

AN EXAMINATION OF NORTH CAROLINA MUSIC EDUCATORS' PREFERENCES OF
MUSICAL COMPETENCIES

By

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine (a) musical competencies that North Carolina music educators believe are the most important to developing musicians, (b) which musical competencies are taught most often in the classroom, and (c) if these musical competencies are included in the North Carolina Essential Standards. Out of 1,620 K-12 members of the North Carolina Music Educators Association who served as potential participants, 184 ($N = 184$) completed a survey addressing perceptions of musical competencies. Based on the results of the survey, the musical competencies educators considered most important were (a) reading music, (b) understanding musical terms, and (c) using proper technique in singing or playing an instrument. Additionally, two-thirds of the musical competencies outlined in the North Carolina Essential Standards are taught “often” or “always”. Further, the competencies for composition and improvisation were consistently rated lowest overall by North Carolina music educators. Results concur with previous research that indicated preferences by music educators for specific musical competencies yet showed differences for which competencies were preferred.

AN EXAMINATION OF NORTH CAROLINA MUSIC EDUCATORS' PREFERENCES OF
MUSICAL COMPETENCIES

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In 1994, the Music Educators National Conference created a list of nine standards that all students should be able to demonstrate as part of the overarching music curriculum (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994). These national music standards, while not enforced by the federal government, were used by state government officials as a model to develop their own state-wide music standards. In 2012, the North Carolina Department of Instruction redrafted the K-12 music education standards, creating the Essential Standards for K-12 music (North Carolina, 2012). According to Charleroy, Dzula, and Greco (2011), North Carolina was one of eight states that revised arts standards during this five-year period. The College Board generated a report outlining the similarities between the arts standards in various states (North Carolina, 2012). This report determined the North Carolina arts standards *did* align with what other states created for their art standards during the time (Charleroy et al., 2011). While this report shows that North Carolina is comparable with several other states, it does not provide any information about the effectiveness of the standards.

Currently, there is a gap in the research literature on the study of North Carolina music educators and their use of the musical competencies outlined in the North Carolina Essential Standards for music. Thus, it cannot be determined if the musical competencies outlined in the North Carolina K-12 music standards are perceived by teachers to be effective, or whether they are taught equally in music classrooms. While several studies have focused on which musical competencies are perceived to be the most important and the frequency in which they are taught by music educators (Blocher, Greenwood, & Shellahamer, 1997; Cohrdes, Grolig, & Schroeder, 2018; Dalladay, 2014; Dalladay, 2017; Taebel, 1980; Teachout, 1997), these investigations did

not examine the musical competencies outlined in specific state or national arts education standards.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine (a) musical competencies that North Carolina music educators believe are the most important to developing musicians, (b) which musical competencies are taught most often in the classroom, and (c) if these musical competencies are included in the North Carolina Essential Standards. The following research questions will be addressed:

1. What musical competencies do music educators in North Carolina perceive are the most important for accomplished musicians to demonstrate?
2. Which musical competencies are taught the most frequently in classrooms in North Carolina?
3. Do the musical competencies taught by music educators in North Carolina align with the standard course of study outlined by the Essential Standards for Music in North Carolina?

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Perceptions of the National Standards

In 1994, the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) released the nation's first set of national standards for music education. These music standards, along with those from visual arts, theatre, and dance, were commissioned through monetary funding by the U.S. Department of Education, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994). Small group delegations from each of the four arts disciplines were challenged to produce a set of standards for their medium that were "pedagogically coherent, consider the special needs of children from diverse cultural backgrounds, children with disabilities, and technology's role in teaching the arts" (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994). The standards that were created describe the knowledge, skills, and understanding that all students should acquire through their arts education programs, including (1) Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music, (2) Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music, (3) Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments, (4) Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines, (5) Reading and notating music, (6) Listening to, analyzing, and describing music, (7) Evaluating music and music performances, (8) Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts, and (9) Understanding music in relation to history and culture (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994).

In an attempt to understand teacher perceptions of these new standards, Byo (1999) conducted a study with participants who were music specialists and general education teachers. It was determined that general educators were not equipped to effectively implement many of the

national standards for music and that music specialists were essential for the new music standards to be executed. Additionally, Orman (2002) indicated that elementary music teachers implemented all nine of the national standards for music, but that little time was devoted to the students making their own creative musical decisions. Further, Borthwick (2002) found that parents have a strong influence on the success of a student learning musical skills and that it is necessary to educate parents in how to best support their student at home. Understanding the various challenges that are in place for the education system, creates a frame of reality in which to conduct future research. While these investigations indicate the music education standards are understood, valued, and utilized by music educators in their classrooms, it is important to understand the context in which educational standards are applied. Standards should be created that set high expectations, but often education systems face additional challenges that prevent them from executing the standards in a perfect setting. Subsequently, Lehman (1999) provided a series of recommendations for school music programs but outlined that often music standards grow each year and funding to support programs does not always allow for adequate implementation.

Development of Musical Competencies

Understanding what educators consider important to teach is not a new topic of discussion. Previous researchers have sought to ascertain which musical competencies music teachers deem most important (Dalladay, 2017; Taebel, 1980; Blocher et al., 1997), as well as to understand the mental strategies students use when asked to perform various musical competencies (McPherson, 2005). Subsequently, researchers created lists of competencies to evaluate based on teacher responses (Dalladay, 2017; Taebel, 1980) or an undisclosed method created by researchers (McPherson, 2005). For example, Dalladay (2017) determined that the

most widely practiced and valued musical competency was performance. While other competencies were deemed important by music teachers, musical performance was ranked highest by the majority of participants, followed by performing music ‘by ear,’ and singing with accurate intonation, respectively.

Additionally, researchers have focused on the importance of developing musicianship and the most effective instructional strategies. In a similar fashion, De Vugt and Malberg (2013), Teachout (2007), and Dalladay (2014) have all examined the development of musicianship with the classroom. For example, Dalladay (2014) concluded that developing musicianship was supported by traditional methods such as classroom instruction and family support. Although Teachout (2007) concurred with these findings, students should also have a voice in their music education to begin to develop their identity as a musician. Cohordes, Grolig, and Schroeder (2018) along with Corrigan and Trainer (2009) both found that formal music training develops musical competencies in students earlier than was originally deemed developmentally typical. Welch, Hargreaves, and Marshall (2010) outlined that many teenagers show a love for music, but few choose to participate in school music programs past their required elementary years. Therefore, in order to keep students involved in music, standards need to provide enough flexibility to be applicable in various musical ensembles, classes, and settings.

In order to determine which competencies are perceived as most important, researchers have sought the perceptions of both expert and novice teachers. Teachout (1997) examined both musical and teaching competencies, and asked teachers to rank which competencies were most important to be a good teacher. Both preservice and experienced teachers ranked teaching competencies above musical competencies, indicating that in order to effectively implement music standards, teachers must first demonstrate a competent classroom environment.

Preservice teachers ranked maturity with self-control, and leadership skills as their top two teaching competencies, while experienced teachers ranked managing student behavior and being organized as the most important. However, it is interesting to note that both groups of teachers rank motivating students as one of their top competencies. Taebel (1980) conducted a similar study asking teachers to evaluate a list of teaching and musical competencies and determine which competencies were most essential to pupil learning. From analysis of the data, Taebel (1980) determined that aural skills ranked the highest on skills most essential to pupil learning. Further, Blocher et al. (1997) studied the rehearsals of several middle school band directors to determine the average time spent on delivering instruction, listening, giving feedback, and dealing with non-musical tasks. Results indicated the majority of rehearsal time was spent with students performing, with only 32 seconds (or less than 3%) of the average rehearsal dedicated to providing new or informative content. The results from these studies varied; as did the list of competencies analyzed.

North Carolina Essential Standards

The MENC National Standards were revised in 2014, however, the North Carolina Essential Standards for music are modeled after the 1994 edition. The North Carolina Essential Standards were created at a time when the standard course of study was revised across all grade levels and subject areas (North Carolina, 2012). Common core was implemented for math and language arts, while the Essential Standards were created for the rest of the subject areas such as science and social studies (North Carolina, 2012). The close ties to Common Core suggest that North Carolina was attempting to create standards and curriculum that paralleled the recommendations of the federal government. All nine of the original musical competencies outlined in the 1994 National Standards are described in the North Carolina music standards

within the context of Musical Literacy, Musical Response, or Contextual Relevancy (North Carolina, 2012).

Charleroy et al. (2011) authored a College Board report that outlined the arts standards that were revised over a five-year period. They determined that North Carolina arts standards were comparable to what other states developed at the time. Several research studies have been conducted that support the structure of the North Carolina Essential Standards for Music. For example, the Give a Note Foundation created by the Country Music Association Foundation (2017) generated a report that supported music curriculums which include musical competencies for creating music, performing music, responding to music and connecting music to other areas. Encouragingly, the North Carolina standards include musical competencies in all three areas. Additionally, Crisciuc (2018) wrote about the importance of music curricula teaching a skill and refining those skills as students' progress. The North Carolina standards are sequential through ages and ability levels, often refining skills as students' progress through different musical advancements.

Several researchers indicated that several musical competencies included in the North Carolina Essential Standards are often overlooked or neglected by teachers. Franklin (2007) cited composition as a musical competency that students rarely experience because music teachers are uncertain how to teach composition and give students proper parameters by which to compose. Along with composition, McPherson (2005) evaluated the ability of students to improvise on their instrument. Results indicated that students were unable to describe or analyze their creative process when improvising melodies. Additionally, it appears that not only do students have difficulty evaluating and interpreting their own musical compositions or improvisations but are also unable to analyze and synthesize the directors conducting gestures

into musical ideas. Madsen, Standley, Byo, and Cassidy (1992) included poor conducting skills in a table of the worst teaching skills a pre-service teacher could demonstrate. All three musical competencies aforementioned in the studies above: composition, conducting, and improvisation, are musical competencies included in the North Carolina Essential Standards.

The current literature does not include a comparison between the musical competencies outlined in the North Carolina Essential Standards for Music and what music competencies educators in North Carolina teach most often. Researchers have indicated that the North Carolina standards are contemporary and adequate for a quality music education, other studies indicate that teachers neglect certain musical competencies (Franklin, 2007; McPherson, 2005). Without a comparison between what is happening within the classroom to what the standards outline, there is little significance to the standards. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine (a) musical competencies that North Carolina music educators believe are the most important to developing musicians, (b) which musical competencies are taught most often in the classroom, and (c) if these musical competencies are included in the North Carolina Essential Standards.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

Selection of Potential Participants

Since the questions in this survey are centered around musical competencies utilized in the North Carolina Essential Standards for music, potential participants are current K-12 music educators in North Carolina. It was determined that an effective way to contact potential study participants was through the North Carolina Music Educators Association (NCMEA).

Membership in NCMEA is established through membership in the National Association for Music Education (NAfME). When music educators join or renew their NAfME membership, they are automatically enrolled in the state-level music education organization. The Executive Director of NCMEA selected and distributed an email to all current K-12 music educator members.

Construction of the Survey Instrument

To address the research questions established for the present study, a survey was designed to compare the opinions of K-12 music educators on various musical competencies. In this study, the term *musical competency* is defined as a various musical skill and technique needed to develop musicianship and allow students to have a quality music education. The musical competencies examined in this study were synthesized from musical competencies outlined in a previous study (Dalladay, 2017) and the musical competencies outlined in the North Carolina Essential Standards for music. Additionally, the survey format was based on a previous methodology by Taebel (1980).

Forced-Choice questionnaire items were created to determine (a) grade level taught, (b) primary content area taught, (c) experience level of participants, and (d) the following musical competencies:

1. Use proper technique when singing or performing on an instrument
2. Perform music “by ear” through singing or on an instrument
3. Improvise harmony through singing or on an instrument
4. Understand and respond to the gestures of a conductor while singing or performing on an instrument
5. Create original musical compositions
6. Improvise when singing or performing on a musical instrument
7. Understand how to use technology to create and analyze music
8. Read standard musical notation
9. Understand music terminology
10. Analyze performances using proper music terminology
11. Understand general knowledge of music from various times, cultures and traditions
12. Make connections to music and other areas

Participants were asked to rate how important they consider each musical competency on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *not important*, 2 = *somewhat important*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *very important*, 5 = *extremely important*). Next, participants were asked how often they teach certain musical competencies in their classrooms (1 = *N/A*, 2 = *never*, 3 = *sometimes*, 4 = *often*, 5 = *always*). Finally, in addition to the forced-choice questions, a free-response question was included where participants could list additional musical competencies that were not included above. The complete survey can be found in Appendix A.

An online survey provider, Qualtrics (Version XM), was used to administer the survey to all potential participants. An email was constructed that explained the purpose of the investigation, contained the direct hyperlink to the survey, and informed potential participants

that by clicking on the link they were giving their voluntary consent to participate in the survey. This study, survey design, and email construction were all submitted to and approved by the East Carolina University Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the distribution of this survey to potential participants. Before the survey was administered to the NCMEA membership, the email and survey link was piloted by an experienced music education researcher. It was determined that the email, survey link, and survey all functioned correctly, and the survey could be successfully completed in less than 5 minutes.

Administration of the Survey

The survey was administered through the Qualtrics (Version XM) program. The executive director of NCMEA sent the email to all current North Carolina K-12 music educators on March 11, 2019. In total, the email was sent to 1,620 NCMEA members as potential survey participants. Two weeks later, a follow-up email was sent in order to reach as many potential participants as possible.

Analysis of the Data

The data was initially analyzed quantitatively by examining descriptive data of the participants. Next, participants' forced-choice responses to were also analyzed quantitatively through descriptive analysis. Finally, a mixed method design that utilized both quantitative and qualitative procedures was used to organize and compare the data that resulted from the free-response sections.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Survey Response

An email containing an invitation to participate in the study as well as a direct hyperlink to the survey was sent to all potential participants. From the 1,622 music teachers who were emailed the survey link, 2 total emails were returned as undeliverable. From this, 184 surveys ($N = 184$) were completed, resulting in a 11.3% response rate.

Demographics of Participants

The breakdown of participants who completed the survey included music teachers from (a) elementary K-5 ($n = 43$), (b) intermediate 4-6 ($n = 1$), (c) middle 6-8 ($n = 65$), (d) high 9-12 ($n = 48$), (e) 6-12 ($n = 15$), and (f) other ($n = 12$) (see Table 1). Primary content area taught were represented by (a) general music ($n = 45$), (b) band ($n = 59$), (c) chorus ($n = 49$), (d) orchestra ($n = 19$), (e) private ($n = 0$), and (f) other ($n = 12$) (see Table 1). Additionally, 33 participants ($n = 33$) have been a music teacher for five years or less, 90 participants ($n = 90$) have been a music teacher for six to twenty years, while 61 respondents ($n = 61$) indicated they have been a music teacher for over twenty years (see Table 1).

Table 1
Demographic Data on Participants.

Category	<i>n</i>	Percentage
<u>Grade Level Taught</u>		
Elementary (K – 5)	43	23.3%
Intermediate School	1	0.5%
Middle School	65	35.3%
High School	48	26.1%
6 – 12	15	8.2%
Other:	12	6.5%
K – 8	2	
K – 12	2	
4 – 8	1	
4 – 12	1	
5 – 8	1	
5 – 12	3	
University	1	
<u>Content Area Taught</u>		
General Music	45	24.5%
Band	59	32.1%
Chorus	49	26.6%
Orchestra	19	10.3%
Private	0	0.0%
Other:	12	6.5%
Band and Chorus	2	
Band and Orchestra	3	
General Music and Orchestra	2	
General Music and Chorus	3	
Piano	1	
Guitar	1	
<u>Years of Experience as a Teacher</u>		
Five years or less	33	17.9%
Six years to Twenty years	90	48.9%
More than Twenty years	61	33.2%

Perceptions of Musical Competencies

In response to the first research question, “What musical competencies do music educators in North Carolina perceive are the most important for accomplished musicians to demonstrate?,” results indicate that out of 12 musical competencies studied, the highest ranking musical competencies are “Reading standard musical notation” ($M = 4.86$, $SD = .38$),

“Understanding music terminology” ($M = 4.77$, $SD = .54$), and “Using proper technique when singing or performing on an instrument” ($M = 4.76$, $SD = .43$), respectively (see Table 2). The competency “Creating original musical compositions” ($M = 2.90$, $SD = .98$) was seen as the least important for an accomplished musician to be able to demonstrate.

Table 2
Overall Rank Order of Importance of Musical Competencies.

Musical Competencies	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Read standard musical notation	4.86	.38
2. Understand music terminology	4.77	.54
3. Use proper technique when singing or performing on an instrument	4.76	.43
4. Understand and respond to the gestures of a conductor while singing or performing on an instrument	4.66	.58
5. Analyze performances using proper music terminology	4.31	.77
6. Make connections to music and other areas	4.16	.94
7. Understand general knowledge of music from various times, cultures and traditions	4.08	.88
8. Understand how to use technology to create and analyze music	3.21	1.05
9. Perform music “by ear” through singing or on an instrument	3.12	1.11
10. Improvise when singing or performing on a musical instrument	3.11	1.04
11. Improvise harmony through singing or on an instrument	2.92	1.11
12. Create original musical compositions	2.90	.98

In order to answer research question two, “Which musical competencies are taught the most frequently in classrooms in North Carolina?,” results indicate that out of the 12 competencies listed, “Reading standard musical notation” ($M = 3.80$, $SD = .49$), “Using proper technique when singing or performing on an instrument” ($M = 3.79$, $SD = .47$), and “Understanding music terminology” ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .60$), respectively are the competencies

taught most often in North Carolina music classrooms (see Table 3). The competency “Improvise harmony through singing or on an instrument” was taught the least in music classrooms ($M = 1.79$, $SD = .70$).

Table 3
Overall Rank Order of Competencies Taught Most Often.

Musical Competencies	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Read standard musical notation	3.80	.49
2. Use proper technique when singing or performing on an instrument	3.79	.47
3. Understand music terminology	3.67	.43
4. Understand and respond to the gestures of a conductor while singing or performing on an instrument	3.59	.64
5. Make connections to music and other areas	3.14	.77
6. Analyze performances using proper music terminology	3.03	.81
7. Understand general knowledge of music from various times, cultures and traditions	2.90	.80
8. Perform music “by ear” through singing or on an instrument	2.27	.80
9. Understand how to use technology to create and analyze music	2.17	.89
10. Improvise when singing or performing on a musical instrument	2.05	.67
11. Create original musical compositions	1.96	.60
12. Improvise harmony through singing or on an instrument	1.79	.70

In response to research question three, “Do the musical competencies taught by music educators in North Carolina align with the standard course of study outlined by the Essential Standards for Music in North Carolina?,” the competencies “Understand how to use technology to create and analyze music” ($M = 2.17$, $SD = .89$), “Perform music “by ear” through singing or on an instrument” ($M = 2.27$, $SD = .80$), and “Improvise harmony through singing or on an instrument” ($M = 2.05$, $SD = .67$), were omitted since they do not directly align with musical

competencies outlined in the North Carolina Essential Standards. It was determined the musical competencies that were taught “often” or “always” indicated North Carolina music educators regularly included activities with those musical competencies. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, any musical competency with a mean score of 3.00 or above was considered as being aligned with the North Carolina Essential Standards. Out of the nine competencies evaluated, six competencies were taught often/always in North Carolina music classrooms indicating 66.7% of musical competencies outlined in the North Carolina Essential Standards are taught regularly. The competencies that were taught sometimes or never included “Understanding general knowledge of music from various times, cultures and traditions” ($M = 2.90$, $SD = .80$), “Improvising when singing or performing on a musical instrument” ($M = 2.05$, $SD = .67$), and “Creating original musical compositions” ($M = 1.96$, $SD = .60$).

Finally, a free response section was placed on the questionnaire to allow participants the opportunity to list any additional musical competencies deemed as very important that were not listed above. A total of 39 additional musical competencies and comments were recorded by the participants and were placed into a taxonomic structure based on themes that emerged (Juchniewicz, 2016; Madsen & Kelly, 2002). Several responses listed multiple musical competencies while other responses included comments outside of listing musical competencies resulting in 37 competencies that were studied. Finally, two university music education researchers viewed a random selection of 20% of all responses and placed each response into the established taxonomic structure for reliability. By using the formula agreements divided by the sum of agreements plus disagreements, reliability was found to be .94 (C. K. Madsen & C. H. Madsen, 2016). Data revealed that the free responses fell into the following categories: (a) “Performance Skills,” (b) “Behavior Skills,” (c) “Listening Skills,” (d) “Aesthetics,” with the

majority of responses falling into “Performance Skills” (see Table 4). Within the “Performance Skills” category, most of the musical competencies listed included “Musicality,” “Practice and Literacy Techniques,” and “Hand Signs and Movement”. Within the “Behavior Skills” category, competencies on “Building Good Character” and “Concert Etiquette” were listed. Musical competencies under “Listening Skills” and “Aesthetics” were also listed as important by respondents (see Table 4).

Table 4
Free Responses - Additional Musical Competencies Deemed as Important That Were Not Listed.

Category	<i>n</i>
<u>Performance Skills</u>	<u>19</u>
Musicality	9
Practice/Literacy Techniques	5
Hand Signs/Movement	3
Conducting	1
Sight Reading	1
<u>Behavior Skills</u>	<u>9</u>
Building Good Character	4
Concert Etiquette	5
<u>Listening Skills</u>	<u>6</u>
Ear Training	5
Acoustics	1
<u>Aesthetics</u>	<u>4</u>
Emotional Response	3
Value of Music Education	1

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to analyze survey responses from North Carolina music educators to understand (a) which musical competencies music educators in North Carolina believe are the most important to developing musicians, (b) which musical competencies are taught most often in the classroom, and (c) if the musical competencies that are valued by educators are included in the North Carolina Essential Standards.

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What musical competencies do music educators in North Carolina perceive are the most important for accomplished musicians to demonstrate?
2. Which musical competencies are taught the most frequently in classrooms in North Carolina?
3. Do the musical competencies taught by music educators in North Carolina align with the standard course of study outlined by the Essential Standards for Music in North Carolina?

Summary of Participant Responses

Based on the results of the present study, there were competencies that music educators viewed as more important for musicians to be able to demonstrate, along with musical competencies that were taught more frequently in classrooms. A number of parallels and contradictions were found compared to previous research studies on musical competencies. For example, the musical competency “Read standard musical notation” was rated highest both for the questions “How important is it for an accomplished musician to be able to demonstrate the following musical competencies?” and “How often do you teach about or include activities involving the following musical competencies?”. Conversely, in a similar study conducted by Dalladay (2014) “Reading from staff notation” was ranked ninth out of twelve musical

competencies. In the present study the competencies “Understanding music terminology” and “Using proper technique while singing or performing on an instrument” were the next highest rated, respectively. When compared to the findings of Dalladay (2014), “Performing on an instrument” was ranked as the top musical competency, while “Use of musical terminology” was ranked tenth overall. Because performing was found to be consistently rated high by Dalladay (2014) and the respondents of the present study, it appears North Carolina music teachers place a greater emphasis on musical literacy (e.g. reading music and understanding standard music terms). Additionally, differences were found between the present study and Dalladay (2014) for the ratings of “Performing by ear,” “Composing,” and “Improvising.” Dalladay (2014) found these competencies were ranked in the top half, whereas the findings from the present study show “Performing music by ear through singing or on an instrument,” “Improvising while singing or performing on an instrument,” and “Creating original music compositions” were rated in the bottom twenty-five percent for both importance and how often they were taught in music classrooms.

There were very few differences between the results of “How important is it for an accomplished musician to be able to demonstrate the following musical competencies?” and “How often do you teach about or include activities involving the following musical competencies?”, as competencies were only separated by a rank in either direction. This indicates that teachers in North Carolina teach the competencies they see as the most important for accomplished musicians to be able to demonstrate most often in their classrooms. Additionally, Franklin (2007) concluded that composition was often overlooked by music educators. The results of the present study appear to concur with these findings as “Creating original musical compositions” was rated last in importance by music educators and that music

educators included compositions activities “sometimes” or “never”. Further, McPherson (2005) found that children who were able to improvise on their instrument had difficulty explaining their process. Results from the present study show that improvising was listed in the bottom three musical competencies for both importance and how often it was taught. Although improvising and composing are both included in the North Carolina Essential Standards for Music, the results indicate that teachers are spending very little time teaching improvising and composing competencies.

The free response section yielded many musical competencies that would fit as a sub category to the musical competencies in this study. Several respondents wrote about teamwork and concert etiquette, which are important aspects of music education, though not necessarily a musical competency. Developing listening skills was listed by several respondents as an important musical competency, yet the “aural” competencies listed (i.e. “Perform music “by ear” through singing or on an instrument,” “Improvise harmony through singing or on an instrument,” and “Analyze performances using proper music terminology”) were rated lower than the “music literacy” and “performance” competencies (i.e. “Read standard musical notation,” “Understand music terminology,” “Use proper technique when singing or performing on an instrument,” and “Understand and respond to the gestures of a conductor while singing or performing on an instrument”). Additionally, another reoccurring theme from respondents was including the emotional response aspect of music. Although this musical competency is not included in the North Carolina Essential Standards, it does represent a valuable part of the musical experiences of students, and therefore was viewed as an important aspect of music education.

Implications of the Findings

The results from this study have implications for music teachers as well as for state legislatures and authors of music curricula. While the North Carolina Essential Standards do not offer indicators for how much time should be spent on each of the standards, the results from this study indicate there is more emphasis currently given to certain standards over others. This raises questions for standards that receive little to no attention during class time. Should music teachers spend more time teaching improvising and composition? Should state standards reflect that only a small amount of time be devoted to these standards? Should these standards be primarily reserved for specialty music classes, such as jazz band, or electronic music? These inconsistencies call for additional research to be completed, along with individual teachers to decide how these results could impact their classroom. Results from this study indicate a relationship between the competencies teachers viewed as important and the competencies that were taught most often in the classroom. Competencies such as composition and improvisation were seen as less important than other competencies and very little class time was devoted to developing these skills. Therefore, classroom teachers must determine if they should devote more class time to teaching overlooked musical competencies as the current standards suggest or continue to place more importance on additional competencies that they perceive of being of greater value in their classroom setting.

Limitations of the Study

While the methodology of the present study was based on previous research, it is important to note that this study only used music teachers in North Carolina for collecting data. It is possible that results may have been different with a higher response rate or in different parts of the country. It is important for future studies in this area to utilize a large and diverse

population to determine if findings from the current study are consistent. The Likert-type scale for the question “How often do you teach about or include activities involving the following musical competencies?” included the options “*N/A*” and “*never*”. This may have been confusing to participants as indicating “*N/A*” would be acknowledging they did not do activities with that competency, which may have functioned as the same indicator as “*never*”. Omitting the “*N/A*” option would make the wording of this question clearer.

Recommendations for Future Research

Subsequent studies could further investigate if (a) grade level, (b) subject area, and (c) experience level indicated patterns among respondents, such as if certain musical competencies were more important in various grade levels. Because music educators in North Carolina are expected to follow the North Carolina Essential Standards for music, it is essential that we understand if the musical competencies that are currently taught are valued by music educators, taught frequently, and align with the North Carolina Essential Standards for music. Further research should be conducted in other states to determine if (a) educators in that state considered the musical competencies outlined in state music standards important, (b) how much classroom time was devoted to various musical competencies, (c) if the musical competencies valued in other states match the values of North Carolina educators, and (d) how the musical competencies in other states align with national music education standards. Therefore, continued examination is warranted to provide opportunities to validate the findings of this study, as well as to allow music standards to be evaluated on a national scale.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** ·
www.ecu.edu/ORIC/irb

Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: Elizabeth Gloege
CC: Jay Juchniewicz
Date: 3/4/2019
Re: UMCIRB 19-000171
Comparing Musical Competencies: Music Educators in North Carolina vs. North Carolina Essential Standards

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 3/4/2019. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category #2, sub category A.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

APPENDIX B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Musical Competencies Survey



Dear Music Education Colleague,

I am writing to ask for your participation in a research study entitled **"Musical Competencies: Music Educators in North Carolina vs. North Carolina Essential Standards"** that will examine which musical competencies music educators believe are the most important to teach.

I know that your time is valuable, thus your involvement will simply consist of taking a brief survey accessible by clicking on the link located at the bottom of this e-mail. No personal identifiers will be asked for and your responses will remain completely anonymous.

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this research study and results of this study will be made available upon completion of the investigation. Participating in this research study is voluntary and you will not receive any monetary compensation for your time. By clicking on the link below, you give your voluntary consent to participate in this survey.

Please feel free to email me should you have any questions or contact the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at 252-744-2914 for questions about your rights as a research participant.

[Click here to take the survey](#)

Thank you for your consideration,

Elizabeth Robinson
Graduate Student, Music Education
East Carolina University
gloegee11@students.ecu.edu

APPENDIX C: SURVEY

Default Question Block

Which grade levels do you teach?

☐ Elementary School (K-5)

☐ Intermediate School (4-6)

☐ Middle School (6-8)

☐ High School (9-12)

☐ Grades 6-12

☐ Other

What is the primary content area you teach?

☐ General Music

☐ Band

☐ Chorus

☐ Orchestra

☐ Private Lessons

☐ Other

How many years have you taught in schools? Include this year.

How important is it for an accomplished musician to be able to demonstrate the following musical competencies?

	Not important	Somewhat important	Neutral	Very important	Extremely important
Use proper technique when singing or performing on an instrument	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Perform music "by ear" through singing or on an instrument	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improvise harmony through singing or on an instrument	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understand and respond to the gestures of a conductor while singing or performing on an instrument	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Create original musical compositions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improvise when singing or performing on a musical instrument	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understand how to use technology to create and analyze music	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Read standard musical notation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understand music terminology	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Analyze performances using proper music terminology	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understand general knowledge of music from various times, cultures and traditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Make connections to music and other areas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How often do you teach about or include activities involving the following in your classroom? *

	N/A	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Use proper technique when singing or performing on an instrument	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Perform music "by ear" through singing or on an instrument	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improvise harmony through singing or on an instrument	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understand and respond to the gestures of a conductor while singing or performing on an instrument	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Create original musical compositions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improvise when singing or performing on a musical instrument	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understand how to use technology to create and analyze music	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Read standard musical notation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understand music terminology	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Analyze performances using proper music terminology	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Understand general knowledge of music from various times, cultures and traditions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Make connections to music and other areas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please list any additional musical competencies you believe are important to teach your students that are not listed above.

