**Is Music Aptitude an Indicator of Students’ Persistence in a Beginning and Middle School Band Program?**

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**Summary of Research**

This presentation details the results of a pilot study created to investigate the impact of music aptitude as measured by the Intermediate Measures of Music Audation (IMMA) on students’ continuation in a beginning and middle school band program (Grades 5-8). The study was conducted at a rural southwestern Pennsylvania middle school and tracked all students enrolled (N = 88) in the beginning and middle school band program from 2007–2014. A correlation was sought using Pearson’s Chi-squared (R2) test between students’ IMMA music aptitude scores as measured in the 4th grade and their rate of program completion. The results showed that there was no direct correlation or statistical significance between program completion and composite music aptitude scores (R2 = 0.04; P = .88).  Additionally, no direct correlation or statistical significance was found between program completion and tonal music aptitude scores (R2 = 0.06; P = .95), or between program completion and rhythmic music aptitude scores (R2  = 0.02; P = .66).

**Applications to Teaching**

The study results suggest that music aptitude cannot be used to predict band program completion; however, aptitude tests can show students’ strengths and weaknesses, which can increase success when developing differentiated lesson plans. Music educators should not anticipate a student’s likelihood of program completion based solely upon their incoming music aptitude scores, and the data from this study can support music educators’ communication with school administrators, parents, and colleagues in showing that a student’s lack of program completion is not related to low musical ability. Other variables such as a student’s socioeconomic status and parental support and enthusiasm should be considered before making changes to a music program. Future research could determine the strength of such variables by surveying families to determine their level of interest and enthusiasm for their children participating in a band program. The goal of this presentation will be to show that music educators need to be creative when developing measures of success and that there is no one answer when solving problems associated with student retention in music programs.