Allocation of Administrative Resources by Maryland Band Directors

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Abstract

There is an extensive collection of works in publication - such as *Teaching Band & Orchestra: Methods and Materials* (Cooper, 2004) and *Teaching Band with Excellence : A Comprehensive Curricular, Pedagogical, and Administrative Resource* (Pearson & Nowlin, 2011) - that deal with becoming a band director, and describe the importance of budget and resource allocation in idealistic terms. However, while a large body of research has been devoted to the impact of budget/resource cuts on band programs, few have focused on allocating what they *have*. The purpose of this study was to examine the practical use of financial and temporal resources among band directors in Maryland. My major research question was: How do Maryland band directors allocate resources of time and money?

My method of data collection was a quantitative survey. The survey consisted of 11 research questions (in addition to a 12th informed consent prompt) that fell into categories of demographic factors, financial resources, and temporal resources. It was not only reviewed by three professors in the Fine and Performing Arts Department at Elizabethtown College, but was also submitted for a trial-run and review by local band directors in Pennsylvania. In order to distribute the survey, a list of all public high schools in Maryland was gathered. This was done by visiting the website for each county school board and entering the listed high schools into a spreadsheet. Next, the potential band director participant from each school was cataloged by their email address in the spreadsheet, either by accessing each school’s website and searching for their email address, or by calling the school office to request the information if it was not found on the website. An e-mail with a link to my survey was sent to each band director, inviting them to participate in my research study and providing potential participants with a brief overview of the research project. Survey results were compiled and analyzed after allowing a two week response period. Due to an overall lack of response to the survey and some school boards’ policies on participation in “outside” research projects, only 15 full survey responses were collected from the pool of potential participants.

District/County budgets (mean:1790, min:0, max: 8,000) and booster-funded budgets (mean:16,125, min:0, max:75,000) proved to be vastly different from each other and among participant responses. Marching band proved to be the ensemble that typically received the largest proportion of funding from its parent program. Among discrete budget categories, there was a significant negative relationship (p <.05) between music purchase/rental and instrument purchase/rental, and also between music purchase/rental and uniform purchase/maintenance/rental. On average, band directors spent approximately 54 hours and 52 minutes per week working at their place of employment during the month of January. Communication-related tasks (phone calls, writing letters or answering mail, email, maintaining student information, and meetings) appeared to require the most time out of band directors’ work schedules, and were negatively correlated with tasks related to pedagogy (grading, score study, planning rehearsals). The more time-efficient that a band director becomes with communication-related tasks as an administrator, the more time that can be spent on pedagogical tasks as a teacher.

While the sample size was not large enough to statistically support significant over-arching conclusions about administrative resource use by Maryland band directors (specifically how the data relate to demographic factors), enough information was gathered in this explorative study to prompt similar research in the future with the hopes that more statistically-significant results would be found given a larger sample size.

Applications to Teaching

* Grounds concepts of administrating a band program in ratios of actual temporal and financial resource allocation data to provide a “real-world” look into the realities of the profession for undergraduate music education students.
* Details how average total working hours divide into time to task relationships, shedding light on where band directors could adjust priorities in order to ensure the most amount of time spent teaching and planning to teach.
* Quantifies how budgets are typically divided between ensembles and discrete spending categories, prompting an analysis of each program’s budget for ways in which spending could be altered to meet the varying pedagogical/musical needs of each director.
* Provides statistical support for advocacy efforts that aim to influence school districts to allocate larger portions of their financial and temporal or human resource “budgets” to their instrumental music programs (specifically, high school instrumental music programs).