected data. Guitar, orchestra, and band teachers were interviewed in order to provide their perspectives on the issues discussed. The Student Survey featured a five-point Likert-type scale, which measured how much students agreed or disagreed with various statements pertaining to their feelings about music, note-reading, or their class at school. Collected data were coded and used to calculate mean scores, standard deviations, and percentages of students in agreement or disagreement with each statement. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed into a word processing document for analysis. The study found that while a variety of perspectives exist within a typical guitar class, some students do not find note-reading to be necessary for the types of music they desire to learn. Other findings included a perceived lack of relevance toward the classical elements of the guitar programs in the schools, a lack of educational

consistency between classroom curricula and private lesson objectives, and the general description of the struggle some guitarists experience with staff notation. Implications of the collected data were discussed, along with recommendations for better engaging these students.

DEDICATION

To my parents, Allan and Marie Ward, whose
encouragement and support have always been a source
of inspiration for my endeavors.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Observations from the Music Hallway

In the middle of my planning period at a suburban secondary school of approximately 3000 students, I walked from a teacher workroom to the main office to check my mail, and then continued toward the music wing to work at my classroom desk. As I made my way down a long corridor, past the auditorium and a theater class, I could already hear the cacophonous mixture of sound resulting from the band, chorus, orchestra, and guitar classes permeating the hallway. The first music class I passed was in the chorus room to my left. I was able to tell from the hallway that the chorus was sight-reading exercises, prepared by their director, who was displaying hand symbols to accompany each syllable they were using for the notes.

Farther down the hall, to my right, I heard the band director exclaim, "Alright, exercise nine, let's go!" I stopped for a moment to observe the beginning band students read material they had not prepared, and I thought that (aside from their tone) they played well and appeared to navigate the notes and rhythms with accuracy. I continued walking and noticed the orchestra class diligently working on music, not as a group but as individuals. After a short time, I heard the orchestra director declare, "Time is up!" On their teacher's cue, the orchestra began to play the excerpt, which sounded difficult to me but was fairly clear with a good

balance of volume across the group. I heard the director say: "No, no, no. We need to shape that line better. If you want to crescendo into measure forty-two, you need to start soft enough that you have room to increase your sound."

The room to the left of the orchestra is home to my guitar classes. The popular program is large enough (seven sections) to employ me as a full-time instructor and also supplements the workload of both the band and choral directors, who each instruct one beginning guitar class. I walked into the guitar room and sat down to work on lesson plans while one of the other guitar instructors continued his teaching. "Hey, where do you play F-sharp?" asked one student to his neighbor. Like the chorus and band, the guitar students were reading exercises, in standard notation, out of a method book.

With my observations of the other music classes fresh in my mind, I looked around the room as they were playing. I estimated that approximately one third of the class appeared to be reading and playing the assignment successfully, while another third looked like they had started to read the exercise with good intentions but, for various reasons, were unable to complete the activity. Based on experiences with my own students, I speculated that some of the mistakes they made were because of simple errors in rhythm and some were because of difficulties in placing fingers on the guitar while looking at the music. Some students in this

group, however, simply did not know where to find all of the notes on the fingerboard or on the staff.

The last third of the class appeared to not be engaged in the task at all. Two boys whispered to each other and laughed while several others seemed preoccupied, staring off into space. A few students held their guitars, but positioned them behind music stands so that the teacher could not see that their hands were not actually playing anything at all. One could argue that this is the fault of the teacher, from his mismanagement of the classroom. However, I know that this scenario, or variations of it, exists sometimes in my own classes as well, and also in the rooms of almost every other beginning guitar teacher in my district (based on anecdotal information from past conversations with colleagues).

It occurred to me that many of the students that have difficulty with note-reading in beginning guitar go on to have success on the instrument, and eventually participate in my upper level guitar ensembles, which read standard notation almost 100% of the time. Why does it seem so much more difficult for guitar students? The chorus and beginning band classes appeared to have fewer students struggling when they were sight-reading. The lower level orchestra students all appeared to be so engaged in their assignment, and had such little trouble reading notes that their teacher was able to focus on shaping the music rather than spend time correcting reading errors. I asked myself: "Are guitar students really that much different?" Why does it seem that the guitar class, as a whole, can't enjoy

the same success in note-reading that the other music classes enjoy? Though the other music classes surely have students who struggle as well, and my observations were only momentary, my impression on that day was that there are clear differences in the overall attitudes that the chorus, band, and orchestra students seemed to have toward note-reading, which are not displayed by all guitarists.

Purpose of the Study

The scenario presented above prompted me to want to learn more about reasons why guitar students might struggle more with note-reading than students of other instrumental ensembles. In conducting this research, no attempt was made to try to "remedy" the situation described above for teachers, nor is the intent to advocate for or against any teaching technique, or to argue against or in favor of reading standard notation in guitar education. The purpose of this study was to better understand the various attitudes and perspectives that students have, particularly toward reading musical staff notation, when they enter into beginning guitar instruction, and how those attitudes might impact their learning experience. By investigating the attitudes of young guitarists, and comparing them with the perspectives of orchestra and band students of comparable experience, I was able to arrive at findings that are relevant to music educators at the secondary level. Surveys and interviews were conducted to gather data and give students and teachers the ability to lend their own voices and opinions to the research.

The guiding research questions for this study helped me to generate survey and interview questions, and facilitated organization of the collected data. A discussion of the findings, and an attempt to address the following research questions are found in Chapter 6:

1. How do beginning guitar students perceive the need for note-reading? Is this perception different among orchestra or band students?

2. Do students of guitar, orchestra, and band have particularly positive or negative attitudes toward note-reading?

3. Do students of these various music groups perceive their classroom activities to be relevant to what they set out to accomplish in music?

4. Is there educational consistency in various forms of guitar instruction? How do teaching practices of private instructors differ from the school instructor in regards to music reading and other aspects of music?

5. Does the typical beginning guitar student struggle as much as orchestra and band students with note-reading in lower level classes?

6. How can this collected information enhance a music educator's approach to their classroom teaching?

Need for the Study

While there is much research on the social aspects of the music classroom, and on popular music, learning styles, music reading, and classroom guitar programs, I could find no study or article that specifically investigates attitudes of guitar students toward reading music at the secondary school level. Furthermore, while many publications over the years have promoted or discussed having the guitar in music classrooms, no research has been found that directly compares the perspectives of guitar students to those of orchestra and band students. Research *has* been published, however, on the individual components that contribute to the described problem, and there are many articles and dissertations about problems in sight-reading, effects of attitude and motivation on student achievement, and social case studies of musicians (including guitarists). Knowledge of student perspectives on classroom music curricula can be beneficial to music educators, and perhaps inspire solutions on how to address these attitudes in the classroom.

Delimitations of the Study

This study is limited in that it presents attitudes and perspectives of students and teachers in four particular high schools and secondary schools at a specific time. Findings in this study may not necessarily be generalized to all music classes in all settings. However, themes identified in this research were present in subgroups from each school. The study is also limited since it makes no attempt to measure student achievement in

music reading beyond a survey response and verbal self-assessment, provided by the students. Since the focus of the study remained on the presentation of participant perspectives, there is also no emphasis on establishing any academic profile of the musicians, such as comparisons of grade point average or other measurements of aptitude.

It is important to consider the potential age discrepancy between some students in this study. There is an overlap in grade level between guitarists and non-guitarists; all orchestra and band students in this study were in seventh or eighth grade, while grade level for guitar students ranged from eighth to tenth grade. This discrepancy could partially account for a difference in learning speed for some students. Despite this age difference, all of the guitar students participating in the study were new to note-reading, and were experiencing their first structured music class in a school environment. Care was taken in selecting orchestra and band students with a comparable lack of experience. Reasons for the selection of students in these age groups are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

It is also necessary to point out that the three subgroups involved in this research have very different cultures and emphases. Through the survey and interview questions and data, many references were made to "alternative forms" of learning music for the guitar, and discussions on instrument roles are presented. Though the intention of this information was to show that guitar students are faced with many varieties of

performance and learning possibilities, it should be made clear that orchestra and band students typically do not have comparable elements in their field. An example of this is a guitarist who may only be interested in playing chord songs, and only reads charts and chord symbols. While it is applicable to the study to point out that this student gravitates toward learning music in this manner, there will be a natural discrepancy in survey results that revolve around the topic of alternative forms of written music, since non-guitarists do not normally use such methods.

Band and orchestra students also play instruments that fill fewer roles in music compared to the guitar. Unlike instruments in the non-guitar classes, the guitar can be seen as a solo instrument or an accompaniment instrument. This certainly accounts for some differences in perspective, especially those that involve classroom musical content. Most non-guitarists probably see their role in the class as being one part of a larger group, while guitarists may join classes with less of an ensemble perspective.

An important aspect of qualitative research is clarifying researcher bias and making explicit the assumptions made by the investigator (Creswell 2007, 207). This study is certainly affected by my own experiences as a guitarist and as a music educator. Like other musicians, I have personal opinions on music, notation, curriculum, and perspectives on student achievement and ability. However, my extensive experience in

both classical guitar education and the world of popular music puts me in an advantageous position to derive meaning out of the data collected.

Attempts were made to ensure objectivity during data collection, such as the use of agree-disagree responses to statements, rather than asking what may be perceived as "leading" questions. The survey statements take a stance on a topic out of necessity, so that the students may decide if they agree or disagree. I made an effort to not always phrase the statements in a way that favored my own expectation or opinion. An example of this was the statement "I personally enjoy listening to classical guitar music outside of school." Though I fully expected the majority of students to disagree with this statement, I phrased it in a manner that opposed my expectation. By doing this irregularly throughout the sequence of statements, I hoped that a student taking the survey would be less likely to feel that the items on the survey were skewed toward one perspective or the other. Finally, I included contrasting perspectives whenever found in the data, to depict the multiple dimensions present in the data, rather than narrowing my focus to the majority opinion (Bogdan and Biklen 1992, 33).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Music in the classroom at the secondary level is at the core of much literature and research. Many studies and articles have investigated nuances of teaching and learning music, the attitudes and motivation of music students, reported practice habits, acquisition of music reading skills, descriptions of students through case studies, revelations of what music means to people, and comparisons of various musicians, music groups, genres, methods, repertoire, and much more. No existing literature was discovered that directly addressed the purpose of this study; however, sources that focused around singular components of the investigation were consulted. This literature review is organized into three sections, each discussing the purpose and/or findings of several resources within a particular topic. These component topics are: *Music Classes* (comparisons of, or teaching environments in Orchestra, Band, or Guitar), *Music Literacy*, and *Attitude and Motivation*.

Music Classes

Orchestra and Band

Two studies that directly relate to this research are those conducted by Stofko (2002) and Adderley, Kennedy, and Berz (2003). Both authors investigated the social aspects and characteristics of music groups in public schools. Stofko draws comparisons between a beginning string class and the experiences of a beginning band, while Adderley, Kennedy, and

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Berz depict the atmosphere and characteristics of high school music groups and discuss what it meant to the students it engaged. Stofko's study traced activities of an orchestra and band class over the course of an entire school year. She wrote about observations of both students and teachers to illustrate the similarities and differences between the two types of ensembles. The study found that both ensembles were structured similarly, with consistent techniques and objectives. Personality differences were noted in descriptions of the instructors. Instrument choice, timbre preference, and reasons for participation were investigated among students. Stofko presented vignettes of the orchestra and band in "beginning of the year, mid-year, late year, and final concert" time frames. One difference between the two groups in the study was a predominance of gender stereotyping in band, related to choice of instruments. Stofko also notes greater emphasis on tuning and technical correctness in orchestra, and the uniquely heterogeneous nature of working with multiple families of instruments in a band setting.

Adderley, Kennedy, and Berz explored music in the schools as a subculture, the "meaning and value that music ensembles engender for their participants," and the general social climate of school music classrooms. The researchers used structured interviews with sixty high school orchestra, band, and chorus students, and conducted observations of their music classrooms. In addition to establishing the meaning of music class to the students and discussing their social climates, the

investigators focused on student motivations to join the group, and the perception of the group by both participants and outside observers. The study highlights the importance of the social aspect of membership in a music ensemble, and implies that students put a great amount of emphasis on the identity and sense of place that their music group gives them.

The following two researchers conducted studies that highlighted facets of beginning string education, which were important to my study when drawing comparisons to beginning instruction in other areas of music. Schulte (2004) questioned a panel of string experts to determine which components and foundational skills are essential for a first-year, elementary-level string class to be successful. Questions related to preferences in class size, grouping, age, class frequency, class length, method books, and perspectives on whether to include performance in the first year. Among other findings, some results indicate that classes should meet two to three times a week for forty-five minutes, preferably at a community music school rather than a commercial music store. Class sizes should be smaller than twenty-five, with students ideally starting no earlier than five years of age.

Lee (2007) investigated and compared the "non-traditional" methods of Shinichi Suzuki and Irene Sharp for cello instruction. In this mixed-methods study, Lee describes the Suzuki approach as emphasizing repetition, rote learning as opposed to immediate note-reading, group playing, teacher modeling, and parental engagement. Lee states that this

method greatly contrasts the approach by Sharp, explaining that she stresses movement, body mechanics, injury prevention, early note-reading, modeling on the *student's* instrument, less repetition of repertoire, and video recording of lessons. The study ultimately determines that while the two methods for instruction differ in their approaches, they are comparable in emphasizing that prominent characteristics of a good childhood music education include a foundation in technique and tone production, listening skills, and parental involvement.

Guitar

Similar to Dr. Lee's study on cello methods, Griffin (1989) explored the possibility of applying the teachings of Japanese violinist Shinichi Suzuki to guitar instruction. In his research publication, Griffin cites examples of guitar instructors that were successful in implementing this method (William Kossler and Frank Longay), and offers suggestions for how to build reading skills and musical literacy in Suzuki guitar students based on the work of Edwin Gordon and Stanley Schleuter. Griffin promotes the adaptation of elements of Suzuki's approach, including emphasis on small group instruction, listening to recordings of repertoire, fostering significant parental involvement in the lessons, and postponement of note-reading in favor of an initial technical focus. Griffin specifically examined the Suzuki teaching practices of Frank Longay, through observations of his goals, objectives, and first-hand accounts of

private lessons for several young students. In his discussion of students acquiring music literacy, Griffin echoes the arguments of other experts, stating that it is difficult for music students to learn to read notes at the same time they are learning to play their instruments, just like it would be difficult for a child "to learn to read and write at the same time they are learning to talk." Fridley (1993) also conducted a study with a focus on pedagogical reading methods in which he compared typical note-reading practices of standard guitar method books to the use of Kodaly's method of a tonal learning sequence with fifth and sixth grade students. He used a "listening test, attitude scales, and a student profile," and found that the Kodaly method works equally as well as the methods found in other books.

Though classroom guitar had been suggested as a progressive course offering in music in prior decades, Bartel (1990), Gustafsson (1996), and Schmid, Marsters, and Shull (1998) all contributed important articles on how to approach guitar instruction in the classroom throughout the 1990s. These articles are primarily geared toward teachers of other areas in music, such as band, orchestra, or chorus, who may want to use the guitar to reach music students in a different manner. Guitar classes were also included in school programs to help engage students in music who otherwise would not choose the traditional classes as electives, or supplement the course offerings in their department. Many of the teachers that began guitar programs at that time were in need of resources, teaching material, and curricular advice to run their courses effectively.

Bartel (1990) extols classroom guitar for its "cultural appeal," and "stylistic adaptability." He goes on to describe several approaches to teaching guitar in the classroom, including what he referred to as Hum and Strum, Guitar Orchestra, Rock Band, Jazz Ensemble, Classical Guitar Solo, and Multifaceted. Some of these approaches to guitar curriculum are based in popular or folk styles, with informal learning techniques. Others, such as the Guitar Orchestra, are described as mirroring the structure of the traditional orchestra or band class. Bartel is also careful to point out which elements of music training are *not* emphasized in the different approaches, such as note-reading in some contexts.

Gustafsson's article (1996) discusses the guitar at the middle school level, and more specifically promotes a program of diverse styles and genres, all in the same course. He describes the primary goals of the guitar program as cultivating responsibility and respect among the students, understanding basic elements of music, and use of music as a tool for expression. He also cites familiarization with music of various cultures and styles, experiencing the discipline of learning an instrument, development critical analysis skills, and sharing knowledge through public performance as important components to the course. A special section of Gustafsson's article provides detailed guidelines for instruction, including specific songs and keys, and advice for working with ensemble material.

Schmid, Marsters, and Shull (1998) created a teacher guide, published by the Music Educators National Conference, which aims to

actively recruit teachers to begin new guitar programs in the schools. Similar to Gustafsson's work, this publication offers information and advice to prospective teachers that may want to begin teaching guitar, even if they are not guitarists themselves. Their guide also includes a historical overview of the guitar and its various traditions, and it lists resources for teachers to find suitable teaching material and guidance.

In 2006, Fesmire surveyed middle and high school music teachers in Colorado to ascertain the amount of guitar activity at those levels in that state. Fesmire found that 35% of teachers surveyed reported teaching guitar as part of their curriculum, or had plans to in the future. He was also able to collect data on the types of music played in these guitar programs, and also assess the relation of their activities to the National Standards for Music Education. Fesmire found that secondary level guitar programs in Colorado were most likely to be found in public suburban high schools that offered only one section, and were typically taken as semester courses. He also found that the majority of guitar educators in these schools were self-taught, with only one instructor describing guitar as their primary instrument. These teachers reported rock, folk, and classical music as the main components of their curricula, with less emphasis on jazz, blues, or other styles. Fesmire suggests that his study shows a shift toward the acceptance of rock music as part of a school curriculum when compared to studies from decades past.

Finally, Seifried (2002) conducted research aimed at understanding "the role of popular teenage music might play in music education." His study was administered using similar techniques and methods to this one, and served as a primary inspiration to my research project. Seifried sought to survey and interview guitar students in a large suburban high school on the impact their music classes had on their overall school experience. His interests in this study included profiling the characteristics of a typical "guitar kid," as well as determining what guitar class meant to the students. Seifried also draws comparisons between typical objectives in guitar class, and the activities and atmosphere of the traditional band and orchestra ensembles. His research illustrates a certain population of students who socially "embrace the margin," a phrase he uses to describe students who intentionally choose non-conformity. Seifried suggests that in a guitar program, this group can find a refuge where the class itself caters to non-conformists, as opposed to most other classes found in the school that do not. Seifried concludes that this creates a "powerful educational tool" that can reach students who wouldn't otherwise be involved in music at school, or who generally have trouble fitting in with a school environment.

Music Literacy

Shaw (1971) argues that in many circumstances, music reading difficulty is mainly the fault of the teacher. He points out that students are frequently not allowed to perform the task of note-reading because the

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instructor assists them in the wrong manner. Instead of encouraging the student to manage their parts on their own, he states that well-meaning teachers are giving the answer away in order to perform the music quickly. Shaw implies that students will simply grow accustomed to "getting the notes" by waiting for someone to eventually show them how to play or sing the music without trying. He recommends working on music reading concurrently with music theory, avoiding repetition without correction, forcing the students to "dig out" their own notes without the aid of a teacher's voice, and making certain that the program is using a consistent system of identifying and singing intervals.

Also a proponent of intervallic focus, Bobbitt (1970) found that students are better enabled to read music after they are exposed to interval training and singing. He suggests that work with tonal scales be delayed until the student has developed the ability to hear, identify, and sing octaves, fourths, fifths, seconds, and thirds.

Hicks (1980) published an article calling for music teachers to explore "reading readiness" activities prior to having their students read staff notation. He contends that students that study the *principles* of notation, rather than the entire system, would be more successful readers in the future and would be less occupied by concepts that are unnecessary for the momentary goal. For rhythm readiness, he suggests marching, clapping, and running to changing tempos. Hicks described "sound before sight" and "experience before theory" as suitable approaches for melodic

focus. Rhythmic exercises accompanied by note naming, rote and imitational learning for melodies, and introduction of line notation eventually leading to an expanding staff technique are all elements of his teaching strategies.

Finally, Hahn (1985) conducted research in which she compared learning to read music with learning to read written language. In her study, Hahn developed a string method, used with young musicians, where the emphasis was on "whole-to-part" strategies, similar to how language reading is processed. In specific terms, Hahn's method offers "units" of tonal and rhythmic phrases rather than the drill of singular notes in isolation. She compared the results of using this method to a traditional method book used in schools, and determined that this whole-to-part method is more successful in music reading achievement.

Attitude and Motivation

McCombs and Pope (1994) describe motivation as something "inherent" which should be "elicited, rather than established." Their text cites "individually learned beliefs about . . . worth, abilities, or competencies" as part of the basis for a student's motivation. McCombs and Pope discuss naturally motivated students, and how they are most inspired to learn when there is no fear of failure present. Unmotivated students on the other hand, may be trapped in what they referred to as a "thought cycle," which reinforces a negative attitude towards their work. When a behavior leads to a negative result, the student will have poor

thoughts that relate to that result, which in turn become negative feelings, which elicits more poor behavior.

Pitts, Davidson, and McPherson (2000) conducted case studies on young musicians over the course of nearly two years to determine profiles of students who succeed or fail in instrumental learning. During the first twenty months of the student's lessons, the investigators found that there were large variations in self-perception, motivation, and how involved the students and parents were in learning the instrument. As others suggest, this study promotes the development of intrinsic desire in the student, finding that it has a strong association with success on an instrument. For students that experienced "failure" in their study of an instrument, it was found that the main distinction between the children that gave up, and those that lost some motivation but continued, was that they "started their learning with very low expectations, not only of their own performance, but of the amount of enjoyment they would gain from learning a musical instrument."

Durrant (2001) discusses a lack of congruence between the attitudes of teenage students and the school music curriculum. He quotes some attitudes of students who quit studying music in a school atmosphere because the content held little relevance to the student's goals or desires. Durrant explains the primary issue at hand as an "argument of whether indeed it is the role of the music teacher to enter the musical world of the adolescent within the school context." He argues further that

classroom music is held in "low esteem," due in part to the perception that

it lacks relevance to the student's needs, and a failure to address "the

socio-cultural contexts in which adolescents live." Durrant contends that

fault lies not in the content of what is being taught, but in the "manner and

context" with which it is presented. He suggests that:

> School music in isolation from other cultural contexts may not be
> the most effective way to musically educate adolescents. Contact
> with professional musicians and other schools to explore, listen to
> and make music from different styles, genres and contexts may be
> the way to engage pupils and reverse the decline in attitudes to
> school music.

Finally, Brown's study (1996) investigated first-year music students

for the purpose of examining possible changes in attitudes toward their

instrumental studies over the course of the year, but also to find a

correlation between those attitudes and classroom achievement, and to

"study the effect of entrance age" on the attitudes of band students. Brown

found that the attitudes of band students towards studying instrumental

music steadily decline over time in the fifth, sixth, and seventh grades. She

notes that this phenomenon is "more severe" in males than females, and

that the decrease in attitude corresponds with an increase in attrition rates

for band. Other interesting findings from this study include a relationship

between student attitude towards music and aptitude with certain musical

elements. For example, students that are proficient with rhythm showed

more positive attitudes toward studying instrumental music, whereas

students that were not proficient with rhythm varied in their attitudes and

perspectives toward music.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this study is to investigate attitudes that beginning classroom guitar students have toward reading music staff notation, and to compare those findings with the perspectives of orchestra and band students of comparable experience. My hope as the investigator was that this inquiry might uncover or highlight reasons why some guitarists struggle more with note-reading than players of other musical instruments.

The historical, educational, and social traditions of the disciplines in which the students are engaged are of particular relevance to this study. These traditions cannot be ignored or undervalued; they provide us with a context that helps to understand the participant viewpoints with greater clarity. The norms of these various musical worlds ultimately influence the perspective of these musicians. Discussions of the various cultural realities of the instrument types are included to help put participant responses in their appropriate context, and also to enable contrasts and comparisons that are otherwise unseen. These discussions might additionally account for differences in perspective, attitude, or achievement across the various music classes.

These goals led me to use a qualitative approach for the study. I gathered information and data from students in several classrooms, asked questions about student and teacher feelings and perspectives, found

emerging themes from the responses, and attempted to make assertions or draw conclusions while placing the findings in a historical and social context. In this chapter, the following sections outline the procedures and measures taken to achieve the research goals: *Choice of Research Method, Role of the Researcher, Study Design, Consent and Confidentiality*, and *Trustworthiness*. Within the *Study Design* section, individual steps are discussed, including Selection of Research Sites, Selection of Classes, Selection of Participants, and descriptions of the survey instruments (Appendix A) in Data Collection and Analysis.

Choice of Research Method

While quantitative methods of research in the sciences and other fields are highly focused on measurement, frequency, and other mathematical values, qualitative research is more concerned with studying the many different qualities and facets of a problem, and the oftentimes subjective meanings of data that are not found in numerical form. This data is commonly found in the form of interview transcripts, photographs, or other physical artifacts studied at the research site and discovered through close human interaction. Qualitative research stresses the "socially constructed nature of reality" and emphasizes "causal relationships between variables, not processes" (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, 8). Creswell defines qualitative research by focusing on the viewpoint of the investigator, the approach of collection and analysis, and the presentation of the findings:

Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action. (Creswell 2007, 37)

Additionally, according to Creswell, it is common in this type of research to "take a stance toward the nature of reality," to bring your own "sets of beliefs," to "make assumptions" about the various issues that make up the research problem and to allow these things to inform the writing of the study (Creswell 2007, 15). He goes on to explain that qualitative researchers include their own personal worldviews and meanings for the topics they are describing, but that they must make explicit their biases and make clear how their own viewpoints are being used in the narrative. The written report is typically narrated in a personal, expressive style where the investigator is allowed to refer to him or herself in the first person, and does not avoid presenting subjective meaning to the information gathered. Finally, the "theoretical lens" that Creswell refers to in his definition entails using a cultural, political, historical context, or philosophical stance to inform the interpretation of the problem being studied (Creswell 2007, 37-39).

Within the paradigm of qualitative research that has been described, a portion of this research is collective case study. Case studies

are appropriate when the investigator wishes to study one or more cases in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition (Stake 2000, 437). Stake continues the justification of this approach by explaining that understanding several individual cases may lead to a greater understanding of the primary research interest (2000, 437). Creswell further defines collective case study inquiry by saying that:

> One issue or concern is selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue. The researcher might select for study several programs from several research sites or multiple programs within a single site. Often the inquirer purposefully selects multiple cases to show different perspectives on the issue.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher was as a participant observer. I visited each research site three to four times to spend time in the classroom, observe normal routines, establish acceptance and credibility, implement a survey, and conduct student and teacher interviews. Students and teachers seemed immediately at ease with my presence in their classrooms. Many students offered greetings and appeared to be intrigued or excited to know of my research. Some went about their business as if I were not there, while others commented that they were happy to have a break from their normal routines.

Study Design

The study design consisted of several steps to ensure data collection that would best inform the research questions, including:

1. Selection of willing music directors and appropriate research sites;

2. Selection of participating orchestra, band, and guitar classes;

3. Selection of student participants through a Musical Background Questionnaire (Appendix A);

4. Data collection through a Student Survey (Appendix A);

5. Data collection through Student Interviews (Appendix B);

6. Teacher Interviews (Appendix C);

7. Data coding and analysis

Selection of Research Sites

The population most integral to the purpose of this study were classroom guitar students, therefore attention was focused toward school systems that not only offered guitar as an elective, but had high achieving, multi-level programs in multiple schools from which data could be collected. While there are many schools across the United States that incorporate guitar into their curriculum, the districts that have multiple schools offering a high level of guitar instruction are difficult to ascertain. Because of this, I selected a school system serving the suburban communities of a major metropolitan area on the east coast, where I knew the sites would fit the research criteria based on my prior knowledge of their fine arts programs.

The school system used in this study is home to more than 150 high schools, secondary schools, middle schools, and elementary schools that

serve nearly 175,000 students a year. The school population is predominantly Caucasian (46%) and upper middle class, while the next largest percentages of students are Hispanic or Asian (18% each). Most schools within the system offer band, orchestra, and chorus, while some offer other music courses such as music theory, piano, or general music participation classes. Approximately fifteen of the high schools or secondary schools in the system offer guitar, and at least nine of those feature what I consider to be highly achieving, multi-level programs.

I narrowed my focus further to those nine schools, hoping to study guitar students that were entering programs that gave them the opportunity to advance through several levels of classes, as opposed to those whose programs offered no courses beyond the beginning or intermediate level. I had past experience and familiarity with almost all of the guitar teachers at the various schools in this region; therefore it was not necessary for me to do further research to identify particular schools that fit the criteria for the research. I considered a program to be "highly achieving" and "multi-level" by the following criteria:

1. The program had enrollment for at least three levels of Guitar, most commonly Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced (or Guitar 1, Guitar 2, and Guitar 3 or Guitar Ensemble);

2. The program had enough sections of Guitar to employ a full-time instructor;

3. The program included at least one concert level Guitar Ensemble.

I determined that four schools would be used for the study, and that I would choose among the schools that met my criteria by using an online Internet list randomizer. Names of the nine schools were entered onto the website, a random order was generated, and the directors of the first four schools that appeared in the resulting list were invited to participate in the study. All four directors quickly agreed to participate and sent me information on their classes and daily schedules. Following my initial interactions with the guitar directors, I asked the orchestra and band directors at two of the selected schools if they would also like to participate, and they unanimously agreed (Table 1, next page).

The selection of the specific schools for the orchestra and band portion of the study was based on two factors. First, two of the four schools involved in the guitar oriented part of the research were high schools, grades 9-12, while the two chosen for orchestra and band were secondary schools that included middle school students in the same building (grades 7-12 overall). Utilizing the secondary schools for this portion of the research allowed me to study orchestra and band students from beginning or lower level classes, which seemed more appropriate when comparing their reading skills and perspectives to those of beginning guitar students. Many string and band students in this school system begin study in elementary school, while classroom guitar instruction commonly begins in

high school. Thus, it was in middle school string and band classes that students could be found who were closer to the beginning of their study, but not too different in music-reading skills compared to the guitarists. Second, since the design of this study required travel to and from multiple areas of the county, it was logical to work with orchestra and band programs that existed within the four "guitar schools."

Table 1. Participating Schools and Directors

	Southfield	Riverview	Central	West Ridge
Enrollment	2800	3900	2210	2850
Classes Studied	Guitar 1	Guitar 1	Guitar 1	Guitar 1
	Int. Orch.	String Ens.		
	Beg. Band	Beg. Band		
Guitar Director	Ms. Mullins	Dr. Stephens	Mr. Boyd	Mr. Hughes
Orch. Director	Ms. Larson	Ms. Brewer		
Band Director	Ms. Mullins	Ms. Edwards		

Selection of Classes

The first step in determining participating groups for each school and program was to choose classes that were scheduled at non-conflicting times in the school day. This was necessary so that multiple schools could be observed on the same day. Each school involved in the study used an alternating block schedule for daily class periods, generally meeting the odd numbered class periods on one day and even numbered periods the next. Each of the four schools had odd numbered periods on the same day,

which simplified the task of selecting classes to use at each school. For example, choosing these particular periods allowed a visit to Central High School's first period class and Southfield Secondary School's fifth period class on the same day, and Riverview Secondary School's second period on the same day as a visit to West Ridge High School's sixth period guitar class (Table 2).

Table 2. Daily Schedule and Profile of Participating Guitar Classes

	Southfield	Riverview	Central	West Ridge
Name of Course	Guitar 1	Beg. Guitar	Guitar 1	Guitar 1
Class Period	5th	2nd	1st	6th
Time of Class	11:12-12:37	7:20-8:50	7:25-8:57	11:32-1:02
Class Size	25	30	23	32
Students Selected for Data Collection	6	6	6	6

Visits to the non-guitar classes were simplified due to Riverview Secondary School's beginning level orchestra meeting during the exact same class period as the lowest level band class. I was able to meet with members of both classes by dividing the period, minimizing the impact on each teacher's instruction. Despite the school's alternating block scheduling, this period met every day, which was convenient for the visitation schedule. I often visited Riverview Secondary's non-guitar classes on an "even" day since the Southfield Secondary School band class also met during 7th period. The lowest level orchestra and band classes at

Southfield Secondary School met on odd days only, which accounts for their selection for the study (Table 3).

Table 3. Daily Schedule and Profile of Non-Guitar Classes

	Southfield	Riverview	Southfield	Riverview
Name of Course	Int. Orch.	String Ens.	Beg. Band	Beg. Band
Class Period	3rd	7th	7th	7th
Time of Class	9:10-10:35	1:20-2:10	12:45-2:10	1:20-2:10
Class Size	38	32	9	46
Students Selected for Data Collection	5	6	6	6

Selection of Participants

Once specific classes were selected, a Musical Background Questionnaire (Appendix A) was mailed to each teacher to distribute to students in the participating classes. The purpose of this questionnaire was to collect information on each student's potential contribution to the study, along with other information such as what instrument the student plays, how long they have studied their instrument, private lesson history, and several agree-disagree statements answered on a five point Likert-type scale. Because the purpose of this study was to investigate attitudes that students with limited experience playing an instrument have toward reading musical staff notation, it was necessary to distinguish the playing histories of the various students to ensure that the students interviewed represented a range of skill levels and perspectives on music reading.

Even though these were beginning or lower level classes, most, if not all of these classrooms contained students with a great variety of experience. Since the research goals were to specifically compare beginning guitar students that have difficulty reading to orchestra and band students that have a similarly short history of note-reading, I used stratified purposeful sampling techniques to identify students meeting those criteria. In his description of purposeful sampling, Creswell suggests that in stratified purposeful sampling, "the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell 2007, 127). I used the Musical Background Questionnaire (Appendix A) to separate the potential participants into categories by instrument, number of years playing, and self-reported ratings on their success with reading standard notation.

The first section of the questionnaire provided a space for students to create a "Study ID," and it was suggested by the teachers that they use a numerical code that they would easily remember. Also in this section, participants listed the name of their school, grade level, name of music class, class period, and gender.

The next several questions were "fill in the blank" and required the students to list their primary instrument of study, how long they had been studying this instrument, whether they take private lessons, and whether they have had any formal training in music theory. I had hoped, in

particular, to find a group of students that were involved in private lessons, to help inform that aspect of the study. I had expected that a greater number of students would be taking private lessons in addition to their classes at school, but it became apparent after questionnaires were collected that this assumption was incorrect. Though there were examples of students involved in private lessons in each type of class, the number of students to draw from in this category was less than anticipated. Other important data from this portion of the questionnaire clarified whether students had had any exposure to formal music theory in addition to their current music class. Any student that reported having such experience or knowledge was eliminated from further participation, primarily because I wanted data only on those that had studied note-reading in the traditional classroom setting.

The purpose of the next segment of the questionnaire was to categorize individuals by the variety of instruments they had studied. This was important because some perspectives or experiences that students have had with note-reading could be impacted by having studied multiple instruments concurrently or in the past. Through my own experience in the classroom, I am aware that many students in music classes are likely to be former players of other instruments. I did not seek to eliminate those with such backgrounds from further participation; however, I wanted to make certain that the various types of backgrounds were represented evenly across the subgroups. I did not, for example, wish for too large a

portion of the sampled guitar subgroup to be former pianists while there were less experienced musicians available that might better inform the research. These purposeful sampling strategies of categorizing potential participants helped me to find an even and representative cross section of students that would inform the study from a variety of perspectives. In this section, students circled the statement that most closely described their personal experience in music:

1. The instrument I play in class is the only one I have ever studied in a serious manner.

2. In addition to my classroom instrument, I currently play others as well.

3. I have studied another instrument or instruments in the past, but quit those and switched to my current one.

Students were asked to list other instruments they have studied if they circled statements two or three. Each class participating in the questionnaire had students in each of the three categories.

The final section of the Musical Background Questionnaire (Appendix A) consisted of four items in which the students expressed to what extent they agreed with statements pertaining to their note-reading history or ability. There was also one final item that directed the students to rate how well they were able to read standard music notation on the first day of the current school year. The first three statements in this section related to *when* the students first learned standard music notation. Students identified that they initially learned note-reading in their current

class, they learned note-reading prior to the class but "not very well," or that they learned note-reading before their current class and retained it successfully. The most common response from guitarists was an agreement with first or second statement, while responses from orchestra and band students appeared to vary between each of the three statements.

Students that agreed with the third statement, implying that they already had good note-reading skills prior to their current class, were not considered for the next phases of the study. Others were excluded from further participation when their answers appeared to conflict with one another. The fourth statement in this section, "I currently feel positive about my note-reading skills," helped to give insight into whether particular students felt as though they are continuing to struggle, or if they simply have positive or negative associations with music reading in general. Predictably, responses to this item were varied in all subgroups, although it was still valuable to the study to be able to identify students that appeared to be having difficulty.

The final item on the questionnaire was a re-phrasing of question three, asking students to rate how well they were able to read staff notation on the first day of their current school year. Students who reported that they could read music "well" or answered that their reading skills were "good" were eliminated from continuing in the study, since the focus was to be put on students that were relatively new to music reading this year.

Data Collection and Analysis

To collect data, I created a thirty-five item survey of statements (Appendix A) to which the students would rate how much they agreed or disagreed. Also described in this section is the student interview process (Appendix B), conducted on subsequent visits to the schools following the survey phase of the data. Surveys were pilot-tested on students unaffiliated with the study in order to assess the clarity of the statements and eliminate confusion in any of the survey items.

<u>Student surveys</u>

On my initial visit to each program I introduced myself to the class, or the teacher explained my presence, and I met with the six selected students in a group setting to explain what the survey and interview phases would entail. I verbally reconfirmed their interest in participating and gave them the thirty-five question survey (Appendix A). Specific analysis of the survey questions and data collected are found in Chapter 4. Survey questions were created covering six different categories, which came into focus by considering the primary guiding questions for the study (as discussed in Chapter 1). These categories were labeled Self-Assessment, Perception, Relevance, Participation, Motivation and Attitude, and Class Expectation.

Self-Assessment questions primarily dealt with student reported assessments of their own skill or ability in class, with note-reading, and other items such as whether they take private lessons. Questions on

Perception gauged how necessary they found note-reading to be, and how critical it is or not to the student's activities, achievement, and goals. Relevance questions had to do with how their class or their studies have related to their personal interests and goals in music. Participation questions aimed to find the intial reasons the students wanted to join their music classes. Motivation and Attitude questions involved more descriptive phrases pertaining to student feelings toward their own abilities, their music class, their goals, etc. Class Expectation questions dealt with the perceptions students had prior to enrolling in the class, and whether they accurately predicted the types of activities they would be undertaking in class.

Items on the survey used a five point Likert-type scale. "5" was circled if the student chose to strongly agree with the statement on the survey, "4" meant that they agreed, "3" implied a neutral response or "I Don't Know," "2" meant that they disagreed, while a response of "1" implied strong disagreement. Following each visit during the survey phase, I entered all of the numerical responses into a spreadsheet document where I could quickly calculate the mean, mode, and standard deviation for each student. This spreadsheet also allowed me to quickly analyze how subgroups (orchestra students only, one particular high school only, all guitar students, etc.) responded overall to a certain question and find emerging themes not only among individuals, but between groups of participants. Statistical data was kept for each individual using their study

ID but also generated for each classroom, each school, and guitarists versus "non-guitarists."

<u>Interviews</u>

Overall, the survey phase of the study took three weeks to complete, followed by a week-long period of analysis. Once some initial themes and findings began to emerge from the quantitative data, follow up interview questions were developed. These interview questions pertained to the same six categories of questions on the survey, but were intended to probe deeper into the meaning and reasons behind why the participants answered they way they did on certain questions. There were some occasions where the interview was tailored to the specific individual if there was something unclear about their responses in the survey. Some students gave seemingly contradictory answers to related statements, for instance: agreeing to "Our activities in my music class match expectations I had when I entered this school year," but also agreeing to "I did not expect that I would have to read standard music notation when I signed up for this class." Such instances were addressed in the interview phase to help bring clarity or allow students to bring their intended meaning into focus.

The interview process lasted approximately four weeks and required one or two more visits to each school, depending on the length of the individual interviews. The sessions ranged in length from ten to thirty minutes, with most lasting the shorter amount of time. My primary

concern outside the research questions was to balance the need for data collection with the impact on the student's time in class. Each teacher gave permission to conduct the interviews during the class period; however I maintained an interest in minimizing the time each student spent outside of the classroom during my visits. I used a Sony M-679V microcassette recorder, which I either placed on a table between myself and the student, or held in my hand with the microphone end pointed at the interviewee. Following each day of interviewing I transcribed the interviews verbatim into a word processor, using only the study ID for indentification.

Other Data Collection

Teacher interviews were conducted in the same manner as the student participants. The questions asked of the teachers were designed to gather information on their observations or opinions on the research problem, to understand various aspects of their curricula, and to ask guitar teachers about their experiences with attitudes toward note-reading. The teacher interviews were conducted after all of the student data had been collected so that the data could influence some of the questions directed toward the instructors.

Consent and Confidentiality

This study was approved the by Institutional Review Board of Arizona State University (Appendix D). All participants, and parents or guardians of the students, signed an Informed Consent and Parental Permission form that described the study, research goals, survey,

interviews, and the impact on classroom instructional time (Appendix D).

Participants were made aware of the voluntary nature of the project.

Students also signed an Assent form (Appendix D), which stated that they

understood the nature of the project and that there would be no

consequence for opting out of the research (written in more informal

language).

Student names were kept confidential by use of a study ID. Prior to

any of my visits, students were instructed by their teacher to create a four

digit number that would be used in lieu of writing their names on any

study related documents (other than the signatures on permission forms).

These study ID numbers were used on the initial Musical Background

Questionnaire (Appendix A), and were also what was entered into the

Internet list randomizer used for sample selection. Teachers were

forwarded the selected numbers and given the permission forms to hand

out to the selected students. In essence, I never had any knowledge of any

student's real name or any other identifiable information other than their

gender, grade level, and primary instrument. No master list matching

study ID to the student's name was ever created. All names used in this

research paper for students, teachers, or schools are pseudonyms.

To further protect student and teacher confidentiality, participant

documents and collected written data were kept in a locked file cabinet.

Documents were separated into file folders named for each school

program. Interview data was stored on microcassette tapes in the locked

cabinet as well, then subsequently erased after transcription into a word processing program.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers do not typically speak or write in traditional quantitative terms like validity, proof, or verification. When focusing on elements of an issue or problem, such as a particular human experience in a case study, those words tend to imply too much of a definitive, measureable, numerically based analysis of the collected data. While qualitative studies can incorporate supplemental numerical data, as this one does, the overall approach to the analysis has more to do with understanding and describing the perspectives of the people experiencing the phenomenon in their particular settings. This type of inquiry often attempts to go deeper than what a simple scaled questionnaire could tell a person. Only after they are able to descriptively report on the experiences, feelings, and perspectives of the participants can qualitative researchers truly make assertions about the nature of the issues being studied (Creswell 2007).

Since attempting to "verify" findings or assertions made in a study like this is impractical, most qualitative writers focus on the "trustworthiness" of what they are reporting, on lending the study "credibility," or describing the research in such a way that the assertions made from the data collected appear "plausible." Eisner (1991, 110) describes the researcher's obligation to trustworthiness as seeking "a

confluence of evidence that breeds credibility, which allows us to feel

confident about our observations, interpretations, and conclusions."

Creswell (2007, 207-209) believes that this collection of evidence can

create a "compelling whole" and be adequately achieved through the

inclusion of any combination of the following validation strategies:

1. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation;

2. Triangulation;

3. Peer review;

4. Negative case analysis;

5. Clarifying researcher bias;

6. Member checking;

7. Rich, thick description;

8. External Audits.

Though some researchers use the term "validation strategy,"

Creswell is careful to note that he views the words validity and verification

as having to do with the procedures and processes maintained in the

study, rather than the traditional perception of scientific validity, which

has quantitative overtones (Creswell 2007, 207). The strategies of negative

case analysis (revising the hypotheses as conflicting information arises as

revealed through data collection and analysis), and rich, thick description

occurred naturally through the data collection and writing of this research

study because both go hand in hand with the processes that that I initially

set forth. A hypothesis cannot be expected to remain unblemished after

the opinions and perspectives of the participants have been documented, so it must naturally be revised to fit the data. Thick description in the writing is necessary to accurately portray the perspectives of the students and teachers, but also to paint the appropriate picture of the environment for the reader. Clarifying researcher bias was achieved in the research process by seeking advice from peer reviewers, and was accounted for in the written report by discussing threats to validity in Chapter 1.

The first validation strategies in Creswell's list, of prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation, were of primary importance in this study. The first was achieved through frequent contact and communications with the directors of each program, multiple visits to each classroom on separate occasions, and informal observation of the classroom operations aside from the planned surveys and interviews. This allowed me to note similarities and differences in how the various classes function, aspects of the teacher's instruction, and student behavior in my research journal. Overall, findings and assertions made based on the culmination of all of the research activity have more credibility and are more plausible the more time the investigator spends in the environment being studied. Through my research notes, I was able to challenge my own ways of thinking and assess potential biases.

Triangulation, which is an attempt to corroborate information by seeking evidence from multiple sources (Creswell 2007, 208), was achieved by selecting not only one school or class from which to gather

data, but choosing several classes from four different schools with multiple

instructors. Though the four schools participating in this study all have

similar demographics and socio-economic attributes, the use of these

multiple sources allow the reader to see that certain issues may or may not

be present across multiple sites, not just in one school. I also triangulated

by comparing student interviews (Appendix B) with data collected from

teacher interviews (Appendix C), and by using multiple research

instruments (Appendix A). The existence of multiple perceptions from

different groups of people helps to clarify meaning, and verify the

repeatability of an observation or interpretation (Stake 2000, 443).

Many aspects of this study were subjected to peer review and

member checking, particularly the transfer of data from the paper surveys

to a computer spreadsheet, the accuracy of the transcriptions of audio

taped interviews, the procedures put in place to gather data, the relevance

and potential bias found in survey and interview questions, and the

general assertions made upon the initial analysis of the collected data.

Items that were peer reviewed were done by two of my colleagues at the

institution where I teach. One colleague boasts nearly a decade of

experience teaching music in public schools, serves as a team leader in the

department, and has directed students to many major regional and state

awards and honors. His experience and perspective was of great value to

this study from the initial conception of the topic to the formulation of the

research instruments. Several times throughout the research process, this

colleague pointed out potential threats to credibility in my wording, was able to help craft a survey question more clearly, or gave his opinion on whether my assertion was supported by the data collected. Another colleague at the same institution, who has an earned doctorate in music from an esteemed conservatory, also assisted in peer review by looking for threats to validity in the written accounts of the processes, data, and findings. Many times he was able to give valuable perspective from the reader's point of view. Both peer reviewers generally agreed that the assertions made in this study were plausible and supported by the data collected.

Finally, and perhaps most important to the credibility of this project, the written accounts of student and teacher survey and interview responses were subjected to member checking. To adequately incorporate member checking in this project, I visited teachers and students involved in the data collection portion of this paper and allowed them to read and respond to my account of their interactions in the classroom, their responses to questions, and the specific conclusions asserted in the paper. Upon review, no students or teachers involved felt the need to clarify their opinions or contest any findings or interpretations. Teachers found my account of their classroom activities and perspectives to be accurate and students all agreed that their opinions were reflected truthfully.

CHAPTER 4

SURVEY DATA

In this chapter, I present information about each student that participated in the Musical Background Questionnaire (Appendix A), as well as responses given during the Student Survey (Appendix A). Each of these two phases of data collection is described in detail, with answers to survey questions expressed as percentages in tables and descriptive form throughout the chapter. When information from follow up interviews is applicable to the description of a large group of students, and is of immediate relevance to the discussion of the survey data, it is included. Other interview data collected on specific individuals is included in Chapter 5.

The Musical Background Questionnaire

Responses to all questions and statements on the Musical Background Questionnaire (Appendix A) were entered into a computer spreadsheet to facilitate coding, make comparisons, and more easily sort the data. After all the students were entered, I analyzed the data and deleted student entries from the spreadsheet if any of the following were noted:

1. The student gave what I considered to be conflicting statements;
2. I judged the student to have too long a history of note-reading experience;

3. The student reported having experience of formal Music Theory training outside of class.

Ninety guitar students and seventy-eight orchestra and band students were selected to participate in the next phases of the study. I sorted these into the following categories according to their responses to the questionnaire:

1. Students who have only studied their current instrument;

2. Students who currently play multiple instruments;

3. Students who formerly studied other instruments but switched to their current one.

I used the code "Musical Background" for this categorization, and designated on the spreadsheet the number one, two, or three for each student, based on which statement described them best. I sorted the students in the spreadsheet first by "School" and "Music Class," and then by "Musical Background." Now that I had the participants categorized by their background, and sorted within their respective classes, I began the process of selecting students from each class, making sure that the remaining students were relatively new at reading notes on their instruments. I purposefully sampled according to "Musical Background," choosing two students from each background type. I entered the study ID's of students designated as a "1", or those who have only ever studied their current instrument, from each class into a list randomizer at the Internet website *www.random.org*. This web-based tool allows users to enter any

words, numbers, or other data into a list, and create a random sequence out of the material entered. I selected the first two students appearing at the top of each randomized list, giving a total of six from each class, totalling twenty-four guitarists from four different schools, and twenty-four non-guitarists from the two secondary schools (twelve band students and twelve orchestra students).

In this report, I only list data for eleven orchestra students because one declined to participate halfway through the study. Instead of replacing this student, I simply collected data on the remaining ones, leaving me with twenty-three non-guitarists. Finally, I consolidated my spreadsheet (see Tables 4, 5, and 6) down to the data from just these forty-seven selected students and invited them to participate in the survey phase of the study, to which they all agreed.

The selection of students for the Student Survey (Appendix A) phase of the research resulted in a sample group with varied musical backgrounds, but who also reported not having much experience reading notes on their current instruments. All three subgroups consisted of students that have only studied their current instrument, those that have formerly studied other instruments, and some who play multiple instruments. All of the orchestra and band students were in either the seventh or eighth grade, while most of the guitar students were anywhere from eighth graders to sophomores in high school. Despite the age difference of some of the older guitarists, all students selected for

Study ID	School	Primary Instrument	Grade	Gender	Length of Study	Private Lessons	Musical Background	Other Instruments	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
0707	RSS	Horn	7	M	1	Yes	1	n/a	5	5	2	4	2
9530	RSS	Percussion	7	M	2	No	1	n/a	3	5	3	5	3
4465	RSS	Tuba	7	M	1	No	2	Perc	5	1	1	4	2
3207	RSS	Clarinet	7	M	1	No	2	Gtr, Pno	4	5	3	4	1
1185	RSS	Oboe	7	M	1	No	3	Viola	5	4	3	4	3
0907	RSS	Clarinet	7	M	1	No	3	Vn, Trb	5	4	2	4	2
7024	SSS	Trumpet	8	M	1	No	1	n/a	5	1	1	5	2
1776	SSS	Tuba	7	M	1	No	1	n/a	5	3	1	5	1
1234	SSS	Saxophone	7	M	1	No	1	n/a	4	2	1	4	3
4258	SSS	Trumpet	7	M	1	No	2	Vn, Pno, Vc	1	4	3	4	2
4218	SSS	Oboe	7	M	1	Yes	3	Violin	1	4	3	4	3
3954	SSS	Clarinet	7	M	1	No	3	Violin	5	3	3	3	3

Table 4. Band Students Selected for the Study

Study ID	School	Primary Instrument	Grade	Gender	Length of Study	Private Lessons	Musical Background	Other Instruments	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
2698	RSS	Violin	7	M	1	No	1	n/a	1	4	3	4	3
0694	RSS	Cello	7	M	2	Yes	1	n/a	2	4	3	4	1
5495	RSS	Cello	7	F	1	No	2	Violin	5	3	1	4	1
6310	RSS	Viola	8	F	1	No	2	Trumpet	5	1	3	4	2
3742	RSS	Cello	7	F	2	Yes	3	Clarinet	1	5	1	5	1
9999	RSS	Violin	7	M	1	No	3	Piano	2	4	3	4	3
6448	SSS	Viola	7	F	2	Yes	1	n/a	1	5	2	4	2
7237	SSS	Violin	7	M	2	No	1	n/a	5	3	2	5	3
2614	SSS	Violin	7	F	1	No	2	Horn	2	3	3	4	2
5358	SSS	Violin	7	M	2	No	3	Trumpet	1	4	3	4	3
1170	SSS	Cello	8	F	1	No	3	Violin	3	4	2	5	3

Table 5. Orchestra Students Selected for the Study

Study ID	School	Primary Instrument	Grade	Gender	Length of Study	Private Lessons	Musical Background	Other Instruments	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
3286	CHS	Guitar	10	F	1	No	1	n/a	5	1	1	3	1
7702	CHS	Guitar	10	M	1	Yes	1	n/a	1	5	1	2	3
8349	CHS	Guitar	9	M	8	Yes	2	Perc	4	5	1	3	3
6262	CHS	Guitar	9	M	1	No	2	Vn	5	1	1	3	1
1214	CHS	Guitar	10	F	1	Yes	3	Vn	2	3	1	1	3
4761	CHS	Guitar	9	M	1	No	3	Pno, Tuba	1	3	3	2	3
1540	RSS	Guitar	11	F	1	No	1	n/a	4	1	1	1	1
4782	RSS	Guitar	9	M	1	No	1	n/a	4	2	2	2	1
8868	RSS	Guitar	9	M	1	Yes	2	Vn	5	1	1	3	1
0792	RSS	Guitar	10	M	1	Yes	2	Pno	2	4	2	3	2
2845	RSS	Guitar	9	F	1	No	3	Vn, Cl	1	4	2	3	1
2170	RSS	Guitar	9	F	1	No	3	Fl	1	5	2	2	1

Table 6. Guitar Students Selected for the Study

Study ID	School	Primary Instrument	Grade	Gender	Length of Study	Private Lessons	Musical Background	Other Instruments	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
6	WRHS	Guitar	10	M	1	No	1	n/a	3	3	4	4	3
17	WRHS	Guitar	9	F	1	No	1	n/a	2	5	1	4	1
10	WRHS	Guitar	10	F	5	No	2	Pno, Fl	4	4	1	3	3
23	WRHS	Guitar	9	M	1	Yes	2	Perc	3	2	2	1	1
7	WRHS	Guitar	11	F	1	No	3	Vc	5	1	1	2	1
8	WRHS	Guitar	9	M	1	No	3	Sx	3	5	1	2	1
9978	SSS	Guitar	10	F	1	No	1	n/a	4	2	2	3	2
27435	SSS	Guitar	9	M	2	Yes	1	n/a	3	2	1	2	3
3471	SSS	Guitar	8	F	1	No	2	Pno	1	4	2	3	3
1818	SSS	Guitar	9	M	1	Yes	2	Perc	1	5	2	3	2
0023	SSS	Guitar	8	M	1	Yes	3	Tuba, Trb	2	4	2	3	2
6308	SSS	Guitar	8	F	1	No	3	Bass, Perc	4	2	1	2	2

Table 6 continued

continuation in the study were at the outset of their formal study in their respective classrooms. The exceptions were two guitar students that had described themselves as "self-taught" prior to signing up for their music class. Still, these guitarists conveyed that they were beginners in terms of note-reading, since the material practiced on their own did not use this same system of notation.

A quick observation of the responses to the final five items on the questionnaire revealed that all twelve of the selected band students reported either not having learned to read notes for their instrument prior to their current school year, or having learned in the past but did not remember it well. Eleven of these students responded with a neutral answer or lower, that they did not read very well for their instrument at the start of the school year. Still, they indicate that they currently feel positive about their note-reading skills. In orchestra, seven of the eleven students described their experience with note-reading as having learned it in the past, but not remembering it well, with three students reporting that they learned to read for their instrument just this year. Similar to the band data, all eleven orchestra students were either neutral, or appeared to feel that they did not have strong reading skills for their instruments at the beginning of the school year. As with the band students, orchestra participants felt more successful in note-reading at the time of the questionnaire.

Guitar students exhibited some similarites and some differences in their responses to the final five items on the questionnaire. Eleven of the twenty-four students were in agreement that they had learned to read notes at some prior point, but that it was not retained. Ten guitar students seemed to be learning to read music for the first time in their beginning guitar classes. All twenty-four of the guitar students reported either a neutral answer, or indicated that they struggled with note-reading at the beginning of the school year, with only two describing their current feelings toward their reading skill as "positive."

The Student Survey

Collecting the Data

The Student Survey (Appendix A) was taken by all forty-seven selected students following the analysis of data from the Musical Background Questionnaire (Appendix A). In this section of the chapter, I describe the process I used to collect and record the data. The following section of the chapter discusses the student responses. Each instructor and I arranged a day and time that I would visit the school, observe the class, and administer the survey to six, and in one case, five students that would continue in the data collection process. Upon each initial visit to the individual classrooms, I reconfirmed the student's willingness to participate in the survey, and met with them either in rooms adjacent to their normal classroom, or in some cases, the hallway outside the classroom door. Each student was instructed to circle one of the five

choices that followed each statement. A response of "1" or "2" was equivalent to "strongly disagree" or "disagree," respectively. A response of "4" or "5" was equivalent to "agree" or "strongly agree." Circling "3" served as a neutral response, "No opinion," or "I don't know." Students were also instructed to answer as honestly as possible, and to try to not "read into" the intent of any questions. Each student then completed the survey, which took most participants approximately ten to fifteen minutes to finish.

Similar to the Musical Background Questionnaire (Appendix A), student responses were entered into a computer spreadsheet where data could easily be sorted by school, individual music class, type of response, or by subgroup (Orchestra, Band, Orchestra and Band combined, or Guitar). The spreadsheet was used to calculate the mean response and mode for each statement, and the standard deviation for each item on the survey. Also calculated was the percentage of students in each subgroup that answered either agree or strongly agree, disagree or strongly disagree, or gave a neutral response. A subgroup showing the combined responses for all orchestra and band students was created to facilitate a comparison between guitarists and all non-guitarists surveyed.

Survey Results

Data from the Student Survey (Appendix A) will be shared by displaying and discussing the statements as they relate to several categories or codes that I identified early on in the research process. As

statements were developed for the survey, I created several categories of information that stemmed from the primary guiding questions in the study. These categories helped to code the collected information and simplify making comaparisons, the analysis of the subgroups, and helped organize the written documentation of the data in this paper. The statements created for the survey are organized under the following codes, which were revised and refined as data were analyzed: Self-Assessment, Student Perception, Relevance, Participation, Motivation and Attitude, and Classroom Expectation.

<u>Self-Assessment Data</u>

The first three statements under the code "Self-Assessment" (Table 7) were related, and pertained to how the students primarily go about learning their music. One statement affirmed that note-reading skills were the main tool the student uses to learn the pieces they play, another statement related to students that predominantly use their aural skills rather than their reading skills, while a third stated that they make use of alternative forms of written notation to learn their music such as charts, numbering systems, or tablature. The majority of non-guitarists (74%) in this study agreed that they use note-reading skills as their primary tool for learning music on their instruments. When making comparisons between orchestra and band responses, fewer band students (67%) agreed than orchestra students (82%). Though answers conveyed some variance, band

Survey Question	Sample Group	Mean	Mode	StDv	A/SA	N	D/SD	DNA
I primarily use my note reading skills to learn our music in class.	Orchestra	3.91	4	1.14	82%	9%	9%	
	Band	3.75	4	1.14	67%	25%	8%	
	Non-Guitarists	3.83	4	1.11	74%	17%	9%	
	Guitar	3.17	3	1.05	29%	42%	29%	
Instead of reading music, I rely on my listening skills and memorization to learn our music in class.	Orchestra	3.00	3	1.10	27%	46%	27%	
	Band	3.00	2	1.21	42%	17%	42%	
	Non-Guitarists	3.00	3	1.13	35%	30%	35%	
	Guitar	3.88	4	1.19	79%		21%	
Instead of reading standard notation, I rely on alternative forms of written music to learn our material.	Orchestra	2.91	2	1.14	18%	36%	46%	
	Band	2.00	1	0.85		33%	67%	
	Non-Guitarists	2.43	2	1.08	9%	35%	57%	
	Guitar	3.88	4	0.90	71%	21%	8%	
Reading standard music notation is difficult or confusing for me.	Orchestra	2.36	2	1.21	27%	9%	64%	
	Band	2.25	2	1.06	8%	17%	75%	
	Non-Guitarists	2.30	2	1.11	17%	13%	70%	
	Guitar	3.87	4	0.76	71%	21%	4%	4%

Table 7. Student Survey: Self-Assessment Data

Survey Question	Sample Group	Mean	Mode	StDv	A/SA	N	D/SD	DNA
When I am given 16 measures of unfamiliar music in standard notation, I can usually read through most of it accurately within the first several minutes.	Orchestra	2.55	2	1.37	27%	18%	55%	
	Band	3.67	4	0.65	58%	42%		
	Non-Guitarists	3.13	4	1.18	44%	30%	26%	
	Guitar	1.79	2	0.88	8%	4%	88%	
When I am given 16 measures of unfamiliar music in standard notation, I can only read some of it accurately after 20 minutes or more of studying it.	Orchestra	3.82	4	0.60	91%		9%	
	Band	2.82	2	0.87	25%	25%	42%	8%
	Non-Guitarists	3.32	4	0.89	57%	13%	26%	4%
	Guitar	2.96	2	0.91	38%	21%	42%	
When I am given 16 measures of unfamiliar music in standard notation, it usually takes me more than one class period of practice and study to be able to play it accurately.	Orchestra	3.27	2	1.42	46%	18%	36%	
	Band	2.82	2	1.33	33%	17%	42%	8%
	Non-Guitarists	3.05	2	1.36	39%	17%	39%	4%
	Guitar	3.63	4	0.88	67%	25%	8%	

Table 7 continued

students were evenly split (42% in agreement and 42% in disagreement) in response to the statement regarding use of their aural or listening skills to learn music as opposed to notation. Though non-guitarists as a subgroup averaged a neutral reply to the statement about listening skills and memorization, it is notable that more band students gravitated toward that method than either of the stringed groups. This data most likely reflects a difference in instructional emphasis between the directors in this study. Further research on the effect of instructional emphasis on student learning preferences is suggested in Chapter 6.

Guitarist responses indicated that most students either gravitate toward listening and memorization skills, or alternative forms of written music rather than traditional note-reading. Only 29% of guitarists reported using reading skills as their main method of learning, compared to 74% for non-guitarists. The percentages were reversed for the "listening" method. Agreeing that this method was more useful was 79% percent of the guitar subgroup, and 35% of non-guitarists. The largest contrast was found in the statement pertaining to alternative forms of written music, where 71% of guitarists agreed that they rely on methods such as tablature, charts, or non-standard notation. Only 9% of all non-guitarists surveyed agreed with this statement. In interviews with the students, I found that the 9% that agreed that they use other forms of notation were considering "writing fingerings in" or "writing the note names in" as alternative notation, while most guitarists were talking about

entirely different systems of notation other than notes on the staff, such as tablature.

Though there is an apparent range of methods employed by students in each class, high percentages of orchestra and band students reported using either standard notation or listening skills and memorization to learn music. Based on the percentages of students that agreed to the statements, many orchestra students indicated reading skill as their primary method, while most band students appeared to indicate either reading or listening skills and memorization. The majority of participating guitar students either used aural skills, alternative forms of notation, such as tablature or chord charts, or a combination of both, but very few favored standard note-reading based on the survey results. Responses to these three statements illustrated a fundamental difference of approach among the three subgroups being studied, which is partially explained by the fourth statement in the "Self-Assessment" category, "Reading standard notation is difficult or confusing for me."

A large difference in response existed in this study between guitarists and non-guitarists surrounding the notion that standard notation is difficult or confusing. Guitarist answers were focused around the mean (3.87) with a low standard deviation. While the average indicated a neutral range, the most frequent answer was "agree." Only 17% of non-guitarists agreed to the statement, while 71% of guitar students indicated that they had difficulty or confusion. Interestingly, orchestra

students had a higher percentage in agreement (27%) than band students (8%). Non-guitarist responses had some variance, with a higher standard deviation compared to other answers on the survey, but the most frequent answer for all non-guitarists was "disagree." The apparent difference between some orchestra students and band, plus an examination of why many guitarists seem to feel this way, was investigated further in the survey and interview process (see Chapter 5). Ultimately, the responses to these statements support my initial assumption that a majority of beginning guitar students surveyed would perceive standard notation to be difficult or confusing, while most students beginning in orchestra or band would not. Most of these students began studying their instruments in the same semester, with only six orchestra or band students, and three guitarists, reporting that they had started their studies earlier than that particular school year.

The next three statements coded under "Self-Assessment" dealt with a hypothetical selection of "new material" that was sixteen measures long. Students were essentially asked how much of the music they would be able to play accurately after certain amounts of practice time. The majority of band students estimated that they can usually play most new material they receive in class either within a few minutes of initial study, or after a study period of about twenty minutes. The most common response given by orchestra students indicated that it generally takes at least a twenty minute period of study to gain some accuracy with their new material.

Guitar student responses showed that most felt they would need more than one class period to begin to play new material with accuracy. A little less than half of guitar students reported being able to play some material within the first practice period, but only after a twenty minute period of study.

Survey responses show that band students tend to be more confident than orchestra or guitar students in their ability to immediately play new material with accuracy. Orchestra students (91%) indicate needing at least some study or practice period, but appear to be confident that they could play new material relatively quickly. Some orchestra students report needing more than one class period to learn their music, but in interviews it became clear that many orchestra students had a noticeably higher standard for "learning their music" than other students. In contrast, musicians from other classes, such as band or guitar, may or may not have had the same definition of "having the music learned." Through this survey question and the interview process, I felt that some guitarists assumed, or seemed resigned to the fact, that they would require many practice sessions to learn a new selection with standard notation.

Student Perception Data

The code "Student Perception" was connected to preconceptions the students expressed and their observations of the nature of reality in their respective field. Survey statements revolved around the necessity or importance of acquiring skill in note-reading, and its use in the

Survey Question	Sample Group	Mean	Mode	StDv	A/SA	N	D/SD
Reading standard music notation is an important part of being a successful musician on my instrument.	Orchestra	4.45	5	0.82	82%	18%	
	Band	4.75	5	0.62	92%	8%	
	Non-Guitarists	4.61	5	0.72	87%	13%	
	Guitar	3.75	3	0.79	54%	46%	
Reading music notation is necessary for the type of music I like to play.	Orchestra	4.18	4	0.60	91%		9%
	Band	4.42	5	0.79	83%	17%	
	Non-Guitarists	4.30	5	0.70	87%	9%	4%
	Guitar	2.71	1	1.55	42%	13%	46%
Reading standard music notation is important because it is the main method of learning music for my instrument.	Orchestra	4.27	4	0.65	91%	9%	
	Band	4.33	5	0.78	83%	17%	
	Non-Guitarists	4.30	5	0.70	87%	13%	
	Guitar	3.67	3	0.70	54%	46%	

Table 8. Student Survey: Student Perception Data

Survey Question	Sample Group	Mean	Mode	StDv	A/SA	N	D/SD	DNA
Most professional orchestral musicians or concert band musicians know how to read standard music notation and use it regularly.	Orchestra	4.45	5	0.69	91%	9%		
	Band	4.17	4	0.72	83%	17%		
	Non-Guitarists	4.30	5	0.70	87%	13%		
	Guitar	4.42	5	0.78	92%	4%	4%	
Most professional guitarists know how to read standard music notation and use it regularly.	Orchestra	4.45	5	0.93	91%		9%	
	Band	3.83	3	0.83	58%	42%		
	Non-Guitarists	4.13	5	0.92	74%	22%	4%	
	Guitar	3.92	4	0.93	71%	21%	8%	
I understand what I am playing on a deeper level because I can read standard music notation.	Orchestra	3.82	4	0.60	73%	27%		
	Band	4.27	4	0.65	83%	8%		8%
	Non-Guitarists	4.05	4	0.65	78%	17%		4%
	Guitar	2.21	2	0.78	8%	17%	75%	

Table 8 continued

professional music world. While it seems to be a foregone conclusion that orchestra and band musicians utilize their note-reading skills in their professional careers, the wide array of styles that are encompassed within the guitar world allow for a discrepancy in note-reading use within their subgroup. A final statement related to "Student Perception" probed whether students in the various subgroups saw deeper value in reading standard notation than simply "learning what notes to play." In developing this statement, I was correlating the perceptions of importance and necessity with the amount of information a student felt they received from the printed music.

No student gave an answer of 'disagree' when asked if note-reading was an important part of being successful on their instrument, however, a higher percentage of guitarists (46%) gave a "neutral/I don't know" answer than did non-guitarists (13%). The most frequent answer among band and orchestra students was "strongly agree." Even though most regard it as important, guitarists surveyed appear more likely to have *uncertainty* as to whether note-reading is important for success on their instrument.

Answers to whether note-reading was "necessary for the type of music they like to play" were widely distributed among guitar students, as evidenced by a larger standard deviation (1.55), compared to a low standard deviation among non-guitarists (0.70). Responses for non-guitarists tended to be close to the mean answer of 4.30, and had a mode

of "5" (strongly agree). Though the percentage of guitarists in agreement (42%) was close to the percentage who disagreed (46%), guitarist answers had a mean of 2.71 with "strongly disagree" as the most frequent answer. Only one non-guitarist (from orchestra) disagreed with the statement, but it was found in the interview process that the student misinterpreted the question to mean the 'music they like to listen to' rather than the music they play on their instrument. Upon clarification, this student would have answered 'agree,' further widening the gap between non-guitarist and guitarist responses.

A rephrasing of this question received nearly the same response among non-guitarists. This question used the wording "...important because it is the main method of learning music for my instrument." Curiously, guitarists were again divided by a close margin (54% to 46%), but instead of nearly half disagreeing, the 46% in the minority answered "neutral/I don't know." This may be due to the "classroom" overtones in how the second version was phrased. Responses to these two statements lead me to assert that band, and orchestra students in particular, almost unanimously acknowledge that note-reading is necessary for the music they enjoy playing. Guitarists seem to have a wide variety of feelings toward the necessity of note-reading, but the ones who do not regard it as "necessary" for the music they enjoy playing appear to feel strongly about their opinion.

The next two statements in the "Student Perception" category had to do with the use of note-reading among professional musicians. Across all subgroups, a majority of students agree that note-reading is widely and regularly used by professional musicians in orchestras and concert bands. The majority in all subgroups also appear to have a perception that professional guitarists are proficient in note-reading and use it regularly for their endeavors. There are more occurrences of neutral answers however, particularly from band students (42%) and from guitarists (21%). This seems to indicate that while students appear to have the perception that note-reading is used among all music groups professionally, some students, including the band and orchestra members, express a degree of uncertainty as to if or how guitarists use note-reading in their careers. In interviews, some guitar students further explained that they incorrectly thought the question was referring only to professional classical guitarists.

Guitarists and non-guitarists clearly answered differently to the statement claiming that they felt their knowledge of note-reading helped them to understand music on a deeper level. Non-guitarists either agreed (78%) or gave a neutral answer (17%), with one band student neglecting to answer the question all together. Guitarists (75%) answered "disagree" or "strongly disagree," with only 8% agreeing to the statement. The mean score for non-guitarists was 4.05 (agree) with a mode of 4, while the mean score for guitarists was 2.21 (disagree), with a mode of 2. Standard deviations for both groups were low, indicating that most of the responses

were clustered around the average and not diverse or varied in any significant way.

After reviewing the Perception data, I assert that many guitarists do not see note-reading as something that will help them to understand the music they are playing or learning, beyond knowing what the notes are. Based on my past experience and observation, they may be more likely to view it as a means to an end (simply getting the notes learned), while non-guitarists might be able to interpret multiple layers of information from their printed music in a more informed manner. In the classroom, guitarists might be spending so much time just trying to improve their reading skills that aspects of rhythm, meter, dynamics, and other musical elements might not get as much of the guitarist's attention compared to an orchestra or band student whose teacher and class has been able to move beyond the stage of "figuring out the notes."

Relevance Data

The goal of the following survey statements was to collect data on how relevant classroom activities are to the student's personal goals and interests in music. The code "Relevance" is in reference to the student's perception of how their classroom experience relates to what they desire to learn about music. Upon creation of the statements for this section, I suspected that students in orchestra or band would find their classroom activities more "relevant" than guitarists do. Again, this assumption stems from the great variety of styles, techniques, and possibilities that exist with

Survey Question	Sample Group	Mean	Mode	StDv	A/SA	N	D/SD
I personally enjoy listening to the styles of music played in orchestra or band classes outside of school.	Orchestra	2.64	1	1.50	36%	18%	46%
	Band	3.25	3	0.87	33%	50%	17%
	Non-Guitarists	2.96	3	1.22	35%	35%	30%
	Guitar	2.29	1	1.40	29%		71%
I personally enjoy listening to classical guitar music outside of school.	Orchestra	2.18	1	1.17	18%	18%	64%
	Band	3.00	3	1.04	25%	50%	25%
	Non-Guitarists	2.61	3	1.16	22%	35%	43%
	Guitar	2.46	2	1.02	21%	8%	71%
The types of music we learn by reading standard music notation relate closely with the music I personally enjoy listening to.	Orchestra	1.91	1	1.30	18%	18%	64%
	Band	3.42	4	1.00	50%	42%	8%
	Non-Guitarists	2.70	1	1.36	35%	30%	35%
	Guitar	2.75	2	1.19	33%	8%	58%
Our activities in music class relate closely to my goals as a musician.	Orchestra	3.18	4	1.17	46%	27%	27%
	Band	3.58	3	0.90	50%	42%	8%
	Non-Guitarists	3.39	4	1.03	48%	35%	17%
	Guitar	2.67	3	1.09	17%	38%	46%
I am a fan of specific professional musicians that play my instrument.	Orchestra	2.09	2	0.94	9%	18%	73%
	Band	2.67	3	0.98	17%	50%	33%
	Non-Guitarists	2.39	3	0.99	13%	35%	52%
	Guitar	3.92	4	1.18	75%	8%	17%

Table 9. Student Survey: Relevance (of Class to Personal Interests)

the guitar. With so many facets to explore in the guitar world, and available role models in the media, it seems likely that conflicting interests would occur more frequently in a guitar classroom, making certain activities appear irrelevant to some students.

Approximately one quarter to one third of students across all subgroups indicated that they personally enjoy listening to the classical music of their instrument or group in their personal lives. There does not appear to be a particular group that tends to "like" the classical music of their field more than another. Many students responded with neutral answers in each subgroup. I found it interesting that so few students reported personally enjoying the music of their field, yet so many students expressed that they like participating in their classes (see Participation Data). In student interviews, many orchestra and band students suggested that among other reasons, they enjoyed the camaraderie with classmates, a sense of belonging to a group, and the challenge of mastering their instrument. Interest in the specific music studied did not appear to be a major factor in their decision to participate. Non-guitarists also expressed a willingness to enjoy performing their classically oriented repertoire by viewing it as something entirely separate and unrelated to their "personal music." These students did not require that their personal music interests be incorporated into their music class at school.

Guitar students reported similar feelings on the subject of listening to classical music in their personal lives. When asked to follow up on this

70

topic, guitarists primarily expressed enjoying the friendship, atmosphere, and variety that their classes provided, but appeared to also place a great deal of importance on particular music being incorporated into the class. In interviews, many individuals reported that they would be disinterested in guitar if none of it related to their own personal tastes. This willingness, or lack thereof, to separate personal interests from the activities of the group proved to be a major difference between guitarists and non-guitarists. Overall, band and orchestra students are more likely to feel that the activity in their classrooms related to their goals as a musician. Guitarist responses were almost evenly split between positive, neutral, and negative answers.

When asked if students were "fans" of specific musicians who play the same instrument as they do, there was a sizeable difference in response between guitarists and non-guitarists. Most guitarists surveyed (75%) claimed to be fans of other professional guitar players, while only 13% of non-guitarists said the same. Half of the band students gave a "neutral/I don't know" response, while 73% of orchestra students gave a negative answer. Standard deviations for the responses of the three groups were all low, indicating that there was not much variation in answer within the subgroups. The mode for the guitar subgroup was "5" (strongly agree) while the most common answer for orchestra was "2" (disagree).

<u>Participation Data</u>

The "Participation" category of survey statements consisted of several statements relating to why students signed up for their music classes, their motivations for staying in the group, and possible future plans in music into adulthood. The vast majority of students from all groups agreed that they participate in their classes because they find it fun or have a personal interest in the group. Only 4% of guitarists and 4% of non-guitarists disagreed. One factor that I predicted would account for some student participation appears to be unimportant. I thought it was likely that at least some orchestra and band students would be involved in their classes because their parents wanted them to. According to the survey, the majority of students in all groups disagreed that their parents' wishes were a factor in participation. Unlike the first two questions, when asked if students sign up for their classes because it is easy to get a good grade, there was some variation in response (particularly from band students). Responses from guitarists and orchestra students indicated that 46-50% of students took the class, at least in part, because they found it easy to get a good grade. The majority of band students (67%) disagreed, indicating that grades in their class are either not easy to come by, or are simply not a factor in their desire to take the course.

Survey Question	Sample Group	Mean	Mode	StDv	A/SA	N	D/SD
I participate in my music class because it is fun, or I am interested in it.	Orchestra	4.00	4	0.77	73%	27%	
	Band	4.25	5	1.06	75%	17%	8%
	Non-Guitarists	4.13	5	0.92	74%	22%	4%
	Guitar	4.21	5	0.88	79%	17%	4%
I participate in my music class because my parents want me to.	Orchestra	2.09	2	0.54		18%	82%
	Band	1.83	1	0.83		25%	75%
	Non-Guitarists	1.96	2	0.71		22%	78%
	Guitar	1.71	2	0.86	8%		92%
I participate in my music class because it is easy to get a good grade.	Orchestra	2.91	4	1.22	46%	18%	36%
	Band	2.00	1	0.85		33%	67%
	Non-Guitarists	2.43	1	1.12	22%	26%	52%
	Guitar	3.33	4	1.05	50%	33%	17%
Playing music will continue to be an important part of my life beyond high school.	Orchestra	3.27	3	0.65	36%	55%	9%
	Band	3.83	4	0.72	67%	33%	
	Non-Guitarists	3.57	4	0.73	52%	44%	4%
	Guitar	3.67	3	0.82	54%	42%	4%
I plan to try to participate in a music group similar to the one I am in now as an adult.	Orchestra	2.64	3	0.92	9%	64%	27%
	Band	3.08	3	0.79	33%	42%	25%
	Non-Guitarists	2.87	3	0.87	22%	52%	26%
	Guitar	2.63	3	1.06	13%	42%	46%

Table 10. Student Survey: Participation Data

Motivation and Attitude Data

The codes "Motivation" and "Attitude" are combined because I
believe a student's attitude is likely to have a significant impact on their
motivation to continue improving their reading skills. The term *Attitude*
here is defined as the application of how the student feels toward a given
phenomenon (like or dislike). *Attitude* is differentiated from the
previously used code *Perception* in that the latter relates to the student's
understanding or interpretation of what reality is, not necessarily how they
feel about it. Statements in this part of the survey investigated simple ideas
about "if" students are motivated to improve their reading skills and "by
what" are they motivated.

According to the survey results, non-guitarists are more motivated to
improve or continue to work on their note-reading skills than guitarists.
While most guitar students reported a desire to improve their skills, 42%
of them were neutral or uncertain about their desire to get better at note-
reading. Most students across the subgroups denied that their motivation
was only due to teacher pressure or wanting to do it because musicians
they admire have reading skills. Most orchestra and band students
indicated that they are motivated to read simply because all of their music
is written in this fashion.

Almost half of the guitarists gave a neutral or uncertain answer to
the statement "I am motivated to read because it is necessary for my

Survey Question	Sample Group	Mean	Mode	StDv	A/SA	N	D/SD
I feel motivated to improve my music reading skills.	Orchestra	3.09	4	1.22	46%	18%	36%
	Band	4.17	4	0.72	83%	17%	
	Non-Guitarists	3.65	4	1.11	65%	17%	17%
	Guitar	3.42	3	0.97	42%	42%	17%
I am only motivated to read music because it is something my teacher makes me learn.	Orchestra	2.73	3	0.90	18%	46%	36%
	Band	1.92	1	1.00	8%	17%	75%
	Non-Guitarists	2.30	3	1.02	13%	30%	57%
	Guitar	2.79	2	1.10	29%	17%	54%
I am motivated to read music because it is necessary for my instrument.	Orchestra	3.91	4	0.83	82%	9%	9%
	Band	3.92	4	1.08	83%	8%	8%
	Non-Guitarists	3.91	4	0.95	83%	9%	9%
	Guitar	3.33	3	1.05	42%	46%	13%
I am motivated to read music because musicians I admire know how to read standard notation.	Orchestra	3.00	2	1.34	36%	18%	46%
	Band	2.58	2	1.16	17%	33%	50%
	Non-Guitarists	2.78	2	1.24	26%	26%	48%
	Guitar	2.50	2	1.10	21%	21%	58%

Table 11. Student Survey: Motivation and Attitude Data

Survey Question	Sample Group	Mean	Mode	StDv	A/SA	N	D/SD
I dislike having to read notes on the staff.	Orchestra	2.55	2	0.93	18%	27%	55%
	Band	2.00	2	0.95	8%	17%	75%
	Non-Guitarists	2.26	2	0.96	13%	22%	65%
	Guitar	3.88	4	1.03	79%	8%	13%
I can learn music for my instrument quicker or better without reading notes.	Orchestra	1.91	1	0.83		27%	73%
	Band	2.00	2	1.04	17%		83%
	Non-Guitarists	1.96	2	0.93	9%	13%	78%
	Guitar	3.46	4	1.14	67%	4%	29%
Note reading is just an old tradition that we are forced to learn, and is not necessary for being a musician today.	Orchestra	1.64	1	0.81		18%	82%
	Band	1.42	1	0.90	8%		92%
	Non-Guitarists	1.52	1	0.85	4%	9%	87%
	Guitar	3.50	4	1.02	63%	13%	25%

Table 11 continued

instrument." Guitar students as a group did not express a specific common factor that motivates them to read standard notation through any of the survey statements. However, many guitar students did convey in interviews that since there are other methods available to them that they deem "quicker," there is not much interest for some individuals to work on this skill. Non-guitarists do not have these alternative methods to rely on, so are more motivated by necessity. The multitude of ways to learn guitar music, combined with the general perception that music reading is not always used among all professional guitarists, leaves the beginning guitarist few incentives to spend time on this standard music proficiency.

The three central statements of "Attitude" in this survey had striking results. To the statements "I dislike having to read notes on the staff," "I can learn music for my instrument quicker or better without reading notes on the staff," and "Note-reading is just an old tradition that we are forced to learn, and is not necessary for being a musician today," guitarists and non-guitarists had polar opposite responses. Most guitarists surveyed (79%) agree that they do not like having to read standard notation, while 65% of non-guitarists reported the opposite. Orchestra (73%) and band students (83%) overwhelmingly disagreed with the second statement regarding learning better without reading standard notation. In contrast, the majority of guitar students agreed with this statement (67%). Non-guitarists in agreement that they learn their music better without reading standard notation came from the band subgroup, perhaps due to

the self-reported tendencies of some that prefer to learn material "by ear."

A high percentage (87%) of non-guitarists disagreed with the statement

"Note-reading is just an old tradition that we are forced to learn, and is not

necessary for being a musician today." In contrast, guitar students were

still split dramatically, with 63% in agreement with the statement and 25%

disagreeing.

Classroom Expectation Data

The last two items on the survey gathered information about

whether students in particular subgroups were able to accurately

anticipate the types of activities they would undertake in their music

classes prior to the school year beginning. More guitarists (54%) reported

that their expectations of what they would learn in class were inaccurate

than non-guitarists (17%). Orchestra and band students appear to know

what to expect from their classes in advance compared to guitar students.

While 50% of guitar students indicated that they did not anticipate having

to read standard notation in class, only 8% of non-guitarists said the same.

Survey Question	Sample Group	Mean	Mode	StDv	A/SA	N	D/SD
Our activities in music class match expectations I had when I entered school this year.	Orchestra	3.82	4	1.08	82%	9%	9%
	Band	3.58	4	1.08	67%	8%	25%
	Non-Guitarists	3.70	4	1.06	74%	9%	17%
	Guitar	2.54	1	1.44	29%	17%	54%
I did not expect that I would have to read standard music notation when I signed up for this class.	Orchestra	1.64	1	0.92		27%	73%
	Band	1.83	1	1.27	8%	17%	75%
	Non-Guitarists	1.74	1	1.10	4%	22%	74%
	Guitar	3.00	4	1.32	50%	8%	42%

Table 12. Student Survey: Classroom Expectation Data

Chapter Summary

Students were selected for participation in this study from a combination of a musical background assessment and purposeful sampling techniques. Students then completed a thiry-five question survey and participated in an audio recorded interview. Survey questions were created under the codes Self-Assessment, Student Perception, Relevance, Participation, Motivation and Attitude, and Classroom Expectation.

Findings from the Self-Assessment portion of the survey revealed that guitarists are more likely than orchestra or band students to find note-reading confusing or difficult, and that each of the three types of music groups in this study had different preferences in their approach to learning music in class. The typical orchestra student was likely to use note-reading skills to learn new material, with minimal emphasis on listening or alternative forms of notation, and felt that accuracy would be achieved after only a short period of study. Of the two non-guitar subgroups, the band classes had more students that use their listening or aural skills to learn new music, yet this subgroup appeared the most confident of their ability to play new material with little to no practice time. Guitarists reported using alternative written forms of music, such as tablature or chord charts, or their listening skills in lieu of standard notation. The typical guitar student taking part in this research did not feel confident that they could play new music accurately without multiple practice sessions.

Student Perception data showed that orchestra and band students found note-reading to be an essential skill with direct benefit, while guitar students appeared less certain. Non-guitarists acknowledged that it is common for professionals in their discipline to have note-reading ability, which most certainly impacts their view of the necessity of this skill. Overall, guitarists did not deem note-reading as unimportant, however there is uncertainty for some as to how note-reading helps them, and a clear acknowledgement from nearly half the students that it is not needed for the particular styles of guitar music they like to learn. Curiously, most guitarists involved in the survey felt that professional guitarists do read music, but that does not appear to be a factor in all guitarist's perceptions of its necessity or importance to what they aspire to learn.

Survey data showed that orchestra and band students found their classes to be relevant to their goals and expectations in music. However, this relevance was unrelated to personal tastes in music. Non-guitarists were not regular listeners of the types of music studied in their classes, and they denied being "fans" of any musicians that played their instrument. Still, these students enjoy their music class and are motivated by their friends and intrinsic drive to learn their instrument. The non-guitar students also appeared to have a more accurate expectation of what their class would entail compared to guitarists.

The typical guitarist responded that they were fans of other guitarists, but it is difficult to discern an overall perspective on whether

the class is relevant to the students from the survey data alone. Guitarists did reveal that they did not necessarily know what to expect from their class prior to signing up. Since guitar students are more likely to be fans of, and influenced by, famous musicians of their own instrument than non-guitarists, it stands to reason that guitarists might wish to emulate musicians in addition to their classroom instructor. This could potentially lead to a perception that some activities in the class are not relevant to their goals if the influences conflict. In Chapter 5, interview data reveals more information on the variety of activities and genres studied in these guitar classes, and how the students feel about them.

An important finding related to Participation Data was that the majority of students in all classes appeared to be interested in their class because of the level of fun they have in the course, rather than other factors such as parental desires or academics and grades. While all students reported uncertainty or neutrality with regard to participating in music groups similar to their classes as adults, band students and guitarists in this study both seem more likely to continue playing music beyond high school than orchestra students.

Finally, related to Motivation and Attitude, guitarists participating in the study are more likely than students of the other groups to see standard notation as an archaic tradition that is not relevant to their goals in music. They may see it as an inconvenience and a hurdle that others are making them navigate, while some guitarists feel that it is valuable. Non-

guitarists do not mind having to read standard notation, and do not resent

having to do it because it is accepted as the primary method for learning

their music. Many of the beginning guitar students participating in this

study apparently do not see standard music notation as something that

facilitates learning their music. From their perspective, since it is not the

easiest, quickest way, it is probably seen as an obstacle keeping them from

learning how to play the music. Non-guitarists have trouble relating to this

perspective, since all of their music and instruction is connected to

standard notation.

CHAPTER 5

STUDENT AND TEACHER INTERVIEWS

This chapter provides student and teacher perspectives on themes drawn from the survey and interview data, which are presented using the person's own words as much as possible. Teacher opinions and perspectives are included to provide a deeper understanding of the nature of their classes, their curriculum, and to occasionally support or contrast with the student responses. Following analysis of the student survey, I developed interview questions to better understand the various student perspectives with greater detail. Students were interviewed with a series of open ended questions, sometimes eliciting further discussion or prompting additional questions only asked in the context of that individual conversation. Teachers were interviewed after all survey data was collected so that information from the students could be used to inform the topics I would address with instructors.

During this phase of the study, most student interviews were conducted in rooms adjacent to their music class or in a hallway near the music wing of the particular school. Teachers continued their normal class routines, and excused individual students for me to interview. Typical interviews lasted for approximately ten to thirty minutes, depending on how talkative the students were. Students were informed that their responses would be audio recorded. Students did not appear to be shy or intimidated by the presence of the recording device, and often seemed to

forget the recorder was even there once the interview began. Following

each day of interviews, I transcribed the collected data from each student

into a word processor for analysis.

Interview data in this chapter is organized by general themes that

emerged throughout the collection process. Similar to the coding of the

Student Survey questions and results, I identified these general themes

and labeled them as follows: *Music Reading Processes and Ability*,

Necessity and Importance of Music Reading, *Expectations and Relevance*

of Activities, *Classroom Music versus Personal Music*, and *Private*

Lessons and their Relation to the Classroom. Within these themes,

specific perspectives and notions are discussed, comparisons are made,

and students that represent the majority opinion or perspective of a

subgroup are quoted, along with discussions of counter-examples found in

the data (perspectives that do not support the theme). Where applicable,

certain data collected from teachers are interspersed throughout this

chapter, while other samples of teacher input are presented in Chapter 6.

Music Reading Processes and Notions of Difficulty

Most student interviews (Appendix B) began with a question about

how the students approach new material that they receive in class. A series

of questions on the Student Survey (Appendix A) that related to this topic

determined that most orchestra and band students were confident that

they could play new material accurately within the first few minutes of

class, or at least after a practice period of twenty minutes on that initial

day. The majority of guitar students, and some orchestra students, reported that they would normally require more than an initial class period to be able to play new music with accuracy. The interview question "How do you go about learning new music that you get in class?" was meant to have the students bring into focus their individual approaches to tackling new material, and then use that information to segue into a conversation about any difficulties they may have experienced.

One band student from Southfield Secondary said that he would either follow the teacher instructions or, as he expressed: "[I would] just go by my own way and try to learn the notes as fast as possible. . . . I try to remember sections, and each time I go through them I try to remember parts I had trouble with." This was a typical response to the question across all three subgroups, in which a student's "process" mainly consisted of memorizing sections of notes, and observing spots where difficulty was encountered. Other statements common to all subgroups also related closely to the teacher instructions for the activity, such as: "My teacher usually assigns certain measures to look at and I try to read it over and over again," or, "I play as much as I can and then ask my teacher for help."

Statements did materialize that were unique to specific subgroups, and occurred on multiple occasions, causing me to consider them as representative of a certain population within each class. Many orchestra and band students cited clear learning strategies, such as silently going over fingerings, naming notes in rhythm, singing, or tapping out rhythms

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prior to attempting to play. Guitarists made very few analogous comments. Orchestra students offered such statements as: "I like to move my fingers as if I were playing while I think about what the notes are," or, "I say the note names to myself slowly while playing," and, "If I know the song I'll try to like, sing it in my head so it's less confusing." Many band students conveyed similar strategies. Other strategies cited by band students related to the use of aural skills: "A lot of times I'll try to sing my notes, but I'm still not as good at that as other people in class," claimed one horn player. A trumpeter described his approach as "listening to other parts that are similar to mine, or tapping the beat before I play."

Interestingly, these statements did not directly correlate with comments made by the instructors, whose reported methods differed. It is possible that students do not always make the connection between warm-up activities and the music presented later in the lesson. Mrs. Larson, orchestra director at Southfield Secondary School shared that, "I always go with rote first," when asked about how she introduces new material in class. She continued: "Usually, I sneak it into our bow warm-ups and then present it later in notation. . . . I demonstrate before showing it to them on paper." Mrs. Edwards, middle school band director at Riverview Secondary, reported that her classes learn by "initially reading notes, then learning by fingering through." These comments appear to contradict the approaches preferred by some of their own students, where many string players gravitated toward initial reading or fingering, and band students

frequently mentioned using their listening or singing skills. Reponses

among band students, however, did parallel comments made by Mrs.

Mullins, band director at Southfield Secondary School, who stated: "We

sing and use other aural techniques before we play."

Only 25% of the guitar students interviewed described similar

learning strategies. Comments that recurred frequently from guitarists

suggest that many desired to supplement the notes they were given. They

would often say things like: I "study the notes and write in the letters so I

can read which ones they are," and that I "write the string number and fret

number near the note and read those." One first-year guitar student

answered: "I never really look at it, someone eventually just shows me how

it goes, and I remember it that way." It would seem that these particular

students within the guitar subgroup have decided that they require a

certain "translation" of the music before being able to play it confidently.

Tablature, also referred to as *tab*, is a form of notation, originating

in the sixteenth century for the lute and keyboard instruments, which is

commonly used today as a kind of shorthand for guitar music. In its

modern form, it is particularly prevalent in commercial music. The

original practice in the Renaissance made use of fret numbers or letters,

placed on a staff that literally represented the strings of the instrument.

The multiple systems of tablature in use at the time were varied, but most

included symbols above the staff to indicate the intended note values

(Read 1969). Modern day tablature typically displays a fret number on a

line that represents one of the six strings, with no indication of other elements, such as rhythm, meter, or articulation. It is commonly found on Internet web sites, which guitarists use to learn the notes or chords of popular songs. Most classical guitarists do not make use of tablature in its current popular usage, often viewing it as an unsatisfactory and incomplete method. In interviews, another common implication drawn from guitarists is that even if they were reading the notes, they were actually performing a mental conversion from standard notation into tablature.

This very thought was conveyed by Dr. Stephens, guitar teacher at Riverview Secondary:

> I have found that students try to transfer their conceptual understanding of tab reading to note-reading. . . . Once a student knows tab, a new level of confusion is present when learning to read staff notation; both are very different conceptually, but they sort of look alike.

Many student comments reinforce this hypothesis, including the following from a student in ninth grade:

> I guess I read the notes okay. I mean, I know when I see the note on the staff, I know what fret that's supposed to be and my finger just goes there. I don't read them that quick though. I don't really know what the letter names are all the time. I just think of which string a note is supposed to be on and which fret to play. Or, if there's a scale pattern that the notes are in, I can figure out where I'm supposed to start and I usually end up being pretty close. Sometimes I can kind of look at the notes and try to memorize the fret numbers.

In contrast to the orchestra and band directors that introduce new music with aural approaches, the guitar director at West Ridge High School, Mr.

Hughes, and Dr. Stephens both say that they primarily start new music by immediately reading at sight. Mr. Hughes replied: "We read notes right away, and then I model for them with a metronome." "We read it, for better or worse," stated Dr. Stephens.

Not all students in each subgroup gave answers that paralleled the trends described in this chapter. Some orchestra students indicated that they write in fingerings on their music, while some individuals in band expressed that they write in letter names as well. Comments such as these were far fewer among non-guitarists, but are important counter-examples of the trends that appeared in the interviews. Likewise, not all guitar students presented themselves as seeking "a way out" of reading standard notation. Though in the minority, many students in the guitar subgroup gave responses that were vague, but did not necessarily suggest that they seek alternatives to standard notation: "I just figure out little bits at a time until I remember it," and, "I play it over and over and go back to fix mistakes," are examples of other types of responses collected from guitar students.

Occasionally, discussions branched off into questions about the level of difficulty the student faced when learning new music in class. In relation to a question on the Student Survey (Appendix A), I reconfirmed with the student how long it would take them to begin to play new music with accuracy. During this portion of the conversation it became obvious

to me that many non-guitarists had a different standard for "accuracy" compared to most guitar students.

A violinist had indicated on her survey that she would typically take longer than the class period to play her music accurately, but in the interview stated: "I'll usually learn the notes right away but then take it home to work on the dynamics and my tone." A clarinetist expressed a similar thought, saying: "I can play along with the group that first period, but then I'll take the music home to make it better, or faster." Most guitar students reported that they would need longer than an initial class period to learn their material, but elements beyond playing notes, such as dynamic considerations, tone, or other aspects of musicality were not mentioned. When asked about their definition of "learned," many guitarists said things like: "I guess I've learned it when I can remember all the notes without making mistakes," and, "I work on it until my fingers just know where to go; until it's programmed in."

Some guitar students declared note-reading as "not a big deal," or "pretty simple if you study it." A quick examination of the individuals making statements such as these indicated that most were former players of other instruments such as piano or violin. While not all guitarists indicated that note-reading was difficult, the majority expressed a clear preference for other methods. A tenth grade guitarist exclaimed:

> I get note-reading, but I just don't understand why the people who write the stuff wouldn't want to make it as easy as possible. It just takes so long to figure out. I have to think about what note that is, and then which string I want to play it on, then which fret it is, and

also what fingering to use, then how long to hold it out. It's much quicker just to see the number on a line and hear how it's supposed to go.

Other guitar students made comments such as, "I don't mind it--it just takes a while for me to memorize," and "I can read it better after I know what it's supposed to sound like." Non-guitarists indicated similarities to guitarists on occasion, with statements like, "It takes me a while," or "I don't like note-reading, but I eventually get it."

Necessity and Importance of Music Reading

A series of questions in each interview prompted students to explain how or if music reading is necessary or important to what they want to play. The majority of students in all groups agreed, and almost unanimously in orchestra and band, that note-reading was an important skill to acquire. A small handful of students, mostly guitarists, gave contrasting answers. For the question, "Do you feel that reading notes is important for being a successful musician?," typical responses from orchestra students were: "I think it's important for first violins to read well because you hear their part more, but I think the accompaniment is important too," and, "yes, because most of the music is written in notes." A cellist added, "The score tells you a bunch of information you couldn't get from just listening, and you couldn't remember it all." Many guitar students mirrored these comments, including one from an eighth grader who offered: "In order to play the music you get, you need to know how to read it the way it's written."

No students described note-reading as "unimportant" in the survey or interview process, however, there was a definite uncertainty regarding its usefulness for approximately half of the guitarists interviewed. This uncertainty was sometimes expressed directly, and at other times only implied when the student could not articulate a specific musical reason for its importance: "It's necessary because I have to do it to get a good grade," remarked one ninth grade guitar student. Others said, "I think it's important. I don't know why," and, "I think it's useful, I mean, because others do it, but I don't know. I get by without it."

Though some students had difficulty expressing specific reasons for its importance, teachers explained in interviews how they convey to students that note-reading is necessary. "I talk at length about how cool it is to be able to play with other people, just because we speak the same musical language," said Mrs. Larson (orchestra). Mrs. Edwards (band) expressed a link between reading necessity and participation in her class, saying: "They can't play in band if they can't read notes." Guitar teachers also conveyed practical perspectives that they share with students. Mr. Hughes said: "I stress that the 'real world' of music requires the reading of standard notation," while Mr. Boyd stressed that: "If [students] wish to play music with anyone other than guitar players . . . standard notation is the communication vehicle. Ability with standard notation enables a player to have a skill that the 'ear players' don't." Dr. Stephens acknowledged that both note-reading and tablature are important in the

guitar world, and but that standard notation provides more insight for the student:

> I acknowledge that tab is a legitimate, and older, form of musical notation; each has advantages and drawbacks. We explicitly discuss this in class. Being able to read and understand standard notation is essential if students want to understand how music works.

In an attempt to delve deeper into this topic, I reminded students of a question on the Student Survey (Appendix A) that had asked whether professional musicians who play the same instrument as the student read music regularly. I then asked, "Do you think it's very likely for someone on your instrument to become successful without knowing how to read notes?" A seventh grade orchestra student replied: "I don't think so, they couldn't memorize it. It would be hard, and they might not be able to be in a professional orchestra because they might get more difficult music and not know how to do the bow strokes and stuff like that." Similarly, a seventh grader in band stated: "I think if they have a lot of ability then yeah, but they might need to be trained a little. They probably couldn't be in a professional group."

Guitarists responded differently to this question. Some students felt that professional guitarists might not be as successful if they "did not know much of the theory" behind the music they were playing. Most made claims such as: "A whole lot of guitar players on radio and television do not read music." A beginning guitar student at Southfield Secondary School had this to say:

Yes, they can. I think that rock guitarists get famous even though they didn't do music in a school kind of way. What matters is that they make cool music and people like it, and they can do that just by playing. I don't think they write their songs down. They just remember what they came up with and they don't need to read music.

Most of the guitar students participating in the research answered questions with only popular or commercial styles of music in mind. Only once in the interviews did any guitar student mention classical or jazz guitar. A student who took private classical guitar lessons did consider those areas of music when replying to this question:

I know that guitar players who go to music school in college use note-reading, so if you go that direction you'd have to be able to read. Not everyone does that with guitar though. You can just play for fun, or you can be in a band. Different people can get by without doing it.

Classroom Expectations and Relevance of Activities

Other topics covered in the interview questions were the relevance of classroom activities to student interests, expectations the students had had prior to beginning the course, and goals the students may have set for themselves in music. I began this discussion with the students by repeating a question from the Student Survey (Appendix A), in which I asked whether they were surprised by anything that was taught to them in class, or if they were able to accurately predict what their music classes would entail. I wanted to gather additional data from those who indicated that they did not expect to do certain things in class, even though many reported anticipating their classroom activities accurately. Following this initial discussion, I attempted to identify what types of goals these

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students maintained in music. Finally, for students whose expectations were not met by the class, I continued the conversation by asking if there was "anything you would change about your class to make it more relevant to your interests?"

Orchestra and Band Classes

Mrs. Larson speculated that her orchestra classes have an accurate prediction of what the class will be like, except for "the class size and variety of instruments." She continued: "The elementary classes are small, often under ten kids, and frequently homogeneous by instrument. Some of my classes push fifty, and include all four instruments. They seem most surprised with anything written: vocabulary, theory, reflections, etc." Most orchestra and band students reported that they had indeed anticipated their courses accurately. String players made statements such as, "I expected what we do, like, older music and stuff. I didn't really expect anything different," and, "I don't know, I just expected to play the instrument." Band directors suggested that their students may have accurate expectations of the class in terms of content, but not necessarily in regards to student conduct. Mrs. Edwards shared that "not all seventh graders" knew what to expect in her band class (behaviorally), while Mrs. Mullins stated that:

> By the time students are in my program, I have usually worked with their groups and they know how I run a rehearsal. I also spend a bit of time travelling to the elementary schools, describing the middle school band experience so that they aren't shocked when they get here. Occasionally, their experience does not match their expectations. Sometimes that is a product of moving here from

another school that did things very differently, and sometimes it is a result of poor behavior choices that lead to a much more negative experience than anyone hopes for.

The typical daily routines for the orchestra and band classes mostly mirrored each other, with teachers moving from instrument-appropriate warm-ups or breathing exercises, to sight reading or method book work, to repertoire rehearsal. Orchestra and band teachers estimated that 80-100% of their time in class is spent working with standard notation. Orchestra classes seemed more likely to use warm-ups that did not involve reading, as teachers described part of their warm-up routines as "bow techniques or rhythm practice by ear."

Most student responses focused more on the content of the classes rather than how the rehearsals were run. Few responses indicated inaccurate expectations, however, a band student did offer: "I thought it would be a lot of classical music, but I found out there was more variety. We do some movie music and, like, old American types of songs." Very few of these non-guitarists were able to identify a specific goal they have in music. When asked about future plans or goals, almost all orchestra and band students gave answers such as, "I don't know," or, "I haven't really thought about that." A saxophone student whose answers went against the trend for non-guitarists expressed dissatisfaction that his class did not play enough "cool music." He went on to say: "I thought maybe we'd do some jazzy kind of things, so I guess I hoped for that more."

Guitar Classes

In contrast to most orchestra and band responses, over half the guitarists claimed that they did not know what to expect when signing up for their classes. Students answered the question on expectations with responses such as: "I didn't think about it, I just signed up because it sounded fun," or "I expected us to play songs and chords. I didn't know that guitar could read notes." Other quotes from guitar students included: "I like my class, but it's different than I thought. I thought maybe we would work more independently and not as, like, the whole group. But, I don't know how that would really work out."

To put these perspectives into the context of their respective environment, three of the guitar teachers interviewed provided details on what occurs in their classrooms. Many aspects of the programs are similar, but several elements vary depending on the instructor, creating an occasional lack of congruence not observed among the orchestra and band classes. At Riverview Secondary, Dr. Stephens's guitar curriculum consists of two main playing styles: pick-style and finger-style. "I pull musical examples from many genres illustrative of those two basic styles," he explained. Within this structure, he emphasizes proper hand positions, and reports "constantly" testing progress and ability in note-reading. Stephens continued:

> The ability to read is necessary and is pervasive in the curriculum, although there are days and topics when it is less explicit. . . . I teach tablature in conjunction with note-reading . . . I have found that, by addressing tab explicitly, there is far less confusion, and

students who are fluent in tab reading are better able to make the transition from reading tab to reading staff notation.

According to Stephens, Riverview's beginning guitar classes typically consist of an introduction activity or warm-up, a review of "old material," introduction of new material, individual practice time or testing, followed by a "pop tune" at the end of class. Riverview's guitar program has been in existence for more than thirty years, under the guidance of only a few instructors. Stephens cites this as a factor in student expectations, explaining that he has "been around long enough, and the program has been around long enough, that most kids know what to expect. Still, some are surprised that it is a serious, sequential program that requires effort."

The guitar director at West Ridge High School, Mr. Hughes, describes the typical class period in his program as "a five-to-ten minute warm up period of scale and right-hand exercises, followed by repertoire rehearsal . . . with periodic sectionals as needed." Mr. Hughes also has professional experience as a clarinetist and band director in a neighboring school district. His classes learn "classical playing position" as well as "folk position" and their respective techniques. They also learn to "pluck with the fingers" as well as playing "with a flat pick." He implies through his responses that his students work less with popular music, and more with method books and standard notation:

> Beginning students learn repertoire and tunes from an assortment of beginning books. Attempts at incorporating contemporary rock and pop tunes were less than successful, as there was much disagreement on selections. . . . I teach them "how" to read tablature because they will encounter it, and all forms of musical

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communication is a plus. Most kids prefer tablature saying they find it easier to comprehend.

Mr. Hughes reports that 90% of his testing involves reading notes, and he uses the same percentage to describe how much class time students spend reading standard notation in general. When asked if his students have accurate expectations of the content of his course, Hughes said that he tries his best to "render an honest representation of what we do . . . no bait and switch." The phrase "bait and switch" that Hughes used here is in reference to the stereotypical reputation some guitar teachers may have earned by enticing students to take their courses with promises of popular music, only to focus heavily on classical traditions once the course is underway.

Mr. Boyd, guitar teacher at Central High School, structures his beginning classes similar to Riverview's, with a warm-up routine, overview of the class for the day, announcements, a review of something "older," introductions of new concepts, followed by playing something familiar to the students at the end of the period. In contrast to the other programs, he estimates that only 25% of the class time is spent on material involving note-reading. Boyd does report testing on standard notation, however he describes it as "irregular," or "every few weeks." According to Mr. Boyd, Central's beginning guitar class focuses on "pop tunes to illustrate chord changes, and reading songs from a text book." He continues, saying that "we read chords, introduce the strings, frets, and tablature briefly at the beginning . . . and standard notation." Also in contrast to other guitar

programs surveyed, Boyd's students "use folk style" sitting positions exclusively, while the others appear to explore both popular and classical postures. In response to questions about student perceptions of the class before signing up, Boyd said:

> In Guitar 1, they don't have a clue, even some of the "players." Good on Guitar Hero [a video game] does not make one a guitar player, and most are surprised by how much effort . . . must go into being successful. I don't think they even think about how guitar might be taught, therefore what I do is just part of the curriculum.

Given the variety of objectives described in the various guitar classes, it is difficult overall to perceive these classes as being relevant or irrelevant to a student's interests. As reported previously, guitar students seemed to make such comments only in regards to specific activities that happen during their classes. One student, representing about half of the guitarists interviewed, said "I think parts of my class are good for what I wanted to learn. Other parts, like reading and stuff, I just do it because we have to." Many students felt that note-reading "wasn't a big deal," even if they didn't have a direct desire to learn it. Another student answered, "I'd say that what we do in class relates to my goals, because all of it will make you better."

On the subject of student goals in music, guitarists appeared to be much more aware and succinct about their desires. "I wanted to learn how to write songs," exclaimed a sophomore guitarist. Others stated, "I signed up because there was this song I wanted to be able to play. I saw a guy playing it on the Internet and I thought it was cool," and "My goal is to

start a band and play shows around school, at like the talent show and stuff." Compared to the mostly vague orchestra and band responses, only a handful of guitarists gave neutral, indifferent responses on this topic. However, it was clear in the interviews that many of the guitar students had some kind of desire, goal, or plan that was propelling them to take guitar class. Most non-guitarists appeared to have trouble expressing a music-related ambition for their future. A likely factor in this is the exposure the guitar enjoys in the media and in live performance, which is likely a powerful motivator for guitar students, compared to the relative lack of commercial presence for orchestra and band groups.

Finally, students who conveyed that they had different expectations for their music class from the reality of the class were asked if there was anything they would change about their course to make it more relevant to their interests. One orchestra student said: "I would like to try playing some songs that people are familiar with, just for fun," while a clarinet player in band stated, "I think it would be cool to play more music from TV shows and things like that." Students that thought their class could do more to relate to their personal interests were a minority in the non-guitarist group, in fact, most orchestra and band students did not express any concerns about the relevance of their music class. The majority appeared to find their classes relevant to their needs because they "knew what to expect" and were primarily participating because of their intrinsic

"interest in the group" and degree of fun they were having in orchestra or band.

<p style="text-align:center">Classroom Music versus Personal Music</p>

A major theme discussed in each student interview was music they listened to for enjoyment in their spare time, and how that music related to what they played in the classroom. Music identified by the students as "personal music" included rock, classic rock, heavy metal, rap, hip-hop, and country music. Very seldom, students reported listening to jazz or classical music as well. "I guess I like more modern rock," exclaimed a seventh grader in orchestra. Other comments from orchestra students included, "Um, hip hop and rock," and, "pretty much just country, I guess. I like rap too." Band students answered in similar fashion, one citing that he listened to "mostly techno and rock, like indie, independent styles of music," and another who said, "I listen to, like, all music except for like rap and stuff like that."

Teachers described the music that their beginning ensembles play as "traditional folk songs and excerpts of classical music," in orchestra, and anything "fun and exciting to keep them interested," in band. Mrs. Larson added that she incorporates some commercial music into her orchestra classes, but "more for listening than playing . . . just for enrichment." Mrs. Mullins explained further that she occasionally includes some music from films or television to contrast their primary band material, typically prepared for adjudication or festivals. Mrs. Edwards

shared that she uses band method books that incorporate some elements of "rock, jazz, and classical" music. These occasional "pop music" components of the band curriculum are primarily what students were referring to on the occasions where a relation between their classroom activity and their personal music was indicated.

I asked the students if they felt like there was any kind of relationship between the music played in their classes, and the music they liked to listen to at home. "No, they're really different," claimed a violinist. Other students in orchestra said, "They're totally separate," and "I think they are two totally separate things, but I sometimes think what we play in class is catchy, and I might listen to it on my own sometimes." Most band students made similar remarks, however, one claimed that the classroom music related to her personal music because she will "sometimes listen to similar things at home." When students indicated a divide between their classroom and personal music, yet appeared satisfied with their experience, some natural follow-up questions were generated: "Are you okay with your classroom music and your personal music existing separately? Can you enjoy your music experience in school without feeling that the class should incorporate 'your' music?" Orchestra and band students unanimously answered yes, or "yeah." One student went on to say, "I don't really mind not having the music I personally like [at school]." This was a very important theme identified from the orchestra and band student responses. They conveyed a willingness to divide their personal

tastes from their classroom music, which was not present in most of the responses from guitarists.

Based on their answers, guitar students seemed more likely to be interested in "extreme" genres of popular music, with some mentioning "death metal" or "thrash music," as interests. However, the guitarist responses overall also included many of the same types of music reported by the other subgroups. "I'm into metal, like heavy stuff," offered a ninth grade guitarist. Some reported that they like "darker, mellow music," and "older groups like Metallica and Van Halen," while others noted that they like "hip-hop and dance music," or "pop and singer-songwriter styles." Guitarists also reported specific instrumentalists or solo artists more often than students of the other subgroups. "I'm really into John Mayer, he's a really good bluesy player," said a junior in beginning guitar. Another student said "the guitarist from Avenged Sevenfold is pretty cool."

Guitar teachers each reported that there are popular components to their classes alongside the classical traditions and standard notation method books. On the role popular music plays in his classroom, Dr. Stephens commented that he uses it "to illustrate and practice various techniques-like 'power chords,' barre chords, and 'alternate picking.' Pop songs are usually taught in that context. Also, sometimes just for fun." He goes on to say: "I make a point to talk about it [popular music] and remained 'plugged in'. . . . I think it is essential if the class is to remain relevant. Also, I find that the more I know about contemporary pop music,

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the more credibility I have with the students." Mr. Hughes at West Ridge High School indicated that it is more difficult for him to keep up with modern pop music: "I will play rock tunes that I know, and show them to the students by rote if they are simple enough, but honestly, with each passing year my knowledge of rock tunes becomes more dated and irrelevant." Mr. Boyd at Central High School claims that popular music is somewhat applicable to his objectives, but that he is "not driven by it." He remains interested in teaching certain parts of the "popular" style even if certain elements are no longer in use: "They love it even if it is old school, and they won't admit it. We work on the blues. Improvisatory soloing has disappeared from much popular music but I still value it and teach it."

All of the guitar teachers indicated that their classes focus on popular music in addition to note-reading and other components of classical tradition in music. Still, not all guitar students felt that their personal musical tastes were necessarily nurtured in the classroom. "He does a lot of variety, in different styles and stuff, but we don't really play any heavy music," shared an eighth grade student. Others felt that certain songs they favor will be taught in class on occasion, but the students still desire "more of those kinds of songs," to the exclusion of genres other students would enjoy. Some students appeared to thrive on the variety in their class. A student from Dr. Stephens's class said: "I love the way we jump from one thing to another. One minute we'll read notes from a book,

and do a classical thing, another time we'll strum a Bob Marley song, and then later we might be working on a Metallica riff."

When asked if there was any kind of relationship between the music played in their classes and the music they liked to listen to at home, responses from guitarists were mixed. A ninth grade student in Mr. Hughes's class said: "Yes and no. We play a few things I like, but we also do a lot of classical stuff and finger picking that I wouldn't listen to." Other comments that expressed mixed emotions were: "I like most of what we play and have a lot of it on my iPod. Usually the stuff I don't like is the music in the books or when we're reading notes," and "We don't play too much of what I'm into. I think he doesn't like country music, or he thinks kids in the class won't like it, so we don't play it. I do like some of the classic rock though." Though there were also many positive comments about the popular music in the classroom, such as, "I love the music we play." Guitar students seemed much more disappointed than non-guitarists if their musical tastes were not applied in the curriculum. Whereas orchestra and band students consented to the reality of their curriculum diverging from their personal music, guitar students gave the impression that they greatly desired, if not needed, their personal music to be a part of their study at school. Elements of the curriculum that did not involve popular music were seldom mentioned in the discussions with guitar students, even though the guitar teachers indicated at least an equal

focus on music fundamentals like note-reading, and learning away from

the popular music arena. Mr. Boyd offered his insight to this phenomenon:

> Guitar students expect that the classroom music will be like their personal tastes. Band kids learned by playing notes, and they experience pleasure in their classes as the whole group plays better and better. But that is a different animal. All performance and the teaching of the instrument [in band] is done by private teachers. Parents buy into the traditional instruments but not many of these students play beyond high school, whereas guitar students get hooked for life.

Dr. Stephens at Riverview Secondary School speculated that beginning

students are not ready for a separation from their personal tastes until

they have the technical capability to work on the more satisfying parts of

the non-commercial literature:

> Beginning to develop an appreciation for classical or jazz is tough in beginning guitar because playing those styles of music well is beyond the abilities of most beginning level students, at least examples of those styles that are complex enough to be interesting.

Private Lessons and Their Relation to the Classroom

While fairly low percentages of participants were involved in private

lessons outside of school, I still had the opportunity to discuss the

experiences related to private instruction of several students in each

subgroup. I was interested to examine how private lessons corresponded

to the material covered in the school group, and to study the differences

between private instruction for the guitar and private instruction on

orchestra or band instruments.

Amber, a cellist at Riverview Secondary School, did not take private

lessons on her instrument at the time of the interview, but did so prior to

starting the school year for about six months. "My lessons were with a teacher near my neighborhood. Someone my mom knew." Amber traveled to her instructor's home for lessons, which were forty-five minutes per week. "We would usually start with hand exercises and scales, and then read exercises out of a method book. . . . I had some solo pieces he would give me, but sometimes we'd play duets." Amber described her lessons as focusing heavily on technique and posture, and always having music to read. She reported that, on occasion, her instructor would teach her something by ear, particularly if it was a "tricky rhythm" or a "confusing part." When asked about repertoire choice, Amber stated, "I don't really know a lot of music to play, so I just did whatever he gave me, mostly out of a book." Amber's experiences with private cello lessons provided a smooth transition into her orchestra class at the start of the school year. "I think the lessons related pretty good with what we do in class. The music might be different, but I play the same, and the things my teacher [at school] has me do are the same."

David, a beginning horn player at the same school, currently takes thirty-minute lessons at a nearby music store. He primarily thinks of his lessons as extra help for what he is learning in class. "We work out of the same method books, and so I can go over stuff I didn't get in class, and he can help me." David's teacher was recommended to him by an older student who also works at the music store. "We start off our lessons working on warming up, breathing, and on my embouchure. Then, we

work on fundamentals and do drills and stuff." All of David's music is in standard notation and, occasionally, solo pieces are chosen by the instructor. "I would say that my lessons relate to what we do in band because most of the time I'm bringing him music from school and he's helping me sound better playing it. Sometimes he gives me something different but I like to work at the band music better."

Orchestra and band teachers both generally describe a harmonious relationship between private lesson curriculum and the objectives of the school program, though they are careful to point out that the quality of the private teacher can vary. Mrs. Larson offered:

> I have some students with private teachers that will actually communicate directly with me about curriculum and repertoire. Other teachers have found a good balance between working on something new and different, but also making time to review what happens in the classroom or giving extra help before auditions and tests.

Mrs. Mullins added:

> If a student has a highly qualified private instructor, the material they learn in lessons helps them achieve a higher level of success in the classroom. . . . Highly qualified instructors will also use their time to introduce the student to music and styles that they would not see in a classroom. Help may be given on classroom assignments as needed, but not on a regular basis. Less qualified instructors tend to use their time going over the same materials using the same books as we use in the classroom.

There were nine guitar students taking part in the research who were either currently involved in private lessons, or had taken lessons at some point prior to the current school year. In contrast to the accounts of Amber and David, their experiences were very different from the

descriptions above. Seven of the nine students taking guitar lessons described their lessons as something of a departure from their classroom curriculum at school. "My teacher asks me what songs I want to learn, and we listen to them and he shows me how to do it," explained one student. Many comments mirrored this depiction, including, "I bring in songs or riffs that I'm working on and we jam," and "He writes songs in my tab book and I work on them between lessons."

Some guitar students reported learning scales, chord forms, or other music theory related to improvising, in addition to this informal style of learning in private lessons. Others said that they focus on physical techniques such as alternate picking, strumming patterns, or slurs. Only two of the nine stated that they worked on any note-reading in standard notation on a regular basis. One student from Southfield Secondary said: "We read through a book that I have from home for the beginning of my lesson, and then learn classic rock or blues songs for the rest of the time." All but one of the students taking private guitar lessons meet with their instructor for thirty minutes at a time, the exception being one student taking classical guitar lessons for one hour every week. This student, who reported working primarily with standard notation, said that he was taking classical because he "might want to do music in college."

With the obvious exception of the classical guitar student, most of the guitarists involved in private lessons appear to enjoy their extra

instruction as a chance to play material that differs from what they learn at school. Anthony, a first year student, commented:

> I like what we learn in class. My teacher at school picks lots of cool music, but he tries to cover lots of styles for everybody. I like a lot of it, but sometimes we'll do songs that other kids want to play that are kind of, um, not my thing. In my lessons at the store, I can play whatever I want, and my teacher makes sure that we're doing stuff I'm interested in.

Other students reported that while they work on popular music in both places, their private lessons do not relate to the classical, formal traditions that they are taught in class. Each of the "guitar schools" involved in the research exhibited varying degrees of balance between classical and popular traditions for the instrument. While students seemed to appreciate their guitar classes at school, there was a clear implication that private lessons were viewed as an opportunity to diverge from their school activities. Responses from guitar students seldom indicated that private lesson programs corresponded or related closely to what they studied in their school programs. This notion is supported by comments from the directors of the guitar classes. Mr. Boyd stated that private guitar lessons and the school objectives tend to be "totally unrelated." He continued:

> Private store teachers only dangle the carrot. The "what do you want to learn today" approach . . . their only interest is getting the student to come back next week so they can pay the rent. The long term interest of the student is rarely considered, so it becomes dessert, and most kids are eating that and rejecting the main course. Because they are prisoners of a year-long course, public school teachers can feed them what they need, and maybe not what they want.

Mr. Hughes agreed, expressing frustration: "Note-reading is not taught or stressed in local music stores. So often do I have students requesting to 'skip' Guitar 1 and go directly into Guitar 2 because they take private lessons, only to discover that they cannot read a note." Like the orchestra and band directors, Dr. Stephens acknowledged that it "depends on the teacher." He said, "A lot of private instruction is lacking when it comes to imparting a basic understanding of music." Overall, there appears to be a consensus among guitar directors that private instruction for their instrument tends to be too focused on playing and song-learning, with little to no emphasis on music as a whole.

Chapter Summary

Interviews were conducted with students (Appendix B) and teachers (Appendix C) after the survey phase of the study. Information elicited from the participants was coded and analyzed under the following themes: *Music Reading Processes and Ability*, *Necessity and Importance of Music Reading*, *Expectations and Relevance of Activities*, *Classroom Music versus Personal Music*, and *Private Lessons and their Relation to the Classroom*.

Interview data showed that orchestra and band students in this study were likely to approach new music with relative confidence, and practice independently with specific learning strategies. Many guitar students participating in the research described few practice strategies beyond persistent repetition, and implied that they would prefer to

translate their notes into other forms of notation. Orchestra and band students found reading standard notation to be a necessary and important part of being a musician, while guitar students expressed some uncertainty about how they would apply reading skills in certain genres for guitar. The uncertainty conveyed by guitarists was congruent with their other comments, portraying commercial guitarists as "not having to read music for what they do." Participating instructors explain the necessity of note-reading to their students by emphasizing concepts of communication in music, the practicality of performing with other musicians, and "understanding how music works."

Orchestra and band students in this study seemed to be less articulate about their future goals in music than guitarists, and had difficulty identifying their plans for musical activity beyond their school ensembles. Guitar students were quite vocal in outlining their reasons for learning their instrument, and gave the impression that playing the guitar would continue to be an important part of their life after high school. While non-guitarists felt that their classes were predictable yet relevant, a majority of the participating guitarists reported having trouble anticipating what they would study in their guitar classes at school. Many expressed that they did not know they would be required to read standard notation as part of their curriculum. Because of the variety of activities that were reportedly undertaken in guitar classes, it is impossible to depict the relevance of these guitar classes for the students. However, it is

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reasonable, based on the collected data, to assume that many guitar students find certain aspects of their class to be relevant to their interests, while other portions of the curriculum are perceived as irrelevant.

All of the students involved in the study are consumers of various forms of popular music outside of their school music programs. A major finding discovered in this phase of the study was reluctance among guitarists to have their personal music disconnected from their music class at school. Guitar students appeared to be much more invested in the types of music they listened to in their spare time. In contrast, orchestra and band students seemed agreeable that their classroom music was something completely separate from popular music, even though they listened to similar genres at home and with friends.

Finally, the participating students show that there is a large contrast in the private lesson experiences of guitarists and non-guitarists. Instrumental private lessons for orchestra and band students appeared to have a greater amount of relevance and correlation to the activities of the music program at school. At the very least, the private teachers who have worked with the study participants in orchestra and band are using standard notation. Private lessons involving guitar were described as a departure from what most of the students associated with school. Lessons seemed to be an opportunity for guitar students to learn songs by request in a more informal manner, with varying degrees of instruction in music theory, and typically utilized tablature rather than standard notation.

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CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to survey the attitudes and
perspectives that guitar students have toward note-reading, and to
compare them to those of orchestra and band students. By uncovering
these perceptions and opinions, possible reasons for difficulty in music
reading among guitarists might be clarified. In the following section, the
guiding research questions that were listed in Chapter 1 will be addressed,
followed by a discussion for classroom music teachers in *Implications for
Practice*. This chapter will conclude with *Recommendations for Further
Research*.

Answering the Research Questions

**How do beginning guitar students perceive the need for note-
reading? Is this perception different among orchestra or band
students?**

One type of student profile identified in this study is that of a
beginning guitar student that perceives note-reading to be difficult,
confusing, and ultimately necessary only for certain types of music.
Furthermore, the types of music for which note-reading skills are used
were not found to be of interest to these students. Observing that there are
a range of perceptions within any population, I found other teenage
guitarists to be respectful of standard music notation, but generally
unconcerned with improving their reading skills. There is no evidence in

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the data that says guitar students find standard notation to be universally unimportant to music, however, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that most beginning guitar students prefer other methods of learning new material. A third guitarist profile includes students who feel positive about their reading abilities, and value having deep musical knowledge. Students with this viewpoint were very likely to have had past experience on other instruments, such as piano, or orchestra and band instruments. Two of these three perspectives differed with orchestra and band students, who largely supported the use of standard notation. Even in the cases where difficulty was reported, band and orchestra students found music reading to be relevant to their needs.

The typical guitar student in this survey was aware of many real-world circumstances where music notation is not traditionally utilized for the guitar. Alternative forms of notating guitar music tend to focus on a single layer of information. Student data revealed the attitude that it was easier or quicker for guitarists to "get" the music using these methods, and was preferred even if it meant ignoring other musical elements. Accepting that some students are not concerned with what they are missing, it is logical to assume that it would be difficult to convince young guitar students to invest their time in a system that requires processing multiple layers of information (i.e., pitch, duration, fingering, tempo, dynamic) after they become aware of methods that they deem sufficient and simplistic. As Mr. Hughes (West Ridge High School) explained: "The

perception is that it [standard notation] is not important, and that playing by ear or tab is good enough." Teachers of guitar classes could do more to make sure that reading activities are presented in a way that helps the student understand the purpose of the task. If note-reading is presented as drill and as a goal in and of itself, the student may perceive it as a chore and fail to associate note-reading with any of its benefits.

Do students of guitar, orchestra, and band have particularly positive or negative attitudes toward note-reading?

Though some beginning guitarists find note-reading to be difficult or confusing, that does not necessarily mean that they have negative attitudes toward staff notation. Based on the data collected in the survey and interviews, I speculate that most existing tensions surrounding note-reading are not related to the practice itself. I sensed that the frustration has more to do with the fact that music reading primarily applies to styles the student has little interest in, or perhaps that it is an element of the class the student did not anticipate having to learn. This assertion supports Durrant's finding, who suggested that estrangement of the students from school music is determined by the manner in which material is delivered, and not by the content of the course (Durrant 2001).

In the Student Survey (Appendix A), 79% of guitarists agreed with the statement, "I dislike having to read notes on the staff." Though the statement is very clear, the student answers may not be so simple. In interviews, the trend was that guitarist comments gravitated toward the

musical style of the activity, or what the musical style was not, rather than the actual task of note-reading. Guitarists who did appear negative toward staff notation depicted it as an old tradition, which they are made to do by teachers because "it's the way it's done." It is difficult to determine the percentage of students who claimed to not like reading notes, but whose dissatisfaction really related to musical style or presentation of the task.

With this in mind, I assert that there are *more* guitarists with negative attitudes toward note-reading than orchestra or band students. However, I suspect that some guitar students are actually rather indifferent about the act of reading notes on the staff, and that observed negativity is usually related to the lack of interest in the musical style, or the length of time spent on the activity in the lesson. Orchestra and band students appeared to be positive or neutral about reading notes on the staff. Many students in these subgroups expressed an interest in improving their reading skill, even if they reported "not liking notes" on the Student Survey (Appendix A).

Do students of these various music groups perceive their classroom activities to be relevant to what they set out to accomplish in music?

The study found that band and orchestra students are more likely to feel that the activity in their classrooms related to their needs and interests. Most students in these groups cited the amount of fun, or other social elements as reasons for taking their class. Others discussed their

interest in the instrument itself, the acquisition of musical knowledge and expertise, or the satisfaction of the group achievement as factors that kept them content in class. What seemed to be missing from their responses to questions about participation was any mention of the actual music being studied in orchestra or band. Nearly all of the students participating in the study reported preferences for popular music genres over the types of music played in their classes at school. Still, orchestra and band students felt that their class was relevant to their interests because their reasons for joining were not tied to musical style.

Measuring the relevance of guitar class to beginning students is a complicated matter. As revealed in Chapter 5, the guitar teachers in this study incorporate a great amount of variety into their curriculum. Portions of a guitar class could be seen as relevant to the interests of rock music fans, while other parts may not be described this way if there is a negative attitude toward classical music or a country song. In general, guitar students are intimately connected to their tastes in music, and are more likely to "require" that their class address that interest.

A notion expressed by Mr. Boyd (Central High School) was that guitar students are more likely to become "hooked for life," which correlates with a finding in this study that guitarists are likely to continue playing music into adulthood. Based on the observed indifference to musical style among the orchestra and band students, and the more frequent reference to musical elements by the guitarists, it is logical to

suggest that the guitar students in this study were more motivated to participate because of the musical content of the curriculum. In summary, guitar students are likely to find certain components of their class pertinent to their goals, while other aspects are either tolerated, or possibly looked upon negatively.

Is there educational consistency in various forms of guitar instruction? How do teaching practices of private instructors differ from the school instructor in regards to music reading and other aspects of music?

Though participation in private lessons was not as prevalent as I expected for this study, the data collected from guitar students showed that there is a considerable difference in the curriculum of many private instructors compared to the objectives of the typical school music program. Most of the private lessons that guitar students described in this study were focused on popular music, and had little educational structure. Many students reported that their private instructors simply taught them songs by request, and taught playing techniques that those particular songs required. Most private lessons for guitar held little resemblance to the curriculum of the school programs. Due to inconsistent educational practices and the multiple roles that the guitar has played over the course of its history, it is my observation that what passes for acceptable guitar technique varies greatly from "classical" guitarists to "rock" guitarists.

Guitarists have the good fortune of playing an instrument that has a varied history. The guitar has applications in several different roles in many different musical genres (Gustafsson 1996), and is versatile to the point that it can be considered both a concert instrument of high art, and an instrument for popular and commercial music. While this dichotomy allows many people to use the guitar for so many things, I believe it may also be the source of problems that many beginning students encounter at the outset of their guitar education. Today, many young students of the guitar come to the instrument relatively unaware of the classical side of its repertoire, classical techniques, and range of styles. However, those students do tend to be aware of commercial guitar music and its place in popular culture. I believe the classical and commercial ends of the guitar spectrum to be dramatically different in many regards. The differing performance techniques, notational styles, and educational practices of the two result in a variety of paths that students take when attempting to learn the instrument.

Private students of an exclusively classical guitar program are generally taught to read standard notation, while students with a teacher whose background is exclusively in popular guitar genres typically learn to read tablature and chord diagrams. There tend to be great inconsistencies in the educational practices of the commercial guitar in particular, perhaps due to the perception of some that the guitar is only a folk instrument. This has perpetuated an educational history of self instruction, learning by

word of mouth, and playing by ear without much emphasis on structured formal training. That the guitar is seen as a "common man's instrument" by some has also facilitated an acceptance of learning the instrument from musicians who did not have much formal training themselves. There are certainly great instructors on both ends of the guitar spectrum. However, this background has caused guitar education today to be much more inconsistent than what you might expect from formal training on the violin, for example.

Does the typical beginning guitar student struggle as much as orchestra and band students with note-reading in lower level classes?

Survey and interview data reflected that guitarists do struggle more, or at least take longer amounts of time, with note-reading in their beginning level classes. More guitar students reported the need for multiple practice periods to learn new material than students from other subgroups. Most students in orchestra or band reported that they usually can play new material either immediately or within a shorter period of study than what was described by the guitar students. To provide teacher perspective on this question, I asked directors how they define "satisfactory" progress in reading after a school year has run its course, followed by the question: "From your perspective, what percentage of your students become satisfactory note readers within the first year of study?"

Mrs. Larson (orchestra) claimed that 75% of her beginning students read satisfactorily after the first year. She defined satisfactory as: "They can recognize all of the notes that were studied in the past year without needing fingerings or letters as reminders." Mrs. Mullins (band) estimated that 85% of her students were able to "read and play a majority of their notes at sight without having to look up fingerings." Impressively, Mrs. Edwards (band) approximated that as much as 95% of her beginning band could read 95% of their notes accurately at any given time.

Guitar directors were a little less specific in terms of percentages, but were descriptive in their definitions of what a satisfactory reader could do in their class. Dr. Stephens (Riverview Secondary) said:

> To me, they should be able to read all natural and chromatic notes in open position, and be fairly comfortable with the notes on strings one, two, and three in fifth position. They should be able to play accurate rhythm patterns using whole, half, quarter and eighth notes. I am okay if they need to write in fret numbers and fingerings in order to do this.

Mr. Hughes (West Ridge High) stated that approximately 50 to 60% of his first year students read music to his standards at the end of the year. He defined satisfactory as the "ability to read eighth note rhythms in the first position, to include sharps and flats." Finally, Mr. Boyd (Central High) offered:

> A small percentage [read satisfactorily]. But I don't drill it as much as some do because I believe a level one class should be an exposure to many facets of guitar playing, of which reading is one. The ones who read best are the ones that come with some skills, perhaps having started on another instrument.

Implications for Practice

How does one manage to engage a class where a certain population within it finds such a fundamental activity to be unnecessary for what they wanted to learn, could possibly harbor negative feelings toward the musical styles associated with it, and only finds particular moments in class to be relevant to their interests? Certainly not all guitarists feel this way, but this study has found that some of these attitudes are present. Persistent repetition and spending even more time on the task will likely reinforce any negative feelings that these students are experiencing. The intention in this study is not to suggest that students avoid learning to read standard notation. However, it is the intention of the research to bring to light some real feelings that students in music classes have made known. Some recommendations for engaging these students are discussed in the following sections, but it should be left up to the educator how to best use this information within the context of their classroom objectives. The following sections highlight some issues that I would recommend guitar teachers consider in their classrooms.

Shorthand versus Comprehensive Methods

An important issue in guitar education is that the various systems for notating guitar music are not equivalent. Tablature, in its modern use, is typically found on Internet web sites, or notated onto manuscript paper, and only shows the student what fret and string to play. Aside from the obvious lack of rhythm, phrasing, and expressive indications, tablature is

also a limited method in other ways. Since it provides a numeric description of the frets, it only depicts one possibility on the guitar neck, taking away the performer's prerogative to find alternative fingerings and playing positions. Staff notation, while perplexing to some, traditionally provides much more information about the music to be learned, but those elements are only useful if they are something the musician wishes to know. Participating guitar students seemed to treat standard notation like they would tablature--simply to "get" the notes while neglecting other available elements on the page. Supposing that some students are only concerned with "what the note is," these guitarists must feel that they can find the missing elements through listening or other means.

Classroom teachers see standard notation as a more complete picture of what is intended in the music, and something that gives the musician a better perspective on how the music functions. Dr. Stephens (Riverview Secondary School) stated: "Being able to read and understand standard notation is essential if students want to understand how music works." Standard notation is useful for musical styles where the performance is more or less intended to replicate the intentions of the composer. In this context, it is important to absorb as much information about the music as possible. In contrast, lead sheets and modern day tablature are a kind of shorthand for traditions that rely less on duplication of performance, and more on improvisation, flexibility, and freedom to create and evolve within the piece of music.

In conclusion, a fundamental problem is that guitar students are attempting to substitute a method that is only meant to be "shorthand," for notation that was intended to specify an expression of many more musical elements. When the student tries to superimpose what is supposed to be a flexible method of notating on to something that was meant to be performed from the composer's intentions, the music that had been notated in standard form is rarely realized in a complete manner. Similarly, it is often not practical to notate some popular music into standard notation, such as a heavy metal guitar solo. The implication here is that the two systems of notation are valid and useful in their own context. Students should be taught explicitly about how certain types of music are conceived (flexibility in blues and jazz; composition and performance in classical) and persuaded that the systems of notation are unequal and not practical for everything that is important in the respective musical styles.

Individual Mentality versus Group Mentality

As stated previously, the guitar has a wealth of different techniques and possibilities, including the ability to manage monophonic, homophonic, and polyphonic textures. Some of these capabilities are usually demonstrated in group settings, such as a classical guitar ensemble, jazz band, or a rock group. Other possibilities for the guitar include solo classical or commercial repertoire, or single-instrument accompaniment for the voice. Today, it is likely that a guitar student will

enter into his or her guitar studies *outside* of a group environment, which could involve self-teaching, seeking assistance from the Internet, or taking private lessons. The "solo" possibilities of the guitar give students what I call an "individual mentality," and may make it awkward for some students to play in a group environment. These students seldom have to concern themselves with rhythmic and metric pressures of a group since they are usually playing alone.

While most instruments have solo repertoire, many students in orchestra and band view themselves as playing a role within the larger musical ensemble. These students likely have a "group mentality" in class. Students with a group mentality probably get a great deal of satisfaction out of hearing the class improve and evolve. Students with an individual mentality are probably less motivated by the group dynamic and more interested in developing their own individual skill.

In the classroom, this implies that guitar teaching in a large group context may be met with some difficulties that are not as apparent in an orchestra or band. Guitar students should certainly acquire group and ensemble skills, but would perhaps gain some satisfaction if the groupings in the class were somewhat varied. Given the variety of activities the guitar directors displayed in this study, it would be easy for a guitar class to utilize large groups for some objectives, two to four person groups for others, and even individual projects that address personal interests of the student. Research shows that a very important motivator for students is

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the amount of intrinsic interest they have developed toward a subject (Pitts, Davidson, and McPherson 2000). If it is applicable to the teacher's objectives, emphasizing variety in group size for different activities may allow the class to still gain ensemble and large group experience, while also addressing individual pursuits that may be tailored to the student.

Feeder Programs and Private Lessons

Access to orchestra and band at the elementary level has an enormous impact on student perceptions and attitudes, and these feeder programs likely create a great deal of consistency for the higher level programs in terms of student ability. The orchestra and band participants in this research were all chosen because they were relatively new to their instruments. However, the majority of other students in these classes had elementary programs available to them, where they were exposed to the fundamentals of music and can transfer that knowledge to their middle school or high school orchestras or bands.

In the area where this study was conducted, guitar students take general music in elementary school, but it does not function as a feeder for guitar classes specifically. Students typically do not have the opportunity to study guitar until high school, which is usually several years after they participated in elementary school music. While the decision to implement it may not be within the guitar teacher's capability, some sort of feeder program for guitar classes would be highly beneficial. If it is not possible to implement in the schools, a community school could be founded that

targets children at an age where they may be less impacted by popular music, and more agreeable to studying note-reading. The present reality of students beginning guitar in middle school or high school makes it more likely that students will have already formed opinions on what they desire out of a music class.

Another recommendation is for teachers to make better contact with private instructors in their area. The ability to consult with the local music store, or professionals in the vicinity of the school could potentially bring more consistency to the educational experiences children receive. The large divide, revealed in this study, between the music classroom and the private studio in guitar is not conducive to student success. Two entirely divergent approaches and curricula can potentially contradict one another, probably causing the student to have to choose which teacher to believe.

Stimulating Interest in Classical Traditions

Many times in class guitar, the student's only exposure to the music of the classical tradition is on that page of sheet music that they struggle to read. Focused so much on the mechanics of decoding it, little attention is put on the music itself. As Dr. Stephens noted in Chapter 5:

> Beginning to develop an appreciation for classical or jazz is tough in beginning guitar, because playing those styles of music well is beyond the abilities of most beginning level students, at least examples of those styles that are complex enough to be interesting.

This quote is very insightful in that it implies that music exists in the classical and jazz realm that students *would* be interested in if only they

had the opportunity to perform it. It makes good sense that the examples

students are being exposed to while they are struggling with notation are

primarily exercises, elementary studies, or otherwise un-engaging

melodies that are made up of the most basic musical elements. Often,

guitarists have playing abilities that surpass their understanding of music

reading or theory. Dr. Stephens also said:

> Their [guitarists] skill level is high in regards to playing, while their
> understanding of music and note-reading is elementary. Learning
> to read notation requires a "step back." Many aren't willing to do
> this.

If an objective in the curriculum is to truly stimulate interest in the

classical music of the instrument and the student has some technical

ability, I would recommend that teachers *occasionally* find examples of

pieces in the repertoire that are more substantial, and present them in a

"modified" tablature (one with rhythmic indications and other pertinent

musical elements included). It is not intended that this would replace

standard notation. It would only be done in the spirit of exposing the

student to more interesting material, in hopes of engaging them in a style

in which they are unaccustomed. Additionally, the student may then

concentrate on the technical aspects of what they are performing without

the distraction of deciphering the notation.

If intrinsic drive is the greatest indicator that a student might

sustain an interest in classical guitar music, teachers should do more to

develop that drive, and allow students to *sometimes* experience the

repertoire free of the notational barriers. I believe this should be more

than an aural exposure to classical literature through listening or guest performers. Students may find that they enjoy some of this music through *playing* it. An unfortunate reality in class guitar is that reading ability is not developed to a point where many can experience the more interesting parts of the catalog. Intrinsic interest cannot possibly be developed for something that the student never performs. This suggestion is made with the hope that some students will earn an appreciation for classical repertoire and will perhaps become more motivated to approach standard notation in order to continue to learn new pieces.

Though tablature, as popular musicians have used it, has been described in this paper as an incomplete and unsatisfactory system of notation, its use in this context would facilitate a more immediate performance of the repertoire for the student. Tablature's neglect of other musical elements is a concern, but the overall goal of acquainting the student with this music may make it worthwhile on occasion. A "modified" tablature could easily be created by including indications for note durations, bar lines, expressive elements, and other elements. This modified tablature would have to be crafted by the teacher, but could easily be produced with current music notation software. It may even be a useful exercise to include the student in the creation of the tablature and its "modifications."

In summary, it is possible that a student may become encouraged to work harder on learning standard notation if there is an intrinsic interest

established in classical guitar music. As it stands, some students do not approach the music because they are too preoccupied with the necessity of reading the notes in their standard format. A student may appreciate that a teacher is taking an interest in the student's learning preferences, and may feel invested if assisting in the creation of the tablature.

Recommendations for Further Research

In studies such as this, it often occurs through data collection that questions, in addition to those guiding the research, emerge that are not included in the study. Sometimes the data collected in a study can create more questions than it answers. Related to this study, there are several possibilities for further research, including inquiries related to the learning preferences of different musical ensembles, further examination of private lesson curriculum, and comparison of how teacher background affects the curricular practices of instructors.

In this study, it was found that certain subgroups gravitated towards certain learning styles in music. Specifically, orchestra groups responded favorably to the use of reading skills, while more band students favored the use of aural approaches. While it was beyond the scope of this study to continue examining this type of difference in depth, a good topic for research and discussion could involve the learning approaches that are preferred by different types of musicians, or even a comparison of learning preferences for solo instruments. Furthermore, an investigation into how a teacher influences the learning preferences of the students in class could

promote a balance of emphasis on aural and reading skills, perhaps facilitating better musicianship and life-long learning in music.

An investigation into the private lesson world for guitar, and a comparison of private lesson curriculum to classroom guitar was intended to be a more significant part of this study. Unfortunately, student participation in private lessons was not as widespread as I initially anticipated when designing the study. It would be a worthwhile project to make observations and comparisons of the typical private lesson in a music store to the objectives of a classroom program. A study of student needs and interests in this context could build upon the findings of this study.

Also of interest could be a study of music teacher background and its impact on curricular practices. I found it interesting in my study that all of the guitar teachers were of such different backgrounds. This seemed to color their perspectives and choice of classroom content. One instructor was a former band director and described his guitar classes as more heavily engaged in note-reading. Another instructor who earned a doctorate in Music Education, and completed his own research on the social elements of class guitar, appears to highly value both staff notation and popular notations such as tablature.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

<center>**Musical Background Questionnaire**</center>

Study ID _____ School _____ Grade _____

Current Level/Music Class _____ Period_____ Gender_____

What is your primary instrument in class? _____

How long have you played your instrument? _____

Do you take private lessons on this instrument? _____ For how long? _____

Have you ever taken a class or had lessons in music theory? _____

Circle the number of the phrase that most closely describes your experience:

1. The instrument I play in class is the only one I have ever studied in a serious manner.

2. In addition to my classroom instrument, I **currently** play others as well: (please list)_____

3. I have studied another instrument or instruments in the past, but quit those and switched to my current one.

    Name all other instruments you have played in the past:

    How long did you study these instruments? _____

    Please rate how well you were able to read staff music after studying your **previous** instrument:
    <center>
    5   4   3   2   1
    well good fair struggled not well
    </center>

Please respond to the following statements by circling **strongly agree (SA), agree (A), not sure (N), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD)**.

The first time I learned note-reading was in my current class.
<center>SA   A   N   D   SD</center>

I learned note-reading before this class but not very well.
<center>SA   A   N   D   SD</center>

I learned note-reading before and remembered it well.
<center>SA   A   N   D   SD</center>

I currently feel positive about my note-reading skills.
<center>SA   A   N   D   SD</center>

Please rate how well you were able to read staff music on the first day of class **this school year**:
<center>
5   4   3   2   1
well good fair struggled not well
</center>

Student Survey   Study ID _____

Instructions: Please read each question carefully and circle the most appropriate answer based on the following categories:

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
N = Neutral/I Don't Know/No Opinion
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree

1. Reading standard music notation (notes on the staff) is something I have studied in my current music class.

      SA   A   N   D   SD

2. Reading standard music notation is an important part of being a successful musician on my instrument.

      SA   A   N   D   SD

3. Reading standard music notation is difficult or confusing for me.

      SA   A   N   D   SD

4. Reading music notation is necessary for the type of music I like to play.

      SA   A   N   D   SD

5. I primarily use my note-reading skills to learn our music in class.

      SA   A   N   D   SD

6. Instead of reading music, I rely on my listening skills and memorization to learn our music in class.

      SA   A   N   D   SD

7. Instead of reading music, I rely on alternative forms of written music (other than notes on the staff) to learn our material.

      SA   A   N   D   SD

8. Most professional orchestral musicians or concert band musicians know how to read standard music notation and use it regularly.

      SA   A   N   D   SD

9. Most professional guitarists know how to read standard music notation and use it regularly.

      SA   A   N   D   SD

10. I understand what I am playing on a deeper level because I can read standard music notation.

                   SA   A   N   D   SD

11. Reading standard music notation is important because it is the main method of learning music for my instrument.

                   SA   A   N   D   SD

12. I can learn music for my instrument quicker or better without reading music.

                   SA   A   N   D   SD

13. I personally enjoy listening the styles of music played in orchestra or band classes outside of school.

                   SA   A   N   D   SD

14. I personally enjoy listening to classical guitar music outside of school.

                   SA   A   N   D   SD

15. The types of music we learn by reading standard music notation relate closely to the music I personally enjoy listening to.

                   SA   A   N   D   SD

16. I feel motivated to improve my music reading skills.

                   SA   A   N   D   SD

17. I am only motivated to read music because it is something my teacher makes me learn.

                   SA   A   N   D   SD

18. I am motivated to read music because it is necessary for my instrument.

                   SA   A   N   D   SD

19. I am motivated to read music because musicians I admire know how to read music.

                   SA   A   N   D   SD

20. I am a fan of specific professional musicians that play my instrument.

                   SA   A   N   D   SD

21. I participate in my music class because it is fun, or I am interested in it.

                   SA   A   N   D   SD

22. I participate in my music class because my parents want me to.

        SA   A   N   D   SD

23. I participate in my music class because it is easy to get a good grade.

        SA   A   N   D   SD

24. Playing music will continue to be an important part of my life beyond high school.

        SA   A   N   D   SD

25. I plan to try to participate in a music group similar to the one I am in now as an adult.

        SA   A   N   D   SD

26. When I am given 16 measures of unfamiliar music in standard notation, I can usually read through most of it accurately within the first several minutes.

        SA   A   N   D   SD

27. When I am given 16 measures of unfamiliar music in standard notation, I can only read some of it accurately after 20 minutes or more of studying it.

        SA   A   N   D   SD

28. When I am given 16 measures of unfamiliar music in standard notation, it usually takes me more than one class period of practice and study to be able to play it accurately.

        SA   A   N   D   SD

29. At some point this school year, I have taken private lessons on my instrument outside of school.

        SA   A   N   D   SD

30. Note-reading is or has been an important part of my private lessons outside of school.

        SA   A   N   D   SD

31. Our activities in music class relate closely to my goals as a musician.

        SA   A   N   D   SD

32. I dislike having to read notes on the staff

        SA   A   N   D   SD

33. Our activities in my music class match expectations I had when I entered this school year.

        SA   A   N   D   SD

34. I did not expect that I would have to read standard music notation when I signed up for this class.

        SA   A   N   D   SD

35. Note-reading is just an old tradition that we are forced to learn, and is not necessary for being a musician today.

        SA   A   N   D   SD

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

1. Can you describe the approach you use when you get new music in class? How do you begin working on new music?

2. What types of music do you personally like to listen to for your own enjoyment?

3. What kinds of music did you expect to play when you signed up for your class?

4. Do you feel like there is any kind of relationship between the music you play in class and the music you like to listen to at home?

5. Are you okay with your personal music and you school music existing separately? Should your class try to incorporate 'your' music?

6. Do you feel that reading notes is important for being a successful musician?

7. Do you think it's very likely for someone on your instrument to become successful without knowing how to read notes?

8. What do you like most about class?

9. What motivates you to do well in your class? Does your teacher motivate you? Your parents? Grades? Friends?

10. Is there anything you didn't expect about the class prior to signing up, or did anything you did this year take you by surprise?

11. What were your goals for your music study this year? Are there specific reasons you signed up for this class?

12. Is there anything you would change about your class to make it more fun, or relevant to your interests?

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

ORCHESTRA/BAND TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please give a summary or outline of the 'structure' of your typical class period. For example, is there a particular routine of warm ups or sequence of objectives, followed by repertoire, etc?

2. Describe your approach to teaching music fundamentals to a beginning class. On a daily basis, what elements of music do you find yourself focused on the most in a beginning class?

3. Describe the style(s) of music your beginning students typically learn.

4. What percentage of your time in a given class/lesson involves having the students read standard notation?

5. Do you regularly test reading ability or progress in note-reading? Do you regularly incorporate sight reading exercises in your classes/lessons? How often?

6. How do you initially approach teaching new material to your students? Do you read notes right away, or do you utilize aural techniques and learning by rote?

7. Do you teach or introduce any alternative forms of reading music? Why or why not? If so, how do the kids respond to other systems of notating music?

8. In your class, do you express or convey that note-reading is a necessity to your students? Why or why not? How?

9. Based on the data collected for this study, a majority of guitar students surveyed perceive standard notation to be difficult or confusing, while most students in orchestra or band do not. Why do you suppose orchestra and band students report less difficulty and confusion with regards to note-reading?

10. From your perspective, what percentage of your students become satisfactory note readers within the first year of study? How would you define "satisfactory" for their level?

11. Describe various playing techniques you emphasize in your class.

12. Do you explore or utilize any popular or commercial styles of music in your teaching? Describe the role of rock or popular music in your student's classes.

13. Does the popular or commercial part of the music world affect anything about your curriculum or how you approach teaching music? Is it applicable to your objectives?

14. Do you feel that students have an accurate perception of what your music class will be like before starting the school year? Do you detect that they are surprised by anything you do with them? Do you think that their experience throughout the year matches what they had anticipated?

15. In terms of learning music fundamentals, do you feel that there is continuity between the lessons given by private teachers and the objectives of the classroom teachers in your field? Does the material studied in private lessons support/reinforce the classroom objectives or is it used to provide the student a chance to work on something unrelated?

16. Is there a competitive aspect to the atmosphere of your class? Does the success or status of some students motivate others to try to improve when they are struggling?

17. Do you feel that students in your class are able to interpret more information from their printed music than simply 'what the notes are'? Do you feel that they see value in note-reading beyond knowing which valve to push, or string to play? Is there evidence of this from any of your students that you can share as an example?

18. Only 25-33% of students across all of the groups (orchestra, band, and guitar) reported listening to/enjoying classical music outside of school, yet the vast majority reported enjoying their music class. Why do you suppose orchestra and band students enjoy their music classes so much, yet do not enjoy this type of music on a personal level?

GUITAR TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please describe your personal music education. (Music degree, certification, performing experience, etc.)

2. Please give a summary or outline of the 'structure' of your typical class period. For example, is there a particular routine of warm ups or sequence of objectives, followed by repertoire, etc?

3. Describe your approach to teaching music fundamentals to a beginning class. On a daily basis, what elements of music do you find yourself focused on the most in a beginning class?

4. Describe the style(s) of music your beginning students typically learn.

5. What percentage of your time in a given class/lesson involves having the students read standard notation?

6. Do you regularly test reading ability or progress in note-reading? Do you regularly incorporate sight reading exercises in your classes/lessons? How often?

7. How do you initially approach teaching new material to your students? Do you read notes right away, or do you utilize aural techniques and learning by rote?

8. Do you teach or introduce any alternative forms of reading music? Why or why not? If so, how do the kids respond to other systems of notating music?

9. In your classes, do you express or convey that note-reading is a necessity to your students? Why or why not? How? Is reading standard notation necessary for success on the guitar?

10. Based on the data collected for this study, a majority of guitar students surveyed perceive standard notation to be difficult or confusing, while most students who have studied for a similar length of time in orchestra or band do not. Why do you suppose guitar students report more difficulty and confusion with regards to note-reading?

11. Do you find that beginning guitar students view note-reading as something that facilitates their learning to play the guitar, or as something that is an obstacle?

12. Do you sense continuity between the material your students play in class and the material they play in their spare time, or do you feel that there is a separation?

13. From your perspective, what percentage of your students become satisfactory note readers within the first year of study? How would you define "satisfactory" for their level?

14. Describe various physical playing techniques you emphasize in your class.

15. Do you explore or utilize any popular or commercial styles of music in your teaching? Describe the role of rock or popular music in your student's classes.

16. Does the popular or commercial part of the music world affect anything about your curriculum or how you approach teaching music? Is it applicable to your objectives?

17. Do you feel that students have an accurate perception of what your music class will be like before starting the school year? Do you detect that they are surprised by anything you do with them? Do you think that their experience throughout the year matches what they had anticipated?

18. What percentage of your students do you think fail to anticipate having to read standard notation upon entering your class?

19. In terms of learning music fundamentals, including note-reading, do you feel that there is continuity between the lessons given by private teachers and the objectives of the classroom teachers in the guitar field? Does the material studied in a local music store support/reinforce the classroom objectives or is it used to provide the student a chance to work on something unrelated?

20. Is there a competitive aspect to the atmosphere of your class? Does the success or status of some students motivate others to try to improve when they are struggling?

21. Regarding playing style, technique, and aspiration, how big an influence are the professional musicians that your students admire/are a fan of?

22. In general, do you find that the well known guitarists your students idolize exhibit proper playing techniques, hand positions, and follow the model that you set in your classroom? Please describe some differences, if applicable.

23. What are the most important factors related to student retention in your program?

24. Most orchestra and band students interviewed reported that they do not personally enjoy listening to the type of music they play in their music classes. However, they also conveyed a willingness to view their personal music and their classroom music as entirely separate things that coexist - which do not need to relate to one another. Do you find that your beginning guitar students feel this way as well? Can you describe any evidence of this in your students, or examples of the opposite (students requiring that the classroom music relate to their personal music)?

25. When you identify a student who is struggling with note-reading, what do you think will motivate them the most to improve that skill?

APPENDIX D

RESEARCH APPROVAL AND PERMISSION FORMS

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To:	Margaret Schmidt
	MUSIC BUIL
From:	Mark Roosa, Chair
	Soc Beh IRB
Date:	04/16/2010
Committee Action:	**Expedited Approval**
Approval Date:	04/16/2010
Review Type:	Expedited F7
IRB Protocol #:	1003005005
Study Title:	Difficulty with Note Reading in Class Guitar
Expiration Date:	04/15/2011

The above-referenced protocol was approved following expedited review by the Institutional Review Board.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without approval by the Institutional Review Board.

Adverse Reactions: If any untoward incidents or severe reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Soc Beh IRB immediately. If necessary a member of the IRB will be assigned to look into the matter. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending IRB review.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, or the investigators, please communicate your requested changes to the Soc Beh IRB. The new procedure is not to be initiated until the IRB approval has been given.

Please retain a copy of this letter with your approved protocol.

DIFFICULTY WITH NOTE READING IN CLASS GUITAR

PARENTAL LETTER OF PERMISSION

Dear Parent:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Margaret Schmidt in the School of Music at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore the evolution of rock and pop culture and its effect on today's young guitarists, in regard to their attitudes and possible struggles with reading standard musical notation.

I am inviting your child's participation, which will involve a simple written questionnaire, a survey, and short personal interview (audio recorded) throughout May and June, 2010. Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to have your child participate, or to withdraw your child from the study at any time, there will be no penalty or effect on your child's grade. Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The results of the research study may be published, but your child's name will not be used.

Although there may be no direct benefit to your child, the possible benefit of your child's participation will help to give a better understanding of certain obstacles guitar students may have with note reading, and compare these experiences with students of other musical groups. There are no foreseeable risks to your child's participation. Interviews and surveys will be done during a 15-20 minute span of time during the student's class time, at the teacher's convenience. The students will be pulled from class on a pre-arranged date, at a time approved by their instructor.

No student's name will ever be mentioned in connection with this study. Code names will be used for school names, instructors, and student participants in the final product. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your child's name will not be used. If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call me at (703) 554-4982.

ASU IRB Approved
Sign SM
Date 4/6/10 - 9/5/11

Sincerely,

Stephen Michael Ward

By signing below, you are giving consent for your child _____ (Child's name) to participate in the above study.

_____   _____   _____
Signature   Printed Name   Date

If you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

DIFFICULTY WITH NOTE READING IN CLASS GUITAR

I have been informed that my parent(s) have given permission for me to participate in a study concerning note reading and music classes in school.

I will be asked to complete a questionnaire about my musical background, a survey about how I feel about certain things in music class, and answer interview questions about learning music, including questions about my answers to the survey. Interviews and surveys will be done during a 15-20 minute span of time during class time.

My participation in this project is voluntary and I have been told that I may stop my participation in this study at any time. If I choose not to participate, it will not affect my grades in any way.

_____   _____
Signature   Printed Name

_____
Date

April 1, 2010

Dear Music Teacher,

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Margaret Schmidt in the School of Music at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore the evolution of rock and pop culture and its effect on today's young guitarists, in regard to their attitudes and possible struggles with reading standard musical notation.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve a simple written questionnaire, a survey, and short personal interview (audio recorded) of selected students in your class throughout May and June, 2010. The research will also involve an audio recorded interview with you, their teacher. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your responses to the interview will be used to provide further perspective on classroom note reading issues, and student difficulties or successes from the teacher's viewpoint. Your responses will also be helpful because they can provide information on your approach to teaching high school music, and specifics on the program's curriculum. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used. Code names will be used for teachers, students, schools, and the school system, so your responses will remain protected.

I would like to audiotape this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be taped; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. Tapes will be erased immediately after the interview responses are transcribed.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact me at: michaelward@asu.edu, or Dr. Margaret Schmidt at marg.schmidt@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

Sincerely,

Stephen Michael Ward
(703) 554-4982
michaelward@asu.edu

ASU IRB
Approved
Sign____Sm____
Date____41610 - 4151'____

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