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Novice Music Teachers: Beginning Secondary Music Teachers and the Challenges of Classroom Management

By

Christopher Kelley

Accepted in Partial Completion
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Music

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Master's Thesis

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Christopher Kelley

11/12/2020

**Novice Music Teachers: Beginning Secondary Music Teachers and the Challenges of
Classroom Management**

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Music

by
Christopher Kelley
Fall, 2020

Abstract

Classroom management has long been held as the number one concern for novice teachers. For novice music teachers (NMTs), classroom management is even more essential due to class sizes often in excess of 50, and with students literally holding noisemakers. While most NMTs are taught how to support the majority of students, and often receive extra support for students with extreme needs, there exists a population of students (Tier II) who fall in between. NMTs are often unprepared for these students, becoming easily derailed from their lessons and very stressed.

To explore the experiences of NMTs and the Tier II population, a short qualitative survey was distributed to 20 teachers who had five or fewer years of experience teaching. From the fourteen responses, patterns are revealed in the behaviors expressed by these students (mostly disruptive) and the interventions employed by the NMTs (mostly connecting with the students and building relationships) to encourage positive behaviors. It is also revealed that it is likely many of the problems faced by NMTs is due to their struggle to be vulnerable and honest with their students, instead attempting to retain an air of authority.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

All teachers face challenges during their beginning years on the job. This is not a shocking or revolutionary statement. Rather, research on novice teachers reveals that all first-year teachers report challenges during their early careers, including "...classroom management, isolation, time for planning, unrealistic vision of success, multiple teaching assignments, difficult schedules, teaching outside of content area, and administrator evaluation and observation" (Conway, 2015, p. 65). While the experience of individual novice teachers will vary due to the specifics of their school and the community they work in, novice teachers across the country face a sharp on-the-job learning curve and extremely high expectations as new hires (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). In fact, the myriad and overwhelming amount of responsibilities and expectations as a new teacher transitions from novice to accomplished educator often results in chronic stress, burnout, and disillusionment (Conway, 2015; Krueger, 2000; Madsen & Hancock, 2002; Tait, 2008). The social-emotional toll that this period takes on the young teacher only begins to subside as more experience is acquired and the teacher becomes more comfortable in the classroom (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

Regardless of content area or age-level (P-12) focus, college graduates who enter the education workforce go through a transition process while on the job (Tait, 2008; Yourn, 2000). In other words, new educators do not enter the field as fully effective teachers—they need to "learn the ropes" and become comfortable with the minutia of being an effective educator in the classroom while also managing all the extraneous responsibilities teachers are faced with (parents outreach, managing and planning trips, afterschool meetings, before school meetings, administrative evaluations, paperwork, etc). Paul Haack addressed this limitation in a message to

new music teachers: “Welcome to the profession! How do you feel about being legally licensed and certified as *minimally competent to teach and likely to do no serious harm!*?” [emphasis original] (2003, p. 9). As such, it is expected for newly hired educators to learn and grow over the first several years of employment. As Lisa DeLorenzo (1992) noted:

Many educators argue that teaching is context-specific, that one must be fully immersed in the teaching process in order to learn the “language of teaching”... This struggle to acquire the feel of “being a teacher” appears throughout the literature and may account for many of the problems that beginners encounter in the classroom. (p. 11)

Novice teachers are still learning, even after several years on the job, due to the magnitude of skills required to become a fully competent teacher. It takes time to, as DeLorenzo noted, “acquire the feel”, as well as hands-on experience.

While teacher preparation programs provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to teach students directly, these are experiences with heavy supervision conducted in a classroom that does not belong to the pre-service teacher. This limits the growth of the pre-service teacher, especially combined with the relatively short periods of time spent in the field. As such, teacher preparation programs are limited in their capacity to fully prepare pre-service teachers for the difficulty of their first years (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). While it has been shown that the quality of pre-service programs impacts the effectiveness of novice teachers (Ballantyne, 2007), Colleen Conway, a lead researcher in the music education field for the past 20 years, wrote:

Although it is important for teacher educators to continue to examine teaching practices and assumptions about music teaching and learning, I believe that even the best teacher education program cannot authentically prepare a beginning teacher for the reality of the first year of teaching. (2003b, p.4)

Mentoring and induction programs can be excellent at providing support for novice teachers to develop into reflective mature teachers (Blair, 2008; Conway, 2003c; DeLorenzo, 1992). However, variation in the funding of mentor programs, state-sponsored vs school district-sponsored mentor programs, and numerous other variables hampers the ability to claim these programs as panaceas for beginning teachers' woes (DeLorenzo, 1992; Schmidt, 2008). The novice teacher is faced with many trials, all requirements of the job, yet most of which can only be overcome through hands-on experience (DeLorenzo, 1992; Yinger, 1987).

The specific challenges new teachers face during their first five years merit study, and ultimately results in greater awareness for the broader education community (Blair, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Schmidt, 2008). While many researchers have explored the general educator (those who teach core subjects), research into the experiences of music educators will pay dividends for all those involved in the training of future music educators, and future music educators themselves. DeLorenzo noted the divide between general educators and music educators when they wrote, "Music teaching often involves specialized skills and responsibilities that are different from the general teaching population..." (1992, pp. 9–10). There is value in researching the experiences of the novice music teachers, separate from the challenges of general novice teachers. This thesis explores the experiences of novice music educators, particularly in regards to the issues noted as most significantly impacting them.

Novice music teachers (NMTs) report specific issues that are unique to the demands of their position: classroom management, isolation from teaching peers, and issues with school administration (Blair, 2008; Conway, 2015; Krueger, 2000; Schmidt, 2008). Classroom management is particularly challenging for music teachers due to the nature of the music education classroom, and the subject itself. Therefore, this thesis focuses on elements of

classroom management as it relates to the experiences of novice music educators. Unlike other content areas, music education at all levels involves large numbers of students learning disciplined usage of noise-makers, whether that device is their voice, a drum, or some other musical instrument (Byo & Sims, 2014; Gordon, 2002). When this requirement is coupled with the lack of desks and the high demands on students' focus/executive function, it is only natural for students of all ages to occasionally exhibit disruptive behaviors.

Disruptive students can negatively impact the classroom, their learning, and/or the learning of others. Due to their limited experience leading lessons, NMTs will not have accrued the *in-situ* experience of the myriad approaches to classroom management necessary to easily keep 30 to 100 middle-school age instrumentalists on task for a 50-minute period (Byo & Sims, 2014; DeLorenzo, 1992; Gordon, 2002; Yinger, 1987).

Student behavior is one of the leading causes of stress and burnout for novice teachers (Aldrup et al., 2018; Aloe et al., 2014; Antoniou et al., 2006; Gordon, 2002; Greenberg et al., 2016), and has been shown to be a primary factor in NMTs leaving the profession (Krueger, 2000; Tait, 2008). NMT attrition contributes not only to the music teacher shortage, but often the most exceptional candidates leave to pursue other professional options, furthering the “brain-drain” of NMTs (Carroll et al., 2000; Conway, 2003a; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Kain & Singleton, 1996; Madsen & Hancock, 2002).

Music teachers are highly motivated to attract and retain students in their programs—since secondary music classes are electives, being an effective advocate and salesperson is vital to keep one's job. As a part of this effort, it has become more and more common for secondary music educators to welcome diverse learners with many different individual needs. These needs may be cognitive, social-emotional, or behavioral. The unpredictability and variety of student

diversity presents an extreme challenge for NMT's as they focus on learning the skill of teaching (Byo & Sims, 2014). Better understanding this challenge may be beneficial for the novice teachers and their future students.

For the purposes of my survey and discussion, I will be using the language of the Tier systems (commonly used in schools and other organizations) to delineate the populations teachers interact with in the context of classroom management. The limitations and intentions are described in detail in Chapter 2 as part of the Literature Review.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the aspects of classroom management that most stymie NMTs, specifically in regards to the population of students who receive limited (or no) support from the special education team (Tier II). It will be valuable to understand what aspects of the classroom management of this population present the biggest challenges for NMTs. Further, investigating strategies that have been implemented, mixed with personal anecdotes of working with disruptive students will provide valuable insights into the realities of classroom management for NMTs. The results from such an exploration may help guide mentors, pre-service programs, and pre-service music educators themselves in preparing for the first five years of employment.

In order to explore the challenges faced by NMTs and classroom management, especially of Tier II students, I conducted a qualitative survey targeted at secondary music teachers with five or fewer years of teaching experience. The respondents' (n=14) descriptions of the challenges they encountered were analyzed to reveal any patterns in challenging behaviors, as well as successful interventions and helpful resources.

Objectives

This thesis and the accompanying survey delve into the particulars of NMTs' classroom management difficulties through direct inquiries:

1. What is it about classroom management that presents the biggest challenges?
2. What are some resources that could help NMTs support all their students?
3. Are there any unique challenges for Music teachers vs. general teachers in regards to classroom management?
4. Research shows that the practical application of classroom management is at the forefront of novice teachers' minds as they enter the profession, so what do they report as causing the most difficulty in their classrooms?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study and accompanying literature review, several terms will be used often and merit clear definitions.

Disruptive and challenging students are those students who, through their behavior, interrupt classroom proceedings, frustrate the learning of those around them, and/or challenge the teacher's ability to keep their lesson plan on track. These behaviors may or may not be intentional, and may or may not even be the child's fault. They can range from blurting out, playing an instrument out of turn, becoming visibly disengaged, throwing a fit, committing acts of violence, and so on.

Classroom management is the umbrella term for everything a teacher does to keep their students focused on the lessons and to encourage the most learning possible. There are troubling connotations of this term (See: Kohn, 2006), but it is the accepted and widely used term in educational research.

Novice Music Teachers (NMTs) in this thesis describes any music teacher who has five or fewer years of teaching experience. Primarily, this term is used to describe Secondary (middle- and high-school) teachers, as that was the focus of the survey.

Response to Intervention (RtI), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) are all examples of interventions that are employed school-wide, and utilize a tiered model. Each one addresses different concerns: RtI uses data and tiers to more quickly find and support students with learning needs and disabilities; PBIS uses data and tiers to encourage positive behaviors and support students who struggle to display appropriate behaviors; MTSS is a framework which combines both RtI and PBIS into a data-driven, tiered system to support students who may be struggling academically, behaviorally, socially, etc (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). These systems are used as the basis for my labelling and conception of the student population the causes the most trouble for NMTs, Tier II students.

The three tiers in these systems are described in more detail in Chapter 2, but generally one can think of Tier I as consisting of 80% of students, Tier II is 15% of students (who typically need a little more support and guidance than Tier I), and Tier III is 5% of students (who typically need a high level of support and guidance, such as students in designated Special Education programs) (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law dictating that all students deserve a full education, regardless of disability. It includes several provisions for public schools to help support students with disabilities, including Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).

FAPE is a provision of the law which requires that public schools must help students with disabilities in receiving appropriate education (i.e. matched to their ability levels) that is free, and

provides the funding to do so. LRE is what has slowly eroded exclusionary practices, where students with disabilities were kept away from “normal” students. Both provisions have been exceptionally positive for the populations they support.

Limitations of Study

The study conducted in this work is limited by numerous variables. The sample size, while adhering to an acceptable range for the qualitative approach used, is too small to perform meaningful quantitative analyses of the data. The questions asked in the survey were lacking in specificity, encouraging the participants to produce narratives that varied widely. While this was useful for a first exploration, it also limits the internal validity of the results as each participant may have a widely different conception of what each question asked.

The survey lacked diversity in geographical, socio-economical, and racial diversity. All participants also graduated from the same institution, limiting the external validity of their experiences.

Summary

The research in this thesis is needed in order to more clearly understand what Novice Music Teachers (NMTs) are experiencing when faced with the behavioral challenges of Tier II students. Classroom management is always the number one concern for new teachers, but how does that concern stack up with their actual experiences? More research is needed to understand the phenomenon experienced by NMTs as they face the disruptive behaviors of Tier II students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Pre-service and novice teachers have consistently ranked classroom management, or some derivative (discipline, motivation of students, etc.), as the aspect of teaching they feel most concerned about and unprepared for (Byo & Sims, 2014). These concerns have been noted in literature dating from the turn of the 20th century into the modern era—for both general teachers and music specialists (Blair, 2008; Conway, 2015; Krueger, 2000; Merrion, 1980; Milam, 1951; O’Sullivan, 1989; Schmidt, 2008; Veenman, 1984).

Defining Classroom Management

Definitions and conceptions of classroom management are as abundant as squirrels in an urban park. Some early conceptions of classroom management focused on reacting to extreme or disruptive behaviors with little to no regard given to preventative measures (Doyle, 1975, 1985). Most classroom management approaches since the mid-80s have been focused on prevention—that is, creating an environment in the classroom where students have a strong incentive (whether internal/intrinsic or external/extrinsic) to self-regulate their behaviors in order to not disrupt the learning of other students (Doyle, 1985; Emmer & Sabornie, 2014). Modern theories have also emphasized the importance of the teacher-student relationship as the underpinning of a successful classroom management approach (Emmer & Sabornie, 2014).

One early definition was noted by Doyle (1985), in a summary of Kounin’s (1970) research. He defined classroom management by two variables: high levels of student work involvement, and low levels of disruption. Doyle himself defined classroom management as “... one of achieving order by gaining and maintaining the cooperation of a group of students in activities that filled the available time” (Doyle, 1985, p. 31). He noted the challenge of

accomplishing this task, as teachers must solve this problem “... in an inherently unstable environment characterized by multiple demands, simultaneous events, immediacy, unpredictability, a public character, and a unique history” (pp. 31-32).

Another definition is proposed in the first edition of the *Handbook of Classroom Management*:

[T]he actions teachers take to create an environment that supports and facilitates both academic and social-emotional learning... [I]t not only seeks to establish and sustain an orderly environment so students can engage in meaningful academic learning, it also aims to enhance students’ social and moral growth (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006, p. 4)

Modern definitions often emphasize social-emotional growth and the whole-child approach to teaching (considering the contexts in which students live—their home lives, their physical, emotional, and mental well-being, etc.), wherein classroom management is not something to be meted out to disobedient students. Instead, it is through classroom management that teachers provide an educationally safe environment for students from all walks of life (trauma-informed, culturally-responsive/sustaining, mental/physical development, etc.) to learn both academic subjects and social-emotional skills (Emmer & Sabornie, 2014).

For further discussion of the varied definitions of classroom management, see the two editions of the *Handbook of Classroom Management* (Emmer & Sabornie, 2014; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). However, for the purposes of this work, the working definition of classroom management will most closely align with the modern view, in which classroom management is the actions a teacher takes to create a learning environment which supports students both academically and social-emotionally.

Theoretical Foundations of Classroom Management

In addition to different definitions, there are foundational, theoretical differences in the research surrounding classroom management. Emmer and Sabornie's (2014) second edition of the *Handbook of Classroom Management* has listed five core philosophical outlooks in their introduction. For example, they described an early framework which originated in the 1970s, "... the process-product tradition [which] sought to identify predictors of teacher effectiveness" (p. 4). This tradition made a direct connection between the way the teacher taught and the way their students performed on assessments. This approach has been researched and expanded on into the modern day, and "... led to greater understanding of the complex set of teacher strategies needed to establish and maintain a productive classroom. In particular, the teacher's role at the beginning of the year was emphasized..." (p. 4). This is notable, as most advice to new teachers strongly emphasizes the importance of establishing expectations and routines at the beginning of the year.

Another foundational philosophy branches out from the work of Kounin (1970) and others who "... worked in the ecological psychology tradition" (p. 4), using direct videotaped observations of actual classrooms. Ecological psychology is an approach which focuses on the environments and contexts of perception and action—in other words, the way a teacher acts and responds in the classroom is likely radically different than the way they might act on the street. This approach means the researchers were not only focusing on the actions of the teachers and the students, but also on the environmental variables in the classroom that influenced those actions (Michaels & Carello, 1981). This approach allowed the researchers to examine the cause-effect sequence more closely, how teachers moved around the room, and other small details that required repeated viewings to catch on to. Emmer and Sabornie (2014) noted the outcomes of this work: "From this perspective came the key idea of the importance of activity management,

including how the teacher engages students and minimizes disruptive behavior by keeping activities on track, preventing intrusions, and maintaining activity flow” (p. 4). These concepts are still considered largely foundational to good classroom management, and impact the way teacher preparation programs instruct future educators. Additionally, the use of video recordings has become an essential aspect of teacher education and continued reflection for practicing teachers.

Emmer and Sabornie continued, describing and defining three further frameworks for researching and understanding classroom management, which I will quickly list here:

- Applied Behavior Analysis (which primarily focuses on carefully planned punishments to reduce unwanted behaviors);
- classroom management as a “school-wide concern” (from which PBIS and MTSS systems evolved—often with a dash of influence from applied behavior analysis);
- and a counseling and clinical psychology tradition (emphasizing teacher-student relationships, communication, and social-emotional development of both teacher and student).

The field of research into classroom management, despite not being very widely discussed among teachers, contains a cornucopia of definitions and theories which directly impact the training of new teachers and the treatment of their students. There has been a radical shift in the past decade, emphasizing the importance of data-driven approaches (PBIS, for example) and supporting the growth and development of social-emotional skills in students. These are positive developments and hopefully further research can continue to show the effectiveness of these approaches. Despite the variability and variety in definitions and philosophies, and the positive

direction the field is heading in, one aspect of classroom management remains a constant: novice teachers struggle with it.

Classroom Management and Novice Teachers

Research shows that beginning teachers have long listed discipline and/or classroom management as their primary concern. Margaret Merrion (1980) quoted several students in a college music teacher prep class,

“Are the kids like this all of the time?” asks a junior practicum student in disbelief. “How do you get the class to listen?” asks a senior starting her student teaching. “How can I maintain better discipline?” worries another student teacher at midterm. “I’m not sure I want to teach!” As a supervising teacher of music, I have had such questions posed and thoughts shared with me on countless occasions by students in our college of education...
(p. 1)

Veenman (1984) conducted an international meta-analysis of research on the problems faced by beginning teachers from 1960 to 1983, and found that, “...*classroom discipline* was the most seriously perceived problem area of beginning teachers” (p. 153). As mentioned previously, Conway (2015), in doing research on the concerns of new music teachers, found the same result. Further, an article published in 2018 continued to list classroom management as a primary cause of stress for all teachers (Aldrup et al., 2018). Why do beginning teachers struggle with classroom management? O’Sullivan (1989) noted one source of the challenge: “Unlike other occupations, beginning teachers assume responsibilities similar to those who have been teaching for 20 years...” (p. 227). What separates beginning teachers from experienced teachers?

In the introduction to Sogin and Wang’s (2002) research, the authors summarized the results of many studies which explored the differences between expert teachers and novice

teachers. These studies quickly revealed why beginning teachers, both in and out of music education, struggle to tackle the challenge of efficient classroom management. They wrote,

The results of these studies show that expert teachers make inferences when describing classroom action and interaction, while novices tend to describe the action in a more literal manner. Expert teachers tend to view the long term and the need to plan for several types of responses during an instructional period, but the novice teachers take almost a knee-jerk approach to fixing a problem. Experts are continuously analyzing and altering their teaching routines. That is, they are able to assume a flexible posture that they can modify to fit different teaching situations... Experts rely on their gut feeling about students, while novices are not quite sure where to begin. Experts look at student cues as prompts for instruction, but novices see cues as prompts for behavior management. (p. e12)

Novice educators are more likely to interpret benign student behaviors as disruptive and in need of correction, are less likely to see the nuance of the situation, and are more likely to become flustered and unsure of how to continue their lesson following a disruption. This would likely still be a problem with a class comprised entirely of Tier I students, but it becomes especially troubling when the novice teacher is faced with a class containing Tier II and Tier III students as well. Novice teachers present as brittle and stiff, particularly when compared to expert teachers—one metaphorical stone might shatter the novice, while a dozen might just bounce off the expert.

Another area that differentiated novices from experts is present in secondary music classrooms, such as band, orchestra, or choir. Sogin and Wang showed that expert music teachers have fast-paced lessons and keep interruptions to rehearsals short, helping students stay engaged

in performing. Expert music instructors also value flexibility in their teaching. Combined with a quicker pace in lessons, many classroom management issues are smoothed over by keeping students engaged in learning:

Flexibility is especially crucial for music teachers because they have to evaluate students' performance regularly as an ongoing event during their music lessons... effective music teachers provide motivation for learning by offering music activities at a fast pace. If they are successful in doing this, they have very little need to monitor classroom management issues. (Sogin & Wang, 2002, p. e15)

Disruptive behaviors are minimized when the pace of instruction is kept high, and keeping students engaged in the process of learning.

These claims were strengthened by Doyle's (1985) literature review on classroom management. In summarizing research about pacing and lesson structures, the author described lesson types that were found to cause the most student misbehavior as those "... high in *intrusiveness* from student-generated stimuli (e.g., music or movement lessons)..." (p. 32). In other words, lessons where students are expected to be creating sound, movement, or speech are more likely to result in students being off-task. On the other hand, lessons "...high in *continuity* of signals..." (p. 32) from the teacher—lessons in which students are only hearing instructions, sound, and information from the teacher—led to less disruptive behavior from students. This points to the unique challenges faced by beginning secondary music teachers, who must balance intrusive, student-generated stimuli (such as a musical instrument) with a continuity of signals from the podium (such as musical direction and instruction). An NMT, who is still developing smooth transitions and good pacing, may find that their continuity is interrupted when the lesson

plan doesn't work—allowing the intrusiveness of students with instruments to take hold and encourage misbehavior.

Novice teachers also face challenges related to the limits of their ability to filter stimuli, whether noise, body movement, or even faces. Veenman (1984) described research in which student-selected “best” teachers were compared to beginning teachers, findings which noted that beginning teachers “... seemed to allow much disorder to go unnoticed, as if it would go away by itself if not acknowledged” (p. 144). Further, the author found that, “... beginning teachers were less able to attend to spontaneous student responses and to cues from the class as a whole than were experienced teachers, but instead were very sensitive to student behaviors that could disrupt their planned presentation” (p. 145). Novice teachers ignore behaviors which don't interfere in their lesson, but which may be causing an increase in student stimuli, while becoming overly reactive to behaviors which do impact their lesson plan. This sort of inconsistency is bred from the novice's undeveloped skills, and is self-centered in nature. Further, it results in classroom management that is unpredictable at best, and chaotic at worst. Neither condition is conducive to healthy student-teacher relationships.

Clearly, beginning teachers must learn to filter the stimuli of a busy classroom and attend to the important behavioral cues being presented by students, and in doing so, create a classroom where students behave more harmoniously. However, beginning teachers may be pressing against mental and physical limitations that can only be developed over time and through hands-on experiences.

Doyle (1975) provided an example of an area many beginning teachers struggle with: localizing. He wrote, “...there is a common tendency among beginning teachers to "localize," that is, to focus primary, if not exclusive, attention on students within a small subregion of the

total classroom space” (p. 40). This results in a beginning teacher only directly teaching and perceiving students who fall within a small radius around the teacher—excluding students outside that area, and harming overall group focus. Eventually, he says, “...students in this ignored region become candidates for disruption requiring discipline action” (p. 40). By becoming focused on the students in their immediate proximity, or localizing, the novice teachers demonstrated a lack of attention and care for students outside of that area, and weakened the “continuity of signals” from the teacher to those students.

Anecdotally, this is something I personally experienced in the digital setting in my student teaching. During an early lesson, despite having 15 smiling faces contained in boxes on an easily scanned screen, I found myself unable to process/*see* any students except for the five or so I happened to latch on to initially. For a full fifteen minutes, while I could literally see 15 boxes on my screen, I could only process the names and faces of the few in my “localized circle”. The names of students outside the localized few, despite being clearly displayed on my screen, were invisible to me, as were the faces and body language of those students. This is likely due to the challenge new teachers face of attuning to the important stimuli and filtering out unimportant stimuli—in attempting to be completely present for all my students, I had overloaded my perceptual abilities and had become blind to the students who came in last. Novice teachers face mental limitations until they have the experiences, guidance, and time to reflect in order to develop their ability to filter and process important student-generated stimuli.

Another area where beginning teachers may struggle is in setting up preventative classroom management routines, rather than focusing on resolving disruptions after they’ve already occurred. In fact, “... findings indicate that what a teacher does before misbehavior takes place is crucial in determining overall disciplinary success” (Doyle, 1975, p. 39). Students need

to know what is expected of them when they are in a classroom—what behaviors are appropriate, what kinds of questions are acceptable and expected, and so on. Without this frontloading of instruction about behavior, students just have their best guess to go on. Enacting a classroom management strategy which focuses entirely on resolving behaviors after they've already occurred leads to more time spent during a lesson, slowing down the pace of the lesson and increasing the chances of off-task behavior by other students. Reactive classroom management in a self-perpetuating feedback loop that, despite attempting to discourage misbehavior, creates more opportunities for it.

However, with a good teacher preparation program and a supportive first job, many beginning teachers can successfully engage in preventative work. Writing about the findings from two first-year PE teachers, O'Sullivan (1989) marked their successes, "From an organizational standpoint, [the beginning teachers] were very pleased with the way the year began. Students learned their rules, routines, and expectations quickly. Time was spent teaching basic routines and students were reinforced for compliance..." (p. 230). O'Sullivan also found that the first-year teachers in their study only really came to understand the pragmatic values of a preventative approach to classroom management through enacting it in their school. They described how one of the research subjects worked through this process,

Kelley taught the rules and expectations initially because, she said, "That is what I was taught to do and I understand deeply all the reasons that we were taught to do that now I think anyone who walks into my classroom is shocked that these kids, when I say 'freeze', they freeze. It is not just in the classroom; even in the cafeteria if they are real loud, and I will say 'freeze', they all stop and look at me." (p. 231)

Experience by itself is no cure-all for the challenges faced by beginning teachers. While research has indicated that, “After 3 or 4 years on the job... many teachers may settle into a pattern of teaching that becomes relatively stable” (Veenman, 1984, p. 145), stability does not, by itself, necessitate expertise. In fact, this time frame would seem to indicate the vital importance of developing beginning teacher’s habits into ones which support the learning and health of themselves and their students throughout their career.

To this end, Sogin and Wang (2002) concluded their study calling for teacher preparation programs to “... stress the importance of being flexible...” (p. e16) and that, “... all teachers would benefit greatly by reflecting regularly on their teaching practice...” (p. e16). In order to encourage novice teachers to be more resilient to lesson derailments and to develop the ability to see students and their behaviors more holistically, it is important to stress these points for new teachers. Further, establishing good preventative practices, such as routines, enables novice teachers to be more flexible. With clear behavior expectations enshrined in the classroom, lesson plan disruptions and small hiccups in the flow of a lesson are less likely to devolve into widespread misbehavior among the students. Routines create an environment where novice teachers have more time to process the behaviors in the room and to cope with lesson plan disruptions.

Doyle (1985) discussed the importance of hands-on practice and an experienced supervisor to guide reflection and analysis of student-teaching experiences. In the conclusion of his article, the author summarized the development of the skill of classroom management, first defining classroom management as “... fundamentally an intellectual skill that is based on knowledge about action-situation relationships in classrooms” (p. 33). He continued, “Such knowledge structures are developed gradually through direct instruction in propositional

knowledge about classrooms... and reflection upon experiences in clinical settings” (p. 33). According to Doyle, pre-service and beginning teachers need direct experience and guided reflections in order to develop the intellectual skills required to effectively teach and manage classroom behavior.

Novice teachers have consistently listed classroom management as their primary concern, and for good reason. It would be challenging enough to enter the teaching profession if the only job was creating meaningful and engaging lessons for a diverse student population, but new teachers are expected to manage that and a classroom full of children—not to mention numerous other responsibilities, such as contacting parents and keeping good records.

There are many aspects of classroom management that are particularly challenging for novice teachers, including remaining flexible, keeping lessons fast-paced, and setting up clear behavior expectations. There are also aspects that can only be learned through hands-on experience and time in the room, such as learning to focus on important stimuli from students and ignore information that is unimportant.

While these are all challenges faced by every educator, music educators are faced with a slew of additional demands and complications.

Unique Classroom Management Demands for Music Educators

In their chapter of the *Handbook of Classroom Management*, Byo and Sims (2014) discussed the distinct challenges that face music teachers as they approach classroom management. One such challenge is the unique demands on the students’ mental, physical, and learning capabilities, which are wide-ranging:

Music classes focus primarily on the production, interpretation, and analysis of sound, as well as on reading and writing using a complex symbol system. Students must

simultaneously employ and integrate cognitive, psychomotor, and affective skills in increasingly sophisticated ways as they progress through the school music curriculum. (p. 224)

The authors noted the abstract nature of music, the complexities for both students and teachers in coordinating large group performances, and the potential for high noise levels and chaos as further challenges. Finally, especially in public schools, teachers and students must face “... the reality that students often don’t have the music literacy skills and knowledge to work productively alone or in small groups” (p. 224). Unlike private music academies or magnet school, public schools are reliant upon the community they serve. Students in the music programs may have numerous other academic and extra-curricular engagements. Additionally, there is likely to be greater diversity in skill and ability level in public schools, since other institutions which are focused on the performing arts may have auditions and strict standards that smooth out the diversity. Already, these distinctions of public music education pose a challenge to overlaying the experiences and expectations of general teachers with music teachers: While general educators of most subjects can easily break students into relatively quiet small groups quickly (opening up time to manage certain students or simply provide needed one-on-one or small group instruction), the same is often not possible or extremely difficult and time consuming for secondary music educators.

The dissimilarities between music teachers and general teachers are even more wide-ranging. Byo and Sims described the particular challenges that face music teachers further, as “Secondary school music teachers most often meet students in ensemble classes, frequently with enrollments of 50 to 100 students... which is two to four times as many students as are found in most other classes...” (p. 224), on top of the planning of concerts, maintaining of budgets for

music, instruments and uniforms, and prepping and performing in public venues. These demands are incredibly unique to the performing arts, and can place extreme demands on secondary music specialists' time, energy, and money. Novice secondary teachers are faced with what is already considered the sharpest on-the-job expectation spike (Feiman-Nemser, 2003), coupled with the even higher demands of secondary music.

NMTs must contend with multiple logistical, financial responsibilities, and numerous secretarial tasks, while also trying to develop a flexible and reflective teaching practice. It would be unrealistic to ever expect a novice teacher to be able to juggle all of these spinning plates, and it should come as no surprise when some fall to the floor. However, developing a better understanding of one of those variables could be helpful for NMTs—if NMTs were better prepared to work with Tier II students, they might handle the substantial circulating saucers a bit better.

The “Tier II” Population

My interests lie in the impact of a specific subset of the student population, one which I describe as “Tier II”. I am borrowing this term from the commonly employed Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model, in which interventions for students are conceptualized as progressing from Tier I (universal supports), Tier II (more focused supports), and Tier III (intensive supports) (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). MTSS is a school-wide, data-driven, tiered systematic approach to supporting all students. It has general supports for Tier I students, who are the base of the pyramid and should comprise about 80% of the school population. These supports might be talking about Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) in class, or other small supports. MTSS assumes that these students do not need very much guidance, and are generally academically and behaviorally at standard. MTSS outlines more robust supports for Tier II

students, who have more areas of growth and should comprise about 15% of the school population. These might include small group work around SEL or academic subjects. Finally, Tier III is outlined by MTSS as needing the most support and being about 5% of the school population. These students receive one-on-one support from educational staff, and may need extensive guidance and instruction (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). While MTSS does include discussions about behavior and social-emotional skills, I am borrowing the terminology, conceptual framework, and population sizes without the specific definitions employed by MTSS and related programs.

Tier I students, in my conceptual approach, would be the general population of students in a Secondary Music Classroom that require only basic levels of classroom management in order to be non-disruptive to class proceedings. These are the students who make up the majority of the class and are typically copacetic to the proceedings in the room. They likely come from supportive families and have experienced little trauma. At the other end of the spectrum, Tier III students would be those who have legally required extra supports or adaptations (IEPs and/or 504 plans) and often receive one-on-one instruction and support for their behavior and/or academic needs. Tier II students, then, would be those who may or may not have a medical/psychiatric diagnosis, but who need extra support and guidance in order to participate in class without being disruptive. For the sake of clarity and completeness, the following will delve into the specifics of each population.

Tier I students should be thought of as the majority of the classroom population, and the population that pre-service programs should have prepared NMTs to best support in their learning and behavioral needs. This group does not exclude students who have a medical or psychological diagnosis. Instead, Tier I refers to any student who doesn't require much, if any,

additional scaffolding or support to stay on task and participate fully without disrupting their own learning, or the learning of others.

The Tier III population should be thought of as students who have an identified disability and are likely supported through the special education program. Due to the legal requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), and every student's right to the least restrictive environment (LRE) for their education, teachers must investigate ways to integrate and accommodate these learners in the classroom. My reasoning for excluding this population from the focus of my research hinges on the amount of support that *should* be available to educators for this population. A well-funded special education program includes behavioral specialists, special education teachers, and one-on-one supports through paraeducators if necessary, as part of the requirements for free appropriate public education (FAPE) found in IDEA (2004). For teachers of any skill level to support this population with fidelity, it should be expected to provide a co-teacher or paraeducator to assist with extreme behaviors or the implementation of heavily differentiated lessons as set out by the FAPE requirements of IDEA.

Tier II, then, is the population of students who need more support than most students, but do not need one-on-one support in order to participate in their classes. These are the students who may be diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or some other psychological or medical condition that may not fall under the supports outlined by IDEA, and receive no official behavioral supports. Commonly, these are the students who can't seem to stop talking, who are stubborn, and who are most likely to flummox a novice educator. These students may be struggling with difficult home lives, or an as-yet undiagnosed learning disability. They may be experiencing trauma or have experienced trauma that impacts their perception of standard social cues, as more than two thirds of American children by age 16 have (SAMHSA,

2020). The behaviors expressed by this group may be as innocuous as a habit of blurting during instruction, or as violent as property destruction and physical/verbal/emotional abuse. NMTs receive very little direct teaching and experience involving this population, and the behaviors may be seen as a failing of the NMT's ability to teach and create clear expectations.

Summary

NMT are faced with the standard challenges of any novice teacher, but with the unique demands of teaching music in public schools. These challenges include the desire and requirement for an inclusive classroom, coupled with financial and logistical responsibilities and large class sizes. NMTs also have to learn how to support the Tier II population of students, who are often disruptive and can derail the NMT's lesson plans.

Chapter 3: Survey, Methods, and Discussion

Introduction

Novice Music Teachers (NMTs) have, like all novice teachers, ranked classroom management as their highest concern heading into and during their early years as a teacher (Byo & Sims, 2014). While research has been done to explore what classroom management strategies work best for music classrooms (Byo & Sims, 2014), or the ways in which NMTs differ from experienced music teachers (Sogin & Wang, 2002), there are limited recent reports on the specific aspects of classroom management that NMTs struggle with. In particular, there is little to no research on the ways certain school populations introduce chaos and stress into the secondary music classroom.

Pre-service teachers are typically prepared in the foundations of classroom management, such as establishing routines and expectations at the beginning of the year. They also receive education and professional support to create and sustain an inclusive classroom for students who are the minority of students who need exceptional assistance to participate (Tier III). There is a gap, however, in teaching and supporting students who are difficult, restless, disrespectful, talkative, and challenge authority. This population of students, to which I have belonged to my entire educational career, can often have their behaviors misattributed as a desire to sow chaos, or to be lazy. This survey aimed to discover how the NMTs respondents had reacted to and managed these students (Tier II), and if they felt they were prepared properly or had any resources to support them in teaching Tier II students.

Subjects

A survey investigating NMT responses to their “Tier II population” was distributed through email to 20 recent graduates from a college in the Pacific Northwest in their first five

years working as secondary music instructors. These teachers were selected due to still being in or near their formative years of teaching, as noted by Veenman (1984). Of the 20 contacted, 14 responded. This group included teachers employed throughout the northwest of Washington State, including small rural communities and urban cities. One respondent is employed in a large metropolitan area of Texas.

The respondents were balanced between male and female educators, with 8 women and 6 men. Four of the respondents were 5th year teachers, five were 4th year, three were 3rd year, one was 2nd year, and one was in their 1st year of teaching. The average number of years spent teaching was 3.7. This sample is a good representation of both teachers who have likely recently “figured out” what works best for themselves in the classroom and teachers who are still trying to discover themselves in the classroom (Veenman, 1984).

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants

Respondent ID #	Gender	Teaching Years
1	Female	5
2	Female	4
3	Female	3
4	Female	1
5	Male	4
6	Male	5
7	Female	4
8	Male	3
9	Male	5

Respondent ID #	Gender	Teaching Years
10	Female	2
11	Male	3
12	Female	4
13	Male	5
14	Female	4

Table 1: Demographic information of participants

Design of Study

This study was conducted largely in line with the Phenomenological approach to qualitative research, in which a researcher conducts interviews with subjects about their experiences with a phenomenon—e.g. grief, loneliness, learning math, etc. In this case, my survey intended to explore how the participants had experienced the phenomenon of being a novice, secondary music teacher and having behaviorally challenging students.

The survey aimed to gather information regarding the behaviors of students, including: prevalence of challenging behaviors in the student population; which behaviors were causing the most trouble; resources the teachers were already accessing; and what interventions had been already attempted. I also included a section for a short narrative in which respondents were tasked with discussing a moment when they struggled the most with a student. In total, there were five short-response questions.

Results

Question 1

1. How many students do you see that need extra behavioral support/interventions per week? *For example, students who struggle with transitions, sitting still, talking,*

making louder than acceptable noises on their instruments, easily overwhelmed, prone to shutting down, etc.

Of the 14 responses, 12 provided answers to this question. The answers varied in format with some listing a specific number, an average across classes, or a percentage of all the students they see. Of the 12 responses, 9 included enough information for me to get an idea of the percentage of a typical class that fall into the Tier II population. The average percentage was 19% with a median of 17%. The highest listed was 50% of the population in class needing behavioral supports, and the lowest was less than 5%.

The first outlier, with 50% reported, comes from a difficult school with high behavioral needs, and is a teacher who is very precise and analytical. As such, this teacher attempted to answer my prompt incredibly precisely, which skewed their response. This can be seen by their response to the first question:

Out of 324 students that I have at least twice weekly, approximately 45-65% of every class need extra behavioral support/interventions as per your definitions provided. Doing my count in each class and finding the modal percentage of most classes, I come up with slightly north of 50%. If we round that down to 50%, we can expect that the most accurate number is around 162 students per week that easily fit your definition of needing extra behavioral supports/interventions. Obviously, this number fluctuates with time, level of success of interventions, events from home, community efforts/struggles, etc...

(Question 1, Respondent #5)

This level of granular detail and closeness of reading of the question was unique among all participants and led to an abnormally high response.

The second outlier comes from a teacher working in a very large Texas-based high school. Texas music programs are notorious for having strict behavioral expectations and incredibly high expectations of their music programs. Being so large (2400 students in the school), this teacher has several experienced music faculty to work with, as they wrote about in their response to question 3: “I travel to multiple campuses and get to work with more experienced teachers” (Question 3, Respondent #14).

This data, excluding the outliers, correlates roughly with the percentages outlined in Tier-based systems: Tier I is 80% of the population, Tier II is 15%, and Tier III is 5% (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016, p. 189). That the data fits nicely with the Tier model gives credence to the usage of this model as a conceptual framework.

Figure 1

Percentage of Class Needing Behavioral Support by Each Participant

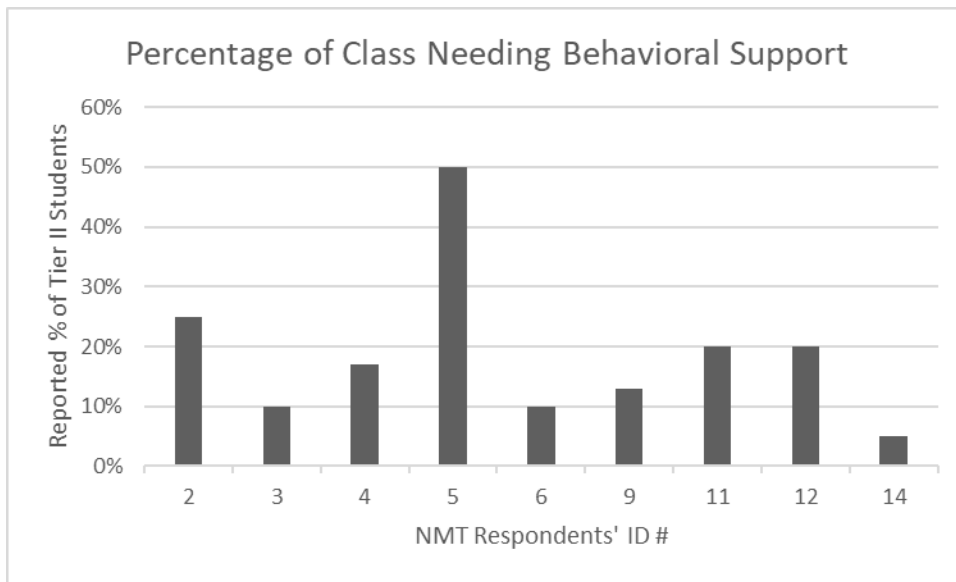


Figure 1: Chart graph showing the percentage of classes needing behavioral support for each respondent

Question 2

2. What behaviors are they expressing in the classroom that you find difficult to accommodate or adapt your curriculum for?

After coding the responses and uncovering the themes, I discovered 7 major categories of problematic behavior. The first major category was “Disruptive behavior”, which 11 out of 14 NMTs reported.

In total, *Disruptive behavior* had 20 responses, which was due to the coding process. One teacher may describe several behaviors that would be classified as “disruptive”.

Table 2

Major Categories and Number of Responses

Major Categories	Disruptive behavior	Apathy	Not following instructions	Shutting down	Absenteeism	Being off-task	Not having supplies
# of Responses	20	8	6	5	3	3	2

Table 2: Major categories and number of responses to Question 2

The respondents operationalized *Disruptive behavior* as 7 different sub-categories. The largest of these sub-categories, *Talking out of turn*, had 8 examples reported. The next two sub-categories, *Arguing with teacher* and *Playing out of turn*, each only had 3 examples. Clearly, the surveyed NMTs find students who talk over them widely challenging, as it impacted 57% of all respondents, and 73% of those who did report a disruptive behavior. An example of one response that described what *Talking out of turn* looks like in the classroom wrote about their frustration, “I waste so much time waiting for my students to be ready to play,” and noted, “A handful of students at my school feel entitled to express any question or opinion that comes to their mind, often loudly and during instruction” (Question 2, Respondent #2).

Figure 2

Disruptive Behavior *Minor Categories and Prevalence*

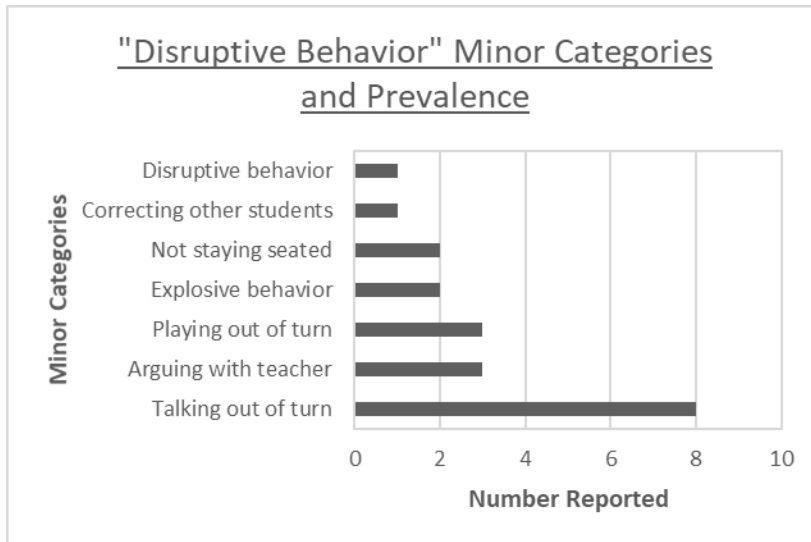


Figure 2: Chart graph showing the prevalence of certain Disruptive Behaviors

Question 3

3. What resources do you consult when you are struggling with in-class behavioral problems, **especially after a bad day**? eg: *SpEd staff, PLA, PD courses, School counselor, admin, etc.*

This question resulted in 8 major categories, and no subcategories. The most often cited resource after a bad day was *Other teachers* with 13 responses out of 14. This was usually listed as part of a fact-finding mission, an attempt to understand what might be going on for the student and if the behavior was consistent throughout the day. For example, one respondent wrote, “I will often try to chat with other teachers that have the same student and try to figure out what they might be doing that is successful” (Question 3, Respondent #1). The second most common response was to reach out to the school’s administration (10/14 responses). This likely indicates that most respondents feel supported by their administration in some way.

Only one respondent recorded talking to the student directly. This could indicate a kind of stigma around the behaviors when combined with the high amount of talking to other teachers and administration—in other words, NMTs may feel like they need validation that the behavior they are seeing is abnormal, or seeking to understand the school’s culture and expectations about student behavior as well as how a teacher manages that behavior. The respondent who described talking to the student directly was one of the most experienced teachers in the survey, with 5 years teaching at the time of their response. Perhaps more experienced teachers would talk more directly with their students in order to form a more complete picture of the student’s needs. This fact-finding and understanding-seeking approach is what was described by the participant:

Simply talking to the student directly outside of instruction time usually gets a better reaction than I typically anticipate. In these cases, I don’t tend to speak in an authoritative manner, it’s more like, “I notice you’re struggling with [fill in the blank]” at which point the student is usually good at opening up. I tend to notice these types of behavioral problems are more often than not things going on firstly at home and secondly at school. The students will almost automatically start expressing what they need to do to work better in class without me prompting. I’ll usually end with, “What do I need to do?” and 100% of the time the student(s) will say they can handle it. (Question 3, Respondent #13)

The described interaction shows an educator focused on the student first, and an empathetic intention to understand where the behavior might be coming from. This teacher seemed to be firmly on the “other side” of the experience gap, writing more like an experienced educator than a novice educator.

Table 3

Categories of Resources and Prevalence

Categories	# of Responses
Other Teachers	13
Admin	10
Parents	5
SPED/Behavior Specialist	4
Mentor Teacher/District Mentor	4
Online Resources, Podcasts	3
School Counselor	3
Student	1

Table 3: Categories of resources reported by respondents in Question 3

Question 4

4. Do you have a story about a student that challenged you the most that you'd be willing to share? *(These stories may be used to help illustrate a particular technique, or guide the narrative of my document – all names and defining data would be anonymized!)*

To parse this data, I used the categories created from questions 2, 3, and 5 (see Table 2, Table 3, and Table 8), going through the stories and seeing what behaviors were causing a problem, what resources and interventions were utilized, and what the outcomes were. This is a very quantitative way of approaching the data: using codes and counting. I also wanted to approach the responses as qualitative, narrative responses. By analyzing the data in both ways, different aspects of their experiences are revealed.

Based on the descriptions of the behaviors facing the participants, most of the narratives described interacting with Tier II students. The behaviors faced were almost always disruptive

(12/14 responses) and often included *Not following instructions* (7/14 responses) or *Being off task* (5/14 responses).

Table 4

Described Behaviors and Prevalence

Behaviors	# of Examples
Disruptive	12
Not Following	7
Off Task	5
Apathy	4
Extreme	2
Shutting Down	2
Argument	1
Attention seek	1
Absent	1
Social Struggles	1

Table 4: Behaviors described by respondents to Question 4

The two most common interventions described by respondents were *Building connection/relationship* with the student (8/14 responses) and some kind of *Punishment* (7/14 responses).

Table 5

Described Interventions and Prevalence

Interventions	# of Examples
Conn/Rel	8
Punishment	7
Tallies	3
Tokens	3
Routines	4
Encouragement	3
Redirections	2

Table 5: Interventions described by respondents in Question 4

The resource reported most often to help understand and resolve issues was the *Student’s parents* (5/14 responses). *Other teachers, Administration, and School counselor* were tied for second (2/14 responses each). It is interesting that the most reported resource, *Student’s parents*, differs from the most reported resource in question 3 (*Student’s parents* was ranked 3rd, with *Other teachers* and *Administration* reported twice as often). One possible explanation could be that the more commonly accessed resources would not be unique enough to stick in the personal narrative provided. In other words, since most NMT respondents seem to frequently talk with other teachers and administration, those details would fade from the story. A more unique and/or stressful resource, like the student’s parents, however, might be more likely to remembered. This is a well-understood component in story-telling and personal narratives—in the same way that the respondents didn’t write about opening the door to enter their room, or whether they wrote a referral with a pen or a pencil, resources they rely on frequently may be culled from the story due to being so obvious and commonplace in their mind as to be irrelevant.

Table 6
Described Resources and Prevalence

Resources	# of Examples
Parents	5
Teachers	2
Admin	2
Counselor	2
SPED	1

Table 6: Resources utilized by respondents to Question 4

Out of 11 stories with a conclusion/outcome listed, 6 ended positively (the teacher describes the student as no longer being a challenge), 3 neutrally (the teacher describes the student as mostly or somewhat no longer a challenge), and 2 negatively (the teacher describes the behavior of the student escalating to violence and expulsion from the class).

Table 7

Outcomes of Narratives Ranked

Positive	Neutral	Negative	Total
6	3	2	11

Table 7: Outcomes of the narratives in Question 4

Question 5

5. What techniques do you currently use, and how well do you think they work? Feel free to elaborate on why they don't work for **your** classroom! *eg. tally-mark systems, clearly prepared transitions, consistent schedules/routines, etc.*

The goal of this question was to continue to elicit narrative responses from the respondents. The responses to this question were coded into six major categories, and then the responses were coded as being either successful or unsuccessful.

The most successful and most often described technique/intervention was *Routine/Schedule* with 32 different examples described by the respondents. Every respondent

described using a routine or schedule, often clearly marked in the room, and every respondent ranked it as successful in helping manage their classroom. Two less successful techniques were also listed less often, *Tally systems* (7 responses) and *Token systems* (5 responses). 5 out of 7 responses about a *Tally system* were negative, and 3 out of 5 *Token systems* were negative. *Tally systems* are anything where the teacher keeps track of class or individual behavior using tally marks, typically counting the number of misbehaviors expressed during the class period. The *Token systems* are often a part of MTSS/PBIS, with the intention of rewarding good behavior and are enacted school-wide.

Another technique that had negative outcomes was *Punishment*. Out of 10 responses describing some kind of punishment, 5 were negative and 5 were positive.

Table 8

Categories of Techniques with Total Responses and Ranking

Categories	Total # of Responses	Positive	Negative
Routine/Schedule	32	32	0
Connection/Relationships	17	17	0
Punishment	10	5	5
Tally	7	2	5
Encouragement	6	6	0
Token	5	2	3

Table 8: Techniques utilized by respondents in Question 5

Discussion

Finding 1

The primary question I sought to answer was what behaviors of Tier II students challenge Novice Music Teachers the most, and were there any patterns or unifying themes to those behaviors. These patterns are mostly pulled from the second question.

Disruptive behavior is most often associated with *Talking out of turn*, *Arguing with the teacher*, and *Playing out of turn*. These are all examples of behaviors that would challenge the NMT's authority in the classroom. I believe that the challenging of the authority of NMTs is at the heart of what is revealed from the survey and research.

While *Apathy* is draining to NMTs, most describe it as an aspect of "defiance" by the student:

- The behaviors that I struggle with the most are students who are disruptive to the classroom environment, students who are apathetic and don't seem to care about grades/practicing/participating, and students who flat out refuse to do what is asked of them. Motivating a student to participate in each lesson is a struggle if the student doesn't seem to want to be involved. This is when the other disruptive behaviors start, when students become unengaged. (Question #2, Respondent #4)
- The toughest behaviors are playing out of turn and being unwilling to participate. As our students tend to face a high level of chronic stress, they will shut down and give up, or come in the room and immediately put their head down. (Question #2, Respondent #11)
- "Apathy, Disruptive behaviors, Absences." (Question #2, Respondent #14)

NMTs describe apathy as concerning, not because the students aren't learning, but because the NMTs can't control the students. This shows that NMTs may be operating from a place of fear when Tier II behaviors threaten to disrupt their lesson plans, and the façade of the “perfect teacher” (Veenman, 1984).

As Veenman (1984) wrote, new teachers are sensitive to having their lesson plans derailed. Perhaps we should prepare NMTs to be more flexible—a characteristic listed by Sogin and Wang (2002) of expert music teachers.

Finding 2

Another question was what had been successful for NMTs in managing their classrooms and the Tier II population. Were there any themes to be found in what the participants reported as successful interventions and techniques?

The fear and inflexibility revealed in the previous section may also be why NMTs, in listing the resources they access after a tough day, most often described talking to other teachers. Other teachers may help NMTs externalize their problems—in other words, it's not the NMT's fault their students misbehave, it's the students' fault. Talking to other teachers may also be way to externalize their response to the problem—instead of pursuing a course of action that is decided by the NMT, they conform to the school culture and the way that other teachers would handle the problem.

The fact that the only respondent to list the student as a resource was also one of the NMTs with the most experience could also indicate that over time, some NMTs may develop flexibility and independence in thinking and approaching Tier II students.

Connection/Relationship building in question 4 resulted in the largest number of positive outcomes (6 positive, 1 neutral, 1 negative). Punishment, despite being the second most common

intervention described, is more of a mixed bag (3 positive, 2 neutral, 1 negative). In fact, when punishment was described without any attempts to build a relationship or connection to the student, both outcomes were neutral—no real change in either a positive or negative direction. Relationship and connection building, when described without any punishments, resulted in 3 positive outcomes and 1 neutral outcome. When these two interventions were described together, there were 3 positive outcomes and 1 negative. Clearly, building a relationship and connection, with or without any punishments, often results in positive outcomes for behaviorally challenging, Tier II students.

In question 5, *Connection/Relationship building* was the second most commonly described technique used by the respondents, with 17 examples spread across 9 individual respondents. All participants who listed examples of relationship and connection building techniques rated them as positive and working well for classroom management. This aligns with research by K. Wayne Yang, in which they outline the idea of “Classroom X”—a classroom where students and teachers co-construct learning; where teachers engage in training discipline, but never punishing or excluding students (Yang, 2009). These are classrooms that seem to be light on classroom management strategies, yet result in high levels of learning and the engagement of all students. Students learn better when they feel respected and understood.

Perhaps building connections and relationships should be the first job for NMTs?

To build real relationships with students requires teachers to drop the façade of absolute authority. It requires vulnerability and the sacrifice of authoritarian control of the classroom and people within it. This sacrifice, however, is heartily rewarded by students who learn better, are more successful, and become allies instead of adversaries. This is not a new idea—in fact,

research abounds on the importance of connection (Denti, 2014), respect (Imbeau & Tomlinson, 2014), and vulnerability (Kohn, 2006).

In this way, we can also look at routines as an example of managing and cultivating respect between the students and the teacher—the teacher shows students what their lessons plans are for the day, thereby bringing the students into the process of lesson planning. Students are trusted by the teacher to know the plan, and will know if the teacher deviates from their plan. There is a threat is sharing this knowledge for teachers who cultivate the image of themselves as a “perfect” teacher: armed with the lesson plans, disruptive students could decide to derail the lesson. However, research in the field of education, and the participants in my survey, shows that students are calmed and supported by this information (Rawlings Lester et al., 2017). By being open and vulnerable, the teacher gives the students their trust and respect. The teacher both encourages students to trust the teacher, as well, and the teacher models how to be transparent, open, and vulnerable (Denti, 2014; Imbeau & Tomlinson, 2014; Kohn, 2006).

General Conclusions

My research shows that Novice Music Teachers may struggle to manage their lesson plans while being confronted with disruptive behaviors from Tier II students, who compose a relatively small percentage of the total classroom population. My research also shows that NMTs seem to broadly find that developing connections and relationships with the students who challenge them may be one of the best ways to help those students become active learners who don't disrupt the teacher or other students.

Novice teachers are often self-absorbed, inflexible, and caught up on appearances. This is the biggest point that emerges from the responses and in the research I've conducted for this thesis. Expert teachers are relaxed, open, and put their students first. I think many of the

challenges faced by NMTs, especially with Tier II students, comes from the tendency of those students to challenge authority and disrupt the carefully cultivated mask worn by so many new teachers. Many times, these students don't even cause these challenges intentionally, at least not at first.

If NMTs can shift their frame of view, these same students could be an absolute boon to the learning environment. Many of these students bring energy and divergent thinking to the classroom. This divergent and unpredictable thinking is often the source of strife with NMTs. However, a teacher who sees these students as an asset can capitalize on their vitality and unique viewpoints. If they can be brought into the process of teaching (as several respondents describe doing), they can inject creativity that is not teacher generated.

NMTs will always have Tier II students. Tier II students can be one of the greatest sources of stress for teachers of all experience levels (Aloe et al., 2014; Gordon, 2002). Instead of trying to stop the wind from blowing, build a windmill. NMTs should focus their energy away from resisting these students, and instead towards cultivating meaningful relationships and connections with them, helping them learn and understand how to contribute to the learning of not only themselves, but their peers as well. However, with a carefully and vulnerably cultivated relationship, clearly outlined expectations and routines, and an avoidance of punishment and shame, these difficult students can help the whole class learn and enjoy learning. It is vital, as music educators, that we integrate these students wholly into our programs—without asking them to leave behind parts of themselves.

Further Research

Further research should be conducted in order to clearly define the population of students I named as Tier II. By having a clearer concept of what is unique about these students who “fall

through the gaps”, educators can start to develop better strategies and deeper understandings of these students.

Building from the themes revealed by my survey, it might be valuable for future research to be more explicitly quantitative in nature to determine the validity of the experiences expressed by the participants in my survey.

It would also be interesting to delve into the interplay between authority, fear, and disruptive students. Are novice teachers entering the field with unrealistic ideas about how much authority they have, or the need to project the image of an authoritarian teacher?

Some of the research which didn’t make it into this thesis explored the difference between Authoritarian and Authoritative (warm-demander) teachers. Does the fear/stress of novice teachers influence their ability to be more authoritative? How could we help steer novice teachers toward the authoritative model, and away from the damaging authoritarian model?

Closing Thoughts

In conducting the research, literature review, and in writing this thesis, I have developed a deeper understanding of the many kinds of students that enter our classrooms. As an educator, I feel I have an ethical responsibility to support every student in finding success and discovering their strengths while working on their weaknesses. The work done over the past two years, both as a part my degree and this thesis, has solidified my belief that every child is capable of achieving success in my room—whatever that means for them.

My research into the varied ideas of classroom management has shown that, despite so much focus on punishment and restriction, most teachers find they have the most success when they take the time and effort to build a relationship with their students. This has a myriad of benefits, as having a stronger connection with students helps in the teaching/learning process,

reduces problematic behaviors, and, importantly, reduces the stress and burnout of being a teacher. When teachers step out of the template of the unflappable teacher and allow themselves to be their authentic selves with their students, most students react incredibly positively. It will always be a balancing act, and I don't think teachers should be unprofessional or prone to oversharing personal details—however, intentional moments of vulnerability with certain students or in certain moments can lead to students reciprocating the unconditional love and care that these teachers work to show towards their pupils.

Already, these ideas have permeated my work, whether with elementary age students, college students in a one-on-one scenario, or just when explaining to a friend or family member how to fix a computer problem—I have a deep, unabating belief that every person is capable of doing and learning whatever they set their minds to, and it's surprisingly powerful to be the patient guide as they make those discoveries. I have always been a partner for those around me on their respective journeys, and now I have a deeper understanding, due to this work above, of how to do this in a supportive and meaningful way.

I look forward to working with many Tier II students in my future, as well as Tier I and Tier III. They are all welcome in my classroom, and I hope I can be a source of stability and create an appropriately challenging environment for each student to discover their strengths.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Suggested Reading

- *Breaking the Mold of Classroom Management: What Educators Should Know and Do to Enable Student Success.* ed. Andrea Honigsfeld and Audrey Cohan, 2014. Rowan & Littlefield Education, Maryland.
- *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community.* Alfie Kohn, 2006. ASCD, Virginia.
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- *Intelligent Music Teaching: Essays on the Core Principles of Effective Instruction.* Robert A. Duke, 2018. Learning and Behavior Resources, Texas.
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- *Inside the Music Classroom: Teaching the Art with Heart.* Patricia Bourne, 2007. Heritage Music Press, Ohio.
- *How Children Learn When They Learn Music.* Edwin E. Gordon, 2014. GIA, Illinois.

- *Learning Sequences in Music: Skill, Content, and Patterns*. Edwin E. Gordon, 2012. GIA, Illinois.
- *Discipline or Punish? Some Suggestions for School Policy and Teacher Practice*. K. Wayne Yang, 2009. Language Arts, Vol. 87.
- *The Hunt for Disability: The New Eugenics and the Normalization of School Children*. Bernadette Baker, 2002. Teachers College Record, Vol. 104.
- *Authoritative Classroom Management: How Control and Nurturance Work Together*. Joan M. T. Walker, 2009. Theory Into Practice, Vol. 48.

Appendix B

Responses to Question 4

Behavior – Intervention - Outcome

01	I specifically think of one student that I had in a band class. He struggled with social cues and was incredibly passionate about band and music. However, this passion combined with his struggle with boundaries/social cues prompted him to comment on everyone else’s playing and what he thought I should do better. Instead of brushing aside his criticism toward me, I valued it in front of the whole ensemble by saying thank you and trying his idea. And I asked for his help at one point. This showed him that I appreciated his ideas, and he ended up listening to me more as the rehearsal progressed.
02	The most challenging student I’ve ever had was a student who was emotionally disturbed and had oppositional defiant disorder. He was interested in music, and his case manager thought band would be a good outlet for him. He would typically bring a toy of some kind to band class, and would just sit in the back of the room playing with his toy. If I tried to redirect him toward playing his instrument, he would argue or make an excuse. If I insisted, he would yell and sometimes physically lash out. One day he completely blew up. He screamed at me, yelled at my whole class to go to hell, and then ran out the room, knocking over music stands on his way, and slamming the door. He was removed from my class shortly after that. I don’t know if that story helps your research, because I didn’t have the resources to help that student in the context of a large, heterogenous beginning band class... but he was definitely the most challenging.
03	One student that has really challenged me is a boy in my 6th grade choir who hates being in class. He refuses to sing, and often tries to make up silly questions or distract from the lesson. At first he wouldn’t even stand/sit on the risers. He would jump off or just sit on the floor and refuse to move. Fortunately I was more stubborn than him 😊 and he now sits and stands on the risers when he is supposed to (sometimes still needs extra reminders) but still distracts the class and refuses to participate. His negative talk can affect the room quite a bit, but thanks to my

	teaching coach, we have found some ways to keep the class room light hearted even when there are issues.
04	<p>One student in particular comes to mind. He's an 8th grade trumpet player and he was determined to push my patience to the limit. Some things he would do included; wandering around the classroom, putting water in his trumpet, charging his phone, reading a picture book to the class (not joking), bringing toys to class, going in lockers, etc. This was obviously very frustrating for me and for the class, but even though I knew he was being disrespectful, I wasn't sure what to do. I tried talking to him after class, documenting his behavior in Skyward, calling home, talking to his teachers, having him fill out reflection forms, and occasionally (much to my embarrassment) I would single him out in class and tell him he must behave or he would not be a part of this class. Eventually his mom came in and asked to have a meeting with me because her son had been keeping her updated on the injustices he felt he was facing in class. I was told that it had been a hard month for both her and her son and she felt like I was picking on him and that I didn't understand him. After what was a very emotional meeting for all involved, I realized that even though I was justified in being frustrated and the student was most definitely showing me disrespect, I really didn't know much about him. After that meeting I was kinder to him in class, tried to talk to him more about his interests, and tried my hardest to not begin the day with this student in frustration but hopeful anticipation that maybe today would be different. Since then, it has not been a perfect relationship by any means, but we can at least communicate better. He feels seen and heard and I feel understood. I learned a great deal from this experience. Building a connection with students takes a lot longer than I had originally thought but once that connection is made, classroom management becomes so much easier! I will never forget this situation and this student.</p>
05	<p>There are many stories of students who have challenged me. Some of them end encouragingly, some with questions and uncertainties, and others with disappointment and sorrows. I think it's really important that these realities are understood by people going into this profession. We're dealing with real people and real situations and the results can and will be mixed. One that has really stuck with me is of a student who I shall here call Elle (anonymized name for you).</p> <p>Elle was in 5th grade when I first met her four years ago. Elle is a rough and tumble kind of young woman. She comes from a broken family of a father who abandoned her when she was 9 and a mother who has chased after every new guy with twice as much enthusiasm as she ever had for Elle. These traumas are deeply woven into Elle's way of interacting with the world; affecting how she sees the world, deciding what she cares about, determining how she processes information, and forming how she approaches human interaction and relationships. Elle hasn't been an innocent bystander in this either, as she's pursued every selfish and short-term gratification path available to her in her parents' negligent lack of boundaries, consequences, structure, and love. When I met her, Elle had already decided that music wasn't something she cared about and yelled this across the room while flipping me off the whole time. Having dealt with some difficult situations before, this didn't deter me or scare me in any meaningful way (especially since I had already had a 6th grader throw a chair at me earlier that day.) That said, I began to discover, in the following weeks, that Elle was completely apathetic in every thing that wasn't girl drama. I tried bribing her with rewards; asking her what she did like ("Nothing"), trying some suggestions (*silent sneering), even offering time of doing nothing or talking with friends ("I don't care, f**k you, suck my c**t..."). I spoke with her other teachers and counselor brainstorming ways to motivate</p>

her. No positive reinforcement, reward, kindness, break, alternate task, independent work, conversation, peer buddy, or anything would work with Elle. We tried consequences; spot changes, conversations, having an adult right near her, classroom exclusions, lunch detentions, small consequences, partial suspensions, calls home (to a full voicemail every time), and even talking with family "friends" to try to get a hold of mom. While these had the essential effect of protecting the education of Elle's peers (which should not be understated as their time and well being matters, contrary to lots of anti-removal and exclusion folks' intentions), Elle was increasingly looking like a tragic failure headed for a life of legal, personal, and communal trouble.

Meanwhile, she only escalated her misbehavior and began bullying other students. I had to remove (classroom exclusion) her from my class numerous times for the emotional and physical safety of other students. She created a vicious clique of girls who would degrade other girls based on their stages of puberty and their bodies. As we were discussing having to suspend her or even expel her, I suggested we try to think outside the box on getting a hold of the family and try to get them to come in and actually meet with us. We committed to, in pairs, trying to go to the house and knocking on the door. This was in tandem with continuing to call, emailing, and sending physical mail. We got lucky and mom answered the door on one of our visits. After an extremely tense at-the-doorstep conversation, we discovered that Elle had woven a thick layer of lies about the school and mom didn't want to confront her and started to support the fabrications. After being screamed at that I was a "dirty racist" and other names I'd rather not recall, I calmly said we just wanted to meet sometime, on her timeline, to help Elle. I said we weren't mad, we didn't hate them, we weren't scared of Elle's struggle, and how much Elle's future depended on her and us figuring out how to help her daughter. She agreed and we set a date and time!

The meeting came and I brought homemade bread to go with other snacks brought by the other teachers. We worked hard to prepare people to not be defensive, but to aim for clarity, compassion, and the best for Elle and her peers. Though the conversation was tough at first, we eventually convinced mom to some structures at school and home that could be put in place and maintained via regular communication. Elle sat angrily through the whole meeting and snapped at whomever spoke to her. She was extremely defensive.

It wasn't a magic bullet. We had frequent check-in systems that varied slightly depending on the classroom. Elle had to come straight to me at the beginning of class and I'd discuss her daily objectives with her and we'd progressively implement more independence on her work as she showed me she could handle it. The first weeks were horrible and disheartening, but, as promised, we provided the structural options to Elle and held the boundaries as necessary, all while communicating with mom daily. I almost cried when, three weeks in, Elle answered my directions with "Okay, I think I can do that." I was sure to carefully accept her response warmly, but with professionalism that allowed her to look strong and not be embarrassed. When she left that day, I immediately called mom and encouraged her to reward Elle that day. Mom grumbled about it and never rewarded Elle, but the change had already started.

It has been four years now since, and Elle is heading toward normalcy. It has been an

	<p>inconsistent, rocky, exciting, emotional, and eventually positive road. As of today, when writing this, Elle spoke with me today and said she's going to do what I told her was required to try and get into my Advanced Band. It will definitely be hard for her and I've encouraged her friend to help her during the next week. Elle almost failed my beginning band class in the Fall, but her mom and I spoke on the phone and she's been improving since. Mom is with a more stable man now and the parenting changes have made more difference than anything else. Elle hasn't been able to hide school from home and mom has begun to care more now that Elle doesn't seem like a lost cause to her. I hope to get to hug Elle as she promotes to high school this coming June.</p>
06	<p>Ultimately I find the most success when I've developed a relationship with the student. I have the privilege of serving grades 5-12, so there's an opportunity to have students for 8 straight years.</p> <p>One student that I have had for all 4 years of my time in [my school] is responsible for a noticeable percentage of my gray hairs. This student pushes boundaries, is maliciously compliant (when I ask them to sit down, they sit on the floor instead of a chair), talks to their neighbors, can be cocky about their playing ability, etc. Their behavior almost paints a picture of them not actually wanting to be in my class, but they would always say they do.</p> <p>I eventually learned about this student's life at home-- the parents got divorced, one parent is completely removed from the picture, the other remarried quickly, and the student is not a fan of stepparent. Last I heard, the student is now living with another family.</p> <p>My ability to approach this student with patience and high expectations has greatly improved. Their behavior is not acceptable, and I tell them that. I also know that they are not receiving the type of love and support I cannot provide, but I can make sure they are still welcomed in a place where their daily actions might not always fit.</p> <p>Now that I have shown this student that I care, that I want the best version of them at school every day, and that their contributions are valid and important, their behavior is manageable and we have systems in place. They continue to drive me completely bonkers, but I love them. Recently they advocated for our music program in a way that resulted in a large monetary contribution to our program. It was not solely their work, but in a sense, I like to think that I'm literally getting paid back for all the frustration they've caused me!</p> <p>I also want to add that this student is one of my favorites, and is an outstanding young adult. But still frustrates me to no end. But I love them. You know what I mean?</p>
07	<p>I have many, so please don't hesitate to ask for more.</p> <p>Currently this year, I am dealing with a student who has had me for all 3 years of his middle school career. My expectations about how the classroom runs and the flow of lessons has stayed practically the same for this student all 3 years, so when this student tries to say that they do not know or understand the basic expectations of the classroom, you know it's not the teacher, or the class, or the classroom.</p>

	<p>This student – male-identifying – seems to have a significant issue with female authority. I say this and can provide the receipts in the number of disciplinary actions that he has on his record... practically all of them are filed by female authority figures. The student challenges directions provided for activities by countering and arguing. In addition, the student talks back and argues with authority after behavioral redirections, including verbal, nonverbal, and physical redirections. When given individualized and explicit directions, the student chooses to move at half speed (or slower) so that they hold up the progression of the rest of the class due to us having to wait for them to complete their task.</p> <p>This student very much enjoys the attention – both positive and negative – of adults and his classmates. This student enjoys trying to continue a conversation (or argument) and try to heighten the energy/stress level of the people in the conversation. Because of these above problems, the student habitually causes lesson progress to stop and gets other students in trouble in the process because he distracts others from what they are supposed to be doing. The student resists or blatantly defies redirections so I typically have to do 3 or 4 redirections within a 5 minute time span, which completely derails the lesson.</p>
08	<p>I had a student in a 6th grade orchestra that I taught last year who I'll refer to as J. J was a very bright and kind student, but had trouble making new friends and always had to have things her way. In my orchestra class, many of the students had played with J in their past year in elementary strings, and at first there was really no glaring issues present. J's most common behavioral problem was playing on her own while I was instructing, as well as blurting out comments/questions during class. One particular day arose where she was especially vocal during a rehearsal, and other students began making comments about how she needed to "shut up" and stop talking/playing, etc. As a new teacher, and somebody who is very committed to maintaining a positive learning environment, these comments were hard to hear. I was able to diffuse the situation in the moment and get to the end of class, however J was extremely reserved the rest of that day. I had a good relationship with this student, and we talked after class about what had happened and she said she wanted to improve her classroom behaviors to help us have better rehearsals. We came up with a visual signal I could use (a sort of flat hand in a smoothing gesture) that I would do when I needed her to regain focus and quiet down. This worked well for us, as now I didn't have to call her out verbally and the other students didn't really notice the gesture. Over time, she did improve her overall management in my class.</p>
09	<p>A 6th grade general music student started this quarter and he would blurt out a lot and call me "Teacher Man." Whenever I would give a direction or start instruction he would blurt out something like "Oh, yes, okay, Mr. Teacher Man." He also began wandering out of his seat every now and again to look out the window, sit in another seat, or go talk to a friend on the other side of the room. He was also frequently on his iPad at inappropriate times.</p> <p>Strategies I tried to implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Shh-ing" when he would blurt - Reteaching him behaviors and discussing impact of his actions - Taking the iPad away

	<p>- Stop & Think form completed in another class -Office Referral to admin -Emails home</p> <p>It was not until the two office referrals and emails home did his behavior begin to improve. Now, he keeps checking in with me, asking how he did that day. I give him feedback during these discussions. During class, I tried to praise him when I can and give him a “BOLT Buck” when I see him meeting the expectation. So far, this is continuing to show results.</p>
10	<p>My answer to question 3 sort of answers this. My “technique” for behavioral issues that go beyond in-class reminders is to connect with my support team – talk to counselors, parents, SPED team, ELL team, admin if necessary. When a student is acting out, there’s usually a reason, and you probably don’t know what goes on in the student’s life when they’re not in your room. Go to 504 meetings. Understand your student’s needs. And be kind! Bad behavior met with anger doesn’t change.</p> <p>(Answer to Q3) I am fortunate that my school has highly supportive and responsive SPED team, ELL team, and counseling teams. Students with 504s have support teachers that I can communicate with to get to know more about them, and can help the student follow through on missing work or behavioral issues.</p> <p>I’ve also learned the power of the parent email. I have a student in piano this year who is an advanced learner, she’s a bright student, and has no trouble with the class content. But she was placed in the class against her will, has decided that she hates it, and that she’s only going to do the bare minimum. She often leaves class for 30 minutes at a time, and there’s really not much I can do to stop her. She approached me a few weeks ago about her attendance and participation grade, which slips lower every time she’s on her phone or out of the class for extended periods. She quite literally yelled at me (in front of the whole class) that it wasn’t fair that she had an A- in piano because she can do everything. I’ve tried giving her supplemental work to keep her busy, but she refuses to do it because “nobody else has to.” So, I emailed her mom. Her mom had no idea about the situation and was very kind and supportive of me. The next day the student apologized to me and her behavior and participation improved... for about a week. Emailing home didn’t solve the problem, but at the very least the student and I are on the same page about the class expectations, and if her participation grade continues to drop, she knows it’s her responsibility.</p>
11	<p>I had one student in my guitar class last year who just wouldn't come to class. I would mark him absent, do all calls on the intercom, and eventually he would show up but there was refusal to do literally anything. Even with the looming F on the horizon, he wouldn't do anything. Phone calls home didn't result in much either. There was a belief that he shouldn't have had to take the class, so I didn't feel particularly supported by admin in the situation either. I'm afraid the story</p>

	<p>doesn't end with me suddenly reaching the student through a miraculous relationship or anything...he did eventually realize that it was just guitar class and should put forth some effort to at-least pass, so that was good.</p> <p>What I find most interesting is the student didn't seem to show disdain towards me. I helped coach baseball, and when we were on the baseball field, everything was fine. No tension in the relationship currently either. Just firmly believed he shouldn't have to take the class and was holding strong. I've faced a few other students that attempt this, and have gotten better at combating it through finding what they are interested in, seeing them on a more regular basis, and just continuing to be committed to their learning.</p>
12	<p>—Middle school band student. Randomly shouts in the middle of class, intentionally plays loud and wrong notes when angry. Hey Z___, awesome job remembering the F# that time. Can you please try that again but this time blend with your neighbor? You might want to bring your volume down about 10%. Let's do an exercise as a whole class. *Class does blending exercise on a particular note.* Great! Let's try that passage again with the same blend. *Z___ plays 10x louder instead, on purpose.* Daily occurrences...had to design many point/treat/reward systems for this student for following directions...</p> <p>—High school student who refused to stand and sing (was perfectly able to stand). After clear expectations, modeling, etc., day 3 happens: "J___, will you please stand with us so you can earn your on task point today?" *Flips me off, walks out, flipping me off the whole way out the door.* Class continues. Stuff like this happened frequently. I had one student say "no way, you stupid bitch" and walk out. I frequently heard "oh my fucking god you're so dumb" from another student. Hence, the daily social emotional journaling (next response).</p>
13	<p>I've had a few difficult students in my career and unfortunately I've never had a good turnaround story like you see in the movies or read in heartwarming books. A lot of issues, as I've said earlier, are firstly home issues and unfortunately we as teachers get caught in the crossfire. Each student, family, class, year, etc., is a little different. All I can say it's takes at least four years at the high school level to create your culture, and it's only then that you can really start using those techniques you spend so long developing from your classroom management texts or pedagogy classes in full.</p> <p>A quick side note: Between my third and fourth years of teaching I was making a long road trip and thinking about classes that I had problems with the previous years. Until I realized it was only one or two students from each of those classes that I was having the issues with and the vast majority of the students were good on a daily basis. So, then I put that into mathematical terms, say 2 out of 40 students in a classroom were difficult to work with, that would mean 95% of the students were awesome. For some reason that really changed perspective in a positive way.</p>
14	<p>Last fall, I had a student in my JV Orchestra who was a really solid player, but his behavior was all over the place. One day he was manic, and couldn't sit still, and the next he would be unwilling to participate or get angry when I asked him to play. I tried building a rapport with the student- focused on things we had in common. He liked me better, but still didn't help with the down days. I contacted</p>

parents, but they would take his privileges away, which drove him further from the goal we had. It ended up escalating to him coming toward me with closed fists, throwing an instrument and being removed from the class after being asked to apologize in order to reenter.

I had another student who was on a 504/IEP for his learning disability. He had some severe posture issues which weren't going away. After a conversation with parents, we agreed he wouldn't be graded down for this since it was due to his Autism. I try to work with the kids where they are- whether it be printing music on colored paper for dyslexic students or letting them take breaks to calm down when frustrated.