

Student and Teacher Perspectives on Instrument Selection

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Research In-Progress

Bayley (2004) discussed how past studies have looked at student perception and instrument choice. Bayley designed a study to inquire answers about the following: guidelines teachers use in student instrument selection, when are the selections made, how much are the feeder schools involved, what are the roles of the students and teachers in instrument selection, and other factors influencing student instrument selection. The study found that music teachers take an active role in guiding their students' choice of instrument. Bayley says "further study should also investigate appropriate ways for these individuals to make positive contributions to music education (p. 31)."

Bazan (2005) investigated the instrument selection process used by directors of beginning bands in a Midwestern state. Within the questionnaire were six sections: band director demographics, band director practices used in the classroom, influence of teachers and music store personnel in the selection process, student gender bias, teacher gender bias, and teacher preparation. Bazan found that the directors of the beginning bands developed their selection process through personal experience. Participants in this study indicated they felt student instrument selection was influenced through peer pressure, timbre, and family input.

Abstract

During my first professional teaching position, I was expected to guide students in selecting an instrument to play in elementary band. I spent a great deal of time thinking over various instrument selection strategies before implementing a plan. As time progressed, I began to wonder if the method I was using for instrument selection was benefiting my students who had moved on to the middle school level. When thinking about my former students, I pondered whether or not they were still playing on the same instrument they initially started with, transferred to an instrument within the same family, transferred to something completely different, or stopped playing entirely. Through these wonderings I began to question my strategies and think about other ways for effective instrument selection.

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative research study was to gain insight on teacher and student perspectives on instrument selection. Elementary band teachers and eighth grade students from eight public school districts in Pennsylvania took an online survey. The elementary band teacher survey focused on the different types of methods used in beginning instrument selection. The eighth grade students were asked what they remembered about choosing their initial instrument and why they made the selection. Results were analyzed to reveal connections between elementary band teacher methods and students' recollections of beginning instrument selection.

Research Questions

What are the methods elementary band teachers are using for instrument selection?
Why the elementary band teachers choose those methods for instrument selection?
What do the eighth grade students remember about selecting their beginning band instrument in elementary school?