

Jennifer C. Hutton

jennyhutton@temple.edu

Temple University

The Lived Experiences of K-12 Music Educators' Development of  
Teacher-Student Relationships

Accepted for presentation at the annual conference of the Pennsylvania Music Educators  
Association, Kalahari Resort & Convention Center, Poconos, PA

April 23 - April 24, 2020

Submitted for alternative poster-session presentation on view at the PMEA Research Webpage,  
May 15-June 15, and the abstract for archiving at the PMEA Research Webpage

## Abstract

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore four K-12 public school music educators' lived experiences of developing teacher-student relationships. Research questions included: (1) how music teachers describe teacher-student relationships in their classrooms; (2) what strategies music teachers use to encourage positive, caring relationships with their students; and (3) what benefits and challenges exist for teachers in relationship-focused classrooms. Participant selection was purposive; all participants were known to prioritize teacher-student relationships in their teaching. Interview data, coded in multiple phases, revealed six themes that influenced teacher-student relationships: *structure*; *time*; *family and community connections*; *choice, voice, and ownership*; *authenticity*; and *enthusiasm*. The essence of participants' experiences involved moments of *caring connection* facilitated by participant awareness, empathy, and attention to individuals. Implications include ideas for evaluating preservice teachers on dimensions of relationship-building along with strategies and practices music educators can use to develop positive teacher-student relationships in their classrooms.

These findings suggest that music educators seeking to build stronger teacher-student relationships might:

- invite caring connections through structured activities and reinforcement of classroom expectations
- increase time they spend with students
- communicate frequently with families inside and outside classroom settings
- give students regular opportunities for choice, voice, and ownership in their work
- show their authentic selves in the classroom
- share with students their enthusiasm for teaching
- make space for moments of caring connection through awareness, empathy, and attention individuals' needs