

**“I Belong in the Band”: The Role of the Marching Band
in a Small, Rural School and in the Community**

By

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A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree

MASTER OF MUSIC

IN

MUSIC EDUCATION

College of Fine Arts

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Stevens Point, Wisconsin

May 2023

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Abstract

This study is about the small-school marching band and seeks to find different ways that a small school marching band can function regardless of its size. It focuses on the importance of friends, school culture, and community culture. This is a case study conducted at a small school in Wisconsin, and findings included what makes kids join and stay in band, and how that is related to the small, tight-knit community they are in.

Keywords: *marching band, rural school, small school, music in the community*

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Chapter I: Introduction

Introduction

Growing up in New Mexico, I was a student in a very large school district. The high school I went to was also a big high school. The band had two hundred members at its peak and was very competitive. Including several competitions during the fall semester, the band also played at the home football games. I fell in love with marching band and the Band's of America (BOA) style that my school used. It was my favorite aspect of being involved in band. After moving to Wisconsin to begin my teaching career, I experienced a culture shock and was confused on how to best teach my students. I quickly realized that not every school is like my high school and that this is something that many new educators experience.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this thesis is to research the different types of marching bands that exist in smaller rural areas. I wanted to learn more about ways that I can best help my students and what experiences I can expose them to through the marching band. The specific question this thesis seeks to answer is What role does the small school marching band play in the school culture and community? Ultimately, I hope that my readers will develop a deeper understanding of marching band in a small school and come up with more opportunities to better help their students.

Importance of the Study

The information in this thesis will be of value specifically to music education students as well as current music educators. There are many different styles and purposes of marching band which vary due to many different factors such as location, population, community and school

culture. Understanding your options as a teacher better sets you and the program up for long-term success.

A Little Background on Marching Band

This section offers a little background on marching band for readers who have not participated in this activity before. For those of you who have been in a marching band before, feel free to skip this section if you wish.

Marching band has a strong background within the military and was used to direct troops and maintain morale. Since these military origins, marching band has evolved to what it is today and has many different purposes. This can range from competitions, purely entertainment at sporting events, parades within the community, or a combination of all three. There really are no set rules on what the marching band can do. As a marching band director, you will not only teach music but also become an expert in marching, color guard, drumline, field design, and uniforms. These are usually learned by band directors on the job. In your typical high school, marching band will start rehearsing throughout the summer, and continue on until football season concludes. This study will go more in depth for what different ways marching bands can function.

Conclusion

In Chapter One, I gave information on the purpose of this study, the importance of this study, my research question, and a little background on marching band. In Chapter Two I will review literature related to my study.

Chapter II: Review of Related Literature

In the previous chapter, Chapter One, I introduced this case study about a small school marching band and the role it plays in the community. In this chapter, Chapter Two, I will review literature related to my study of small school marching bands. Many scholars agree that marching band is important to the health and sustainability of a small school music program. I have organized my review of literature into the following sections: Recruitment, School Culture, and Community Culture. In the first section on Recruitment, I will provide information on scholars who have published on how marching band helps with recruitment. In the second section on School Culture, I will provide information from authors who have discussed the ways in which marching band contributes to overall school culture. In the third section, I will include literature about how community culture is affected by small school marching band programs.

Recruitment

In this section, I will present information from scholars who study recruitment for small school music programs (Darling, 2018), from other scholars about teaching and recruiting in rural areas, (Robinson, 2010, and Wilcox, 2005), as well as building and maintaining a music program (Riggs, 1942, and Johnson, 2017).

Darling (2015), a well-known scholar in the area of orchestra in rural areas describes her way of teaching in a rural school thus:

An advantage of the small program extends to the faculty. A benefit is the close collaboration we are able to achieve with a smaller music department. We work well together and consider ourselves a PreK-12th

grade music department, and to that end we share time, resources, and ideas, which contributes to our success (p. 1).

Wilcox (2005), a music educator in a rural Nebraska town, talks about his experience teaching band in a rural town and how he goes about recruiting for the band program. He points out that “For a very small school, we have a very large music program” (p. 1). As with most small schools, a lot of the students are involved in multiple activities such as sports, music, drama, and various other clubs. These students are very busy and this teacher's goal is to make band as exciting and fun as possible. The recruitment process starts in the fourth grade where they will then go on to be in beginning band. Most of these students who start playing an instrument in fifth grade go on to continue playing that instrument all throughout high school. When asked about recruiting strategies, it was pointed out that the program sells itself pretty well based on their success. It is simply “a case of success breeding success” (p. 2). The high school will go over to the elementary school and play for these students. It gives these students a chance to hear what they could sound like in a few years if they play an instrument. This gets students excited to be in band.

Another rural band director from Kansas agrees with exposure of the group playing a large role in recruitment and growing a program. Robinson (2010) talks about how in seven years since coming to Scott City, Kansas, this high school has gone from having no music program to having a sixty-member marching band. He says that he is proud of what he has accomplished during this time however, “It really came together naturally because this program gets so much exposure to the community and becomes something that exists far outside of your band room” (p. 2).

One scholar (Johnson, 2018) discusses some of the advantages and disadvantages for maintaining a music program in a small community. He talks about how difficult scheduling can be at a small school since there might only be one section of a class rather than at a large school where there would be multiple sections. He points out that, “Small rural schools have fewer class offerings, causing scheduling issues to fit band in” (p. 3). He points out that the only solution to this problem at his school is to have the marching band meet before school. While Johnson could not have a marching band program during the school day, another scholar, Riggs (1942) believes that a solution to starting and retaining a marching band program in the small school relies heavily on getting the approval from the community as well as school administrators. Riggs states that if there is not any interest from the students, this program will not succeed. The first step is to meet with the students and outline what you want the program to look like. Interest from the students as well as support from the parents and community is vital in order to have a program grow at any school, but especially at a small school. This is where school culture comes into play.

School Culture

This section discusses literature regarding the impact the marching band has on school culture. These include scholars who discuss the importance of music in schools (Silverstone, 2018; Damkohler, 2015; Brown, 2012) as well as others who talk about the impact that the marching band has on the culture within the school (Saslow, 2008; Nussbaum, 1999; Breske, 2019).

Importance of Music in Schools

School culture is affected by a lot of different aspects within the school. Some of these things might include the staff, administrators, community, but the most impactful would be the students. The students' well-being, culture within the students, and how well students do in school is a big indicator for how positive the school culture is. There are numerous studies done talking about the importance of music in schools and how it affects the rest of the student body as well as the school culture.

Silverstone (2018), an advocate for music education in schools, discussed several benefits of music education in schools with the biggest one being enhanced language capacities. “There is evidence to suggest the area of the brain controlling both musical ability and language comprehension are more related than previously thought” (p. 1) Having students in music classes drastically improves their reading skills which further improves the school culture from within. Silverstone mentions how in a lot of districts music and art might be seen as unnecessary and might even be cut from the curriculum. She says that this is detrimental to the school because of how many benefits there are in music education. One more of those benefits that she listed includes learning about teamwork and collaboration.

Damkohler (2105), an executive director for an arts program, discusses music education as having a multiplier effect on schools. She states that, “The value of incorporating music into a child's education cannot be understated. There is a heap of incontestable research showing that an education rich in music improves students' cognitive function and academic performance. Simply put, children learn better when music is part of their school curriculum” (p. 1). Damkohler goes on to list several benefits of music education in schools including enhanced

language capabilities, powerful study habits, and helping to foster more well-rounded students in all areas in school.

Brown (2012), a writer and parent of three kids is very passionate about the psychology behind how kids best learn. She has done extensive research on music education specifically and the benefits that it has on kids even from a young age. Brown discusses how much learning music impacts and enhances skills that children will use in other areas. “A music-rich experience for children singing, listening, and moving is really bringing a very serious benefit to children as they progress into more formal learning.” (p. 3) Music learning supports all learning and leads to an increased engagement in school. This is beneficial to the overall school because it will ultimately make the school culture much more positive and a better environment to be in.

Impact of Marching Band

A big part of school culture is affected by the things that happen outside of the classroom such as sports, extracurriculars, and other clubs. The marching band affecting school culture is no exception. Saslow (2008), A journalist from New York, spent time with a low-income high school marching band and learned about their experiences. This specific school has a very successful marching band program and has won several championships over the last fifteen years. The superintendent of the school district mentions how amazing of an accomplishment this is and how fortunate they are to have music in this school. About one-third of the students start at this high school not knowing how to speak English and she says that music is a universal language for the student body. The superintendent goes on to say, “Our music program is one vehicle to enable the kids to get strong support and to feel good about themselves” (p. 1). In making sure these students have a place to go and feel accepted within the school, they feel

proud to be a part of this group and to share their talents with the rest of the school as well as the community.

Nussbaum (1999), a researcher and music education advocate, discusses cases of several high schools where being in the marching band is growing in popularity. One band director even said that his band includes football players and cheerleaders adding, “When I first started twenty-three years ago, you would never have a kid give up football to play in the band” (p. 8). There are a lot of students in bands across the country that choose to participate in sports as well as be in the band. Marching band is becoming more popular and more kids want to join. There are a variety of reasons why students might want to join band ranging from playing music, hanging out with their friends, or just going to the football games for their school. One student said that “I saw all of my friends get to play music at the football games and I wanted to be a part of that.” The marching band simply being present at school events has more of the student body engaged in the school culture and wanting to be a part of a group.

Breske (2019), a former band teacher, has spent the last part of his career connecting music in schools to social-emotional learning (SEL) and the impact it can have on schools. He states that, “When playing music in a group, individuals have contact with other individuals, engage in social cognition, participate in communication, coordinate their actions, and cooperate with each other, leading to increased social cohesion” (p. 3) When there is more focus on SEL, the marching band can be seen as an essential part of education which can significantly impact the school culture within the student body.

Community Culture

This section discusses literature regarding community culture and how the marching band contributes and works within the community. These include scholars who discuss the importance of community support as well as the specific things that the marching band does for the community (Berman, 2018; Jax, 2023). There are some parts of a school that are very important in the community and have a lot of eyes on them at all times. A couple of those activities are sports and the marching band. Being in a small community affects this as well.

Berman (2018), a member of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), has done research on the marching band as it relates to the community in rural and urban areas. His biggest advice for any teacher, but especially those trying to grow a program in a rural town, is to get to know your students, parents, and community. Building a relationship with these people will get you their support and will ultimately help with the success of the program. One teacher in rural Nebraska said that, “Getting to know my students and their families on a more personal level is an advantage of the small school environment. I can make the program about the community itself, getting parents and local businesses involved” (p. 1). Listening to your students and working with the community is a great way to build a successful music program.

Jax (2023), a high school band director, put out a list of tips for using the marching to build a relationship with the community. He stated that the most important part is to get the parents' support and the best way to do that is to have an open line of communication and be responsive to students and their families. The next step in growing your program is to build a relationship with the community. “Students need to be in the community making music as much as possible. Even if you don’t have a marching band, do a parade, play at a football game, carol at the local retirement home. Be in the community and communicate with parents just as much as

with the students” (2023). This is imperative for small schools because they might not have the numbers to have a “successful” marching band so it is important to realize that there are other options for your ensemble no matter the size.

In conclusion, Chapter Two includes literature regarding recruitment, school culture, and community culture. To better understand the role that the small school marching band plays within the community, it is important to research other music programs across the country in order to know more about ways the marching band connects within the community. The literature presented here forms the foundations of this research because it helps to better examine my research question: What role does the small school marching band play within the community?

In this chapter, Chapter Two, I reviewed the literature related to this study focused on the small school marching band. In the next chapter, I will describe the methodology used to address my research question, the design of the study, then finally the procedures used for analysis.

Chapter III: Design and Methodology

In Chapter Two, I reviewed the preexisting literature about recruitment, school culture, and community culture. In Chapter Three, I will now explain the research project design and share my analysis methods. I have created the following subsections for organization and ease for the reader: Process, Participants, Mixed Methods Research, Data Collection, and Analysis. As first discussed in Chapter One, the research question guiding this study is: What role does the small school marching band play in the school culture and community?

Process

To start this research, I started with wanting to understand what the small school marching band can do for school culture as well as the community. I knew that I wanted to interview students and a non-music teacher at the school about their thoughts on the marching band. I also wanted to send out a survey to the marching band students on marching band and how it relates to the community and school culture. I reached out to the students via email since they are students in the district where I teach. I asked all students to participate in the survey (twenty-two completed it) and I asked for three volunteers for a more in-depth interview. I reached out to the staff at my school and asked for two volunteers to complete an interview about the marching band and one teacher reached out and agreed to participate. All students and teachers signed the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix A). I interviewed each of the three students and the two teachers, audio recorded each interview, and then fully transcribed each for further analysis.

Participants

The participants in this study were selected using convenience sampling. This kind of sampling allowed me to identify participants that are all in the band as well as teachers in the school. I used convenience sampling in order to better understand the role the small school marching band plays within the community. After I spoke to the band about filling out the survey, I asked for three volunteers to complete the interview. Once that was confirmed, I reached out to staff members at my school asking for a volunteer to complete an interview. I had access to their emails because we work in the same school district. After the teacher and three student volunteers received an Informed Consent form (see Appendix A) they consented to being interviewed. The participants were two male and two female students as well as two female teachers.

Mixed Methods Research

This study uses mixed methods research which focuses on collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data within the same study (Smith, 2017). By using mixed methods research, I was able to collect quantitative data using surveys and qualitative data through interviews and observations. Mixed methods research allows data collection from a larger sample population as well as more in-depth analysis from a smaller sample pool. With the qualitative data, I will use narrative analysis because this will allow me to deal with interviews as well as field observations. Narrative analysis is used to better understand how research participants feel and to tell a story based on their own personal experience (Delve, 1993).

Data Collection

I will first discuss how I collected my quantitative data. I knew that for this data I wanted to survey a larger number of people and the best way to do this would be to send out a survey. I

created a survey using Microsoft Forms and emailed it to a class listserv that I had. I wanted my sample pool to consist of marching band members at the school. I went over to their class one day and explained my research topic and why it was important. I discussed what the survey would consist of and explained all consent forms that would be required. I then sent out the survey to their emails which I had from teaching in the same district. Each question on the survey was on a scale from strongly disagree to agree and the survey website automatically organized the results into a pie chart.

In order to collect the qualitative data, the first part was from field observations. I was able to do that at football games, basketball games, parades, school events, and in class rehearsals. I took notes at each of these events to document what the band did at each of these events as well as to see how others reacted to the band. This could have been from the student body, teachers, or members of the community. This relates to the survey as I can get a deeper understanding of how the community is reacting to the marching band in order to compare it to the survey results.

The final part of qualitative data collected was from interviews from three students and one non-music teacher at the school. While talking with the high school class regarding the survey, I mentioned that I am also looking for three volunteers to interview for an in-depth perspective of the marching band experience in the small school. I had three students volunteer and I reached out to them individually to set up a separate time to complete the interview separately from each other. To get a volunteer for the teachers, I reached out to the whole staff via email and explained my research project and asked for one volunteer to complete an interview. I had two teachers reach back out and volunteer to complete this interview. I fully

transcribed all interviews and coded them to look for common themes between all of the student interviews as well as between the students and the teacher interview.

Approach Analysis

My data analysis plan included both qualitative and quantitative data. For the quantitative data I analyzed pie charts from the survey. I summed totals and compared the resulting percentages to look for relationships in the data. The qualitative data came from interviews and involved coding from this data, using *in vivo* coding. *In vivo* coding, “helps researchers attain an in-depth understanding of the direct stories, ideas and meanings that are expressed by research participants” (Fitzgerald, 2017). When using *in vivo* coding, I looked carefully through the transcripts of interviews in order to identify themes which emerged from the data. Using this mixed methods approach I was able to review the opinions of most of the members in the marching band and get more in-depth information from a few select constituents.

In Chapter Three I went over the specific design of this project. I walked through each step of my process followed by my method of analysis. In the next chapter, I will report my findings.

Chapter IV: Findings

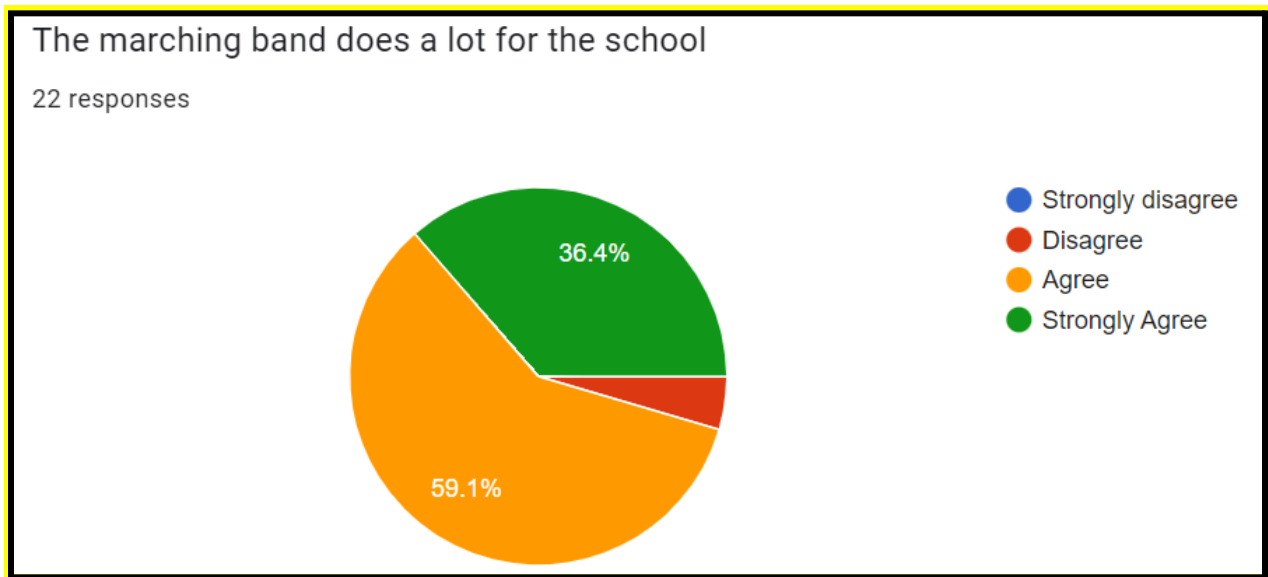
In the previous three chapters I introduced a topic about the small-school marching band and the role it plays within the community, a review of literature related to this study, a closer look at the design of the project, the methodology, and my approach to analysis. In Chapter Four, I will report my findings from the data. As described in Chapter Three, I collected both qualitative and quantitative data by doing observations, conducting interviews, and sending out surveys. The results of this data collection are as follows.

Survey Results

The survey consisted of eight questions on a scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree. There were twenty-two responses received. The following paragraphs detail a breakdown of the questions with the responses.

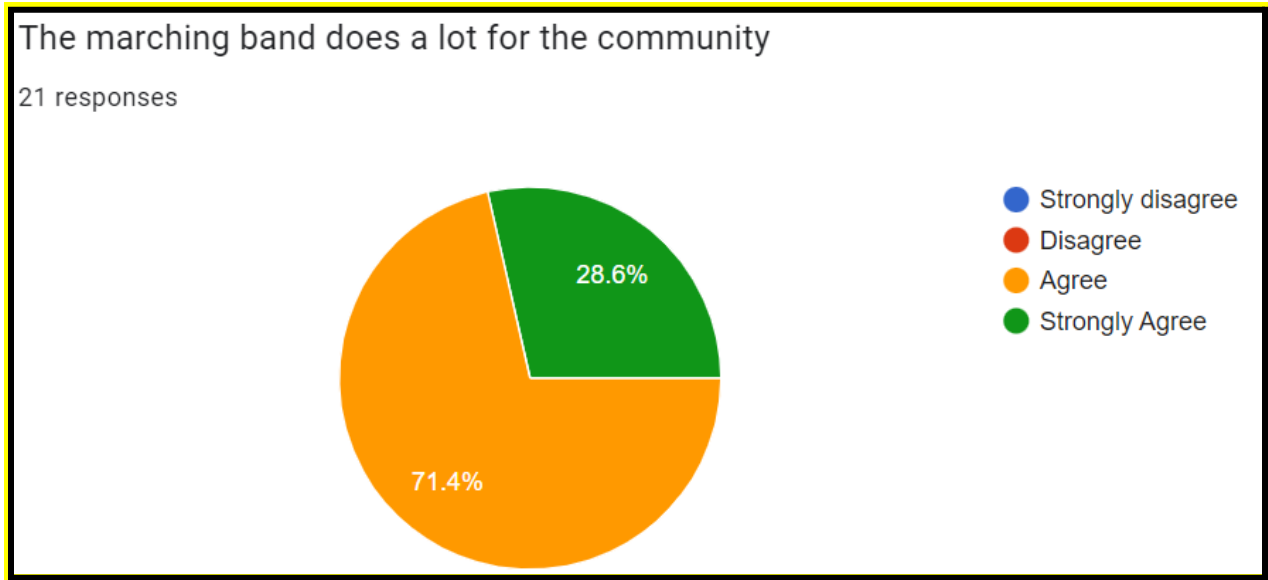
The first item on the survey required participants to agree or disagree with the statement, “The marching band does a lot for the school.” Eight students (36.4%) strongly agreed, and thirteen students (59.1%) agreed with the statement. Only one student (4.5%) disagreed and no students strongly disagreed. Moreover, twenty-one students (95.5% of those surveyed) agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 1



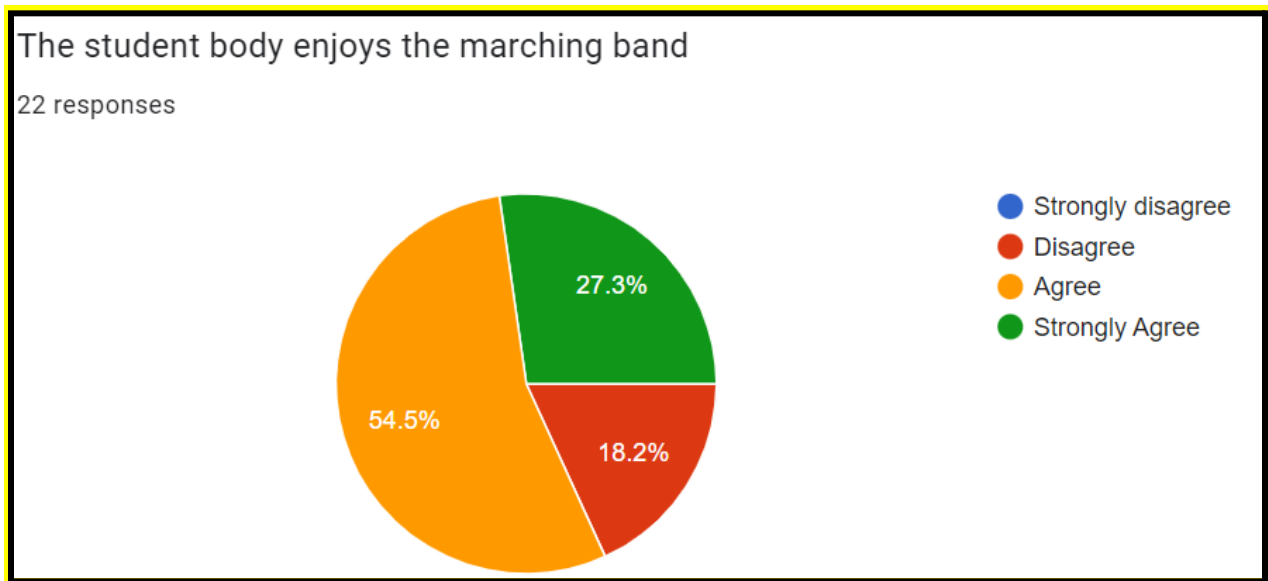
The second item on the survey required participants to agree or disagree with the statement, “The marching band does a lot for the community.” Six students (28.6%) strongly agreed, and fifteen students (71.4%) agreed with the statement. No students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Figure 2



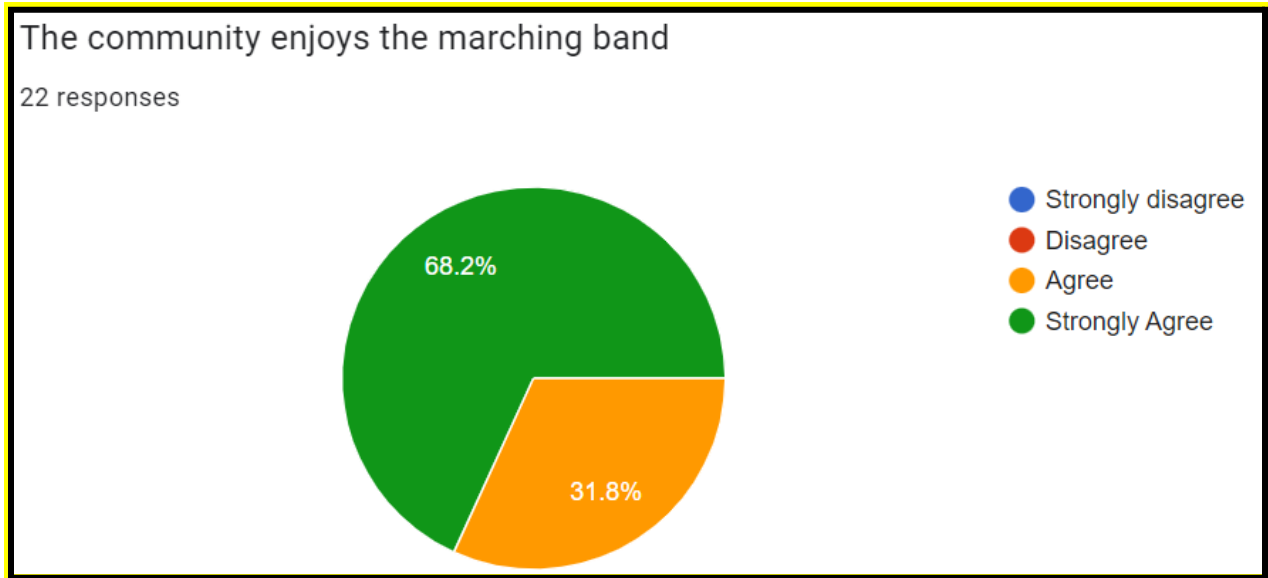
The third item on the survey required participants to agree or disagree with the statement, “The student body enjoys the marching band.” Six students (27.3%) strongly agreed, and twelve students (54.5%) agreed with the statement. Four students (18.2%) disagreed and no student strongly disagreed. In total, eighteen students (81.8% of those surveyed) agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 3



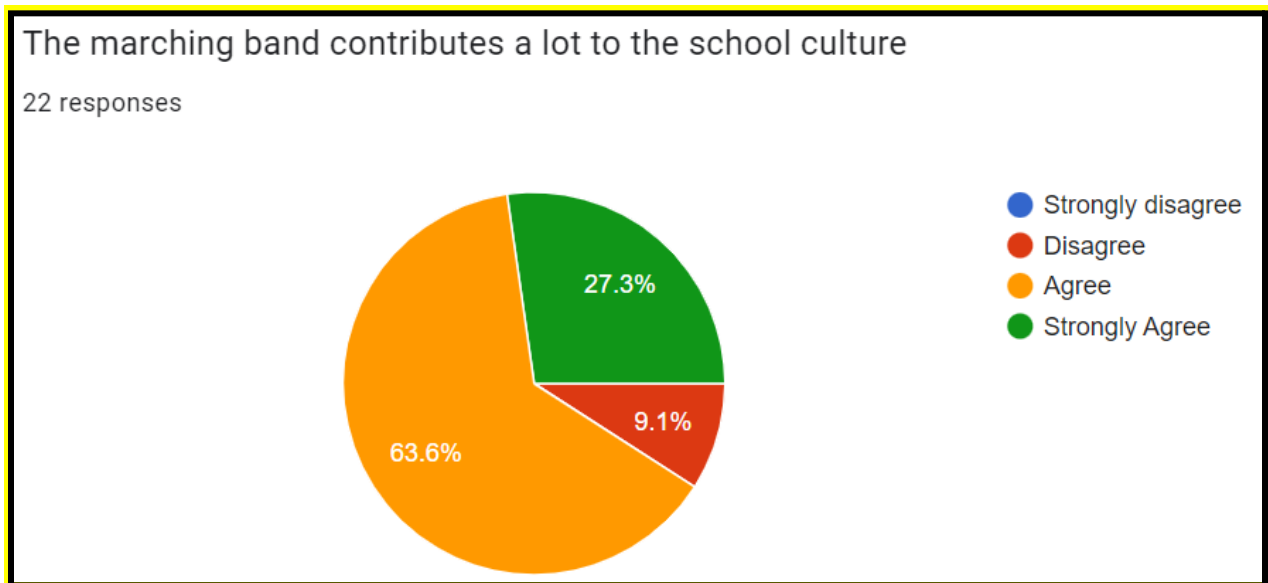
The fourth item on the survey required participants to agree or disagree with the statement, “The community enjoys the marching band.” Fifteen students (68.2%) strongly agreed, and seven students (31.8%) agreed with the statement. No students disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 4



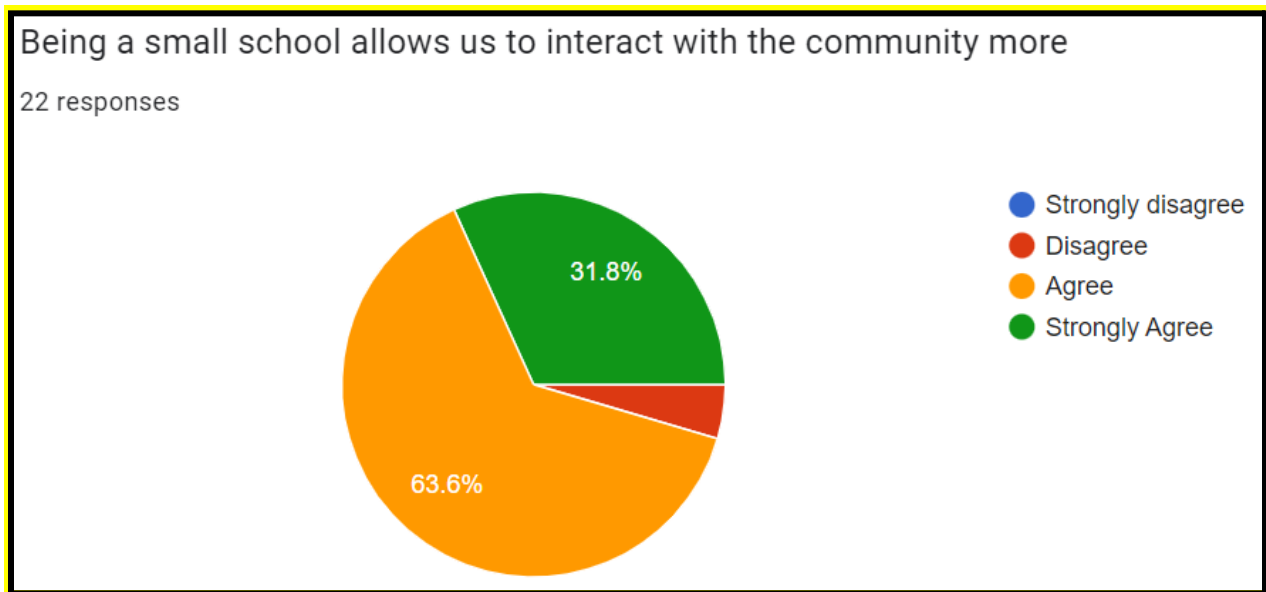
The fifth item on the survey required participants to agree or disagree with the statement, “The marching band contributes a lot to the school culture.” Six students (27.3%) strongly agreed, and fourteen students (63.6%) agreed with the statement. Only two students (9.1%) disagreed and no students strongly disagreed. Thus, a total of twenty students (90.0% of those surveyed) agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 5



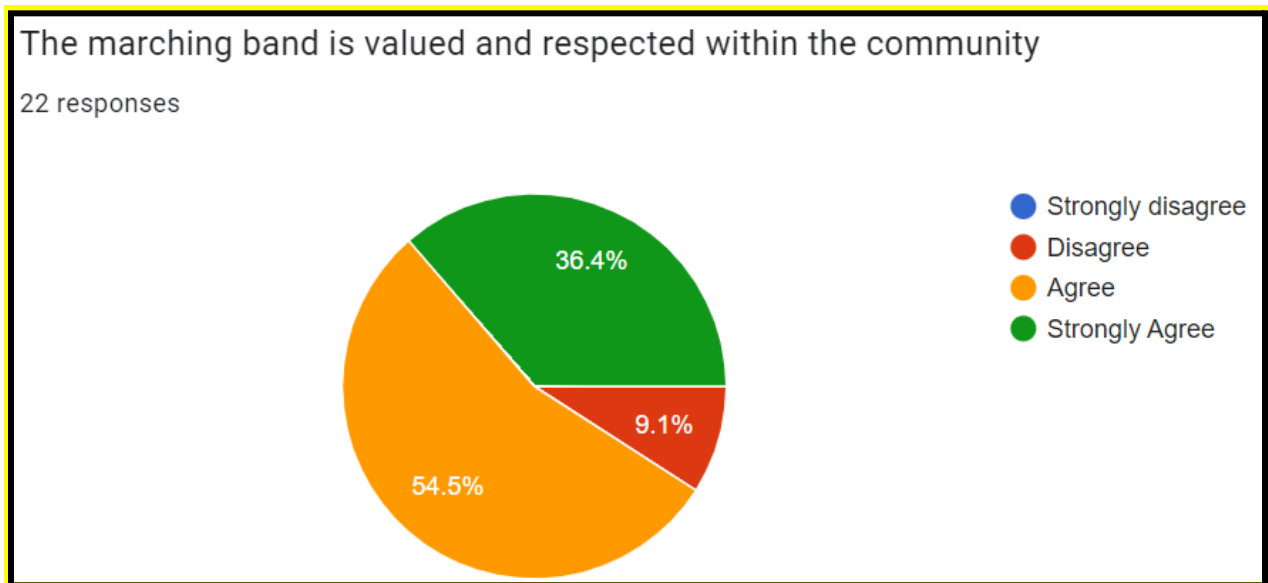
The sixth item on the survey required participants to agree or disagree with the statement, “Being a small school allows us to interact with the community more.” Seven students (31.8%) strongly agreed, and fourteen students (63.6%) agreed with the statement. Only one student (4.5%) disagreed, and no students strongly disagreed. A total of, twenty-one students (95.5% of those surveyed) agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 6



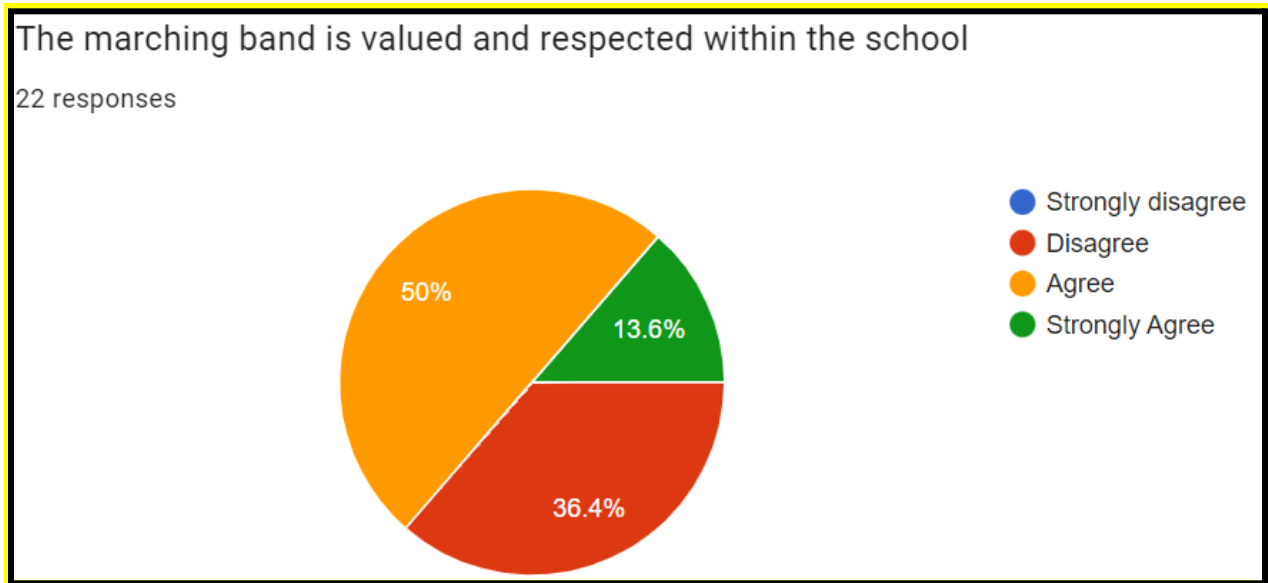
The seventh item on the survey required participants to agree or disagree with the statement, “The marching band is valued and respected within the community.” Eight students (36.4%) strongly agreed, and twelve students (54.5%) agreed with the statement. Two students (9.1%) disagreed, and no students strongly disagreed. A total of twenty students (90.0% of those surveyed) agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 7



The eighth item on the survey required participants to agree or disagree with the statement, “The marching band is valued and respected within the school.” Three students (13.6%) strongly agreed, and eleven students (50%) agreed with the statement. Eight students (36.4%) disagreed, and no students strongly disagreed. A total of fourteen students (63.6% of those surveyed) agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 8



Interview Results

Subthemes

For the interviews with the three students, there were several common themes that occurred in two or more of the interviews. These themes included: teachers, peers, assemblies, parades, school culture, small school, school events, competition, and holidays. In the student interviews, all three students brought up competition, holidays, peers, and school events. Out of those four themes, the most popular was school events. Different types of school events were referenced seven times across all three of the interviews. The school events the students were referring to include assemblies, playing at graduation, playing for football/basketball games, the hall of fame induction ceremony, and pep rallies. Peers and competition were tied with three references each. Students talked about their peers and how the peers felt about the band. Two of the students said that most of the student body enjoys the band while the other student said the rest of the student body is indifferent. All three students referenced competition in marching band in their interview. Finally, holidays had two references involving the parades that happen during the holiday season.

The interview from the teachers had four recurring themes throughout the interviews. Those references include teachers, students, small-school culture, and assemblies. The topic that was addressed most frequently was small school culture, with five references. This related to football/basketball games, pep rallies, and parades. Assemblies were referenced four times and the student body was mentioned four times. One teacher talked about the students' reaction during assemblies as well as during the pep rallies. She referenced small school culture three times and talked more specifically about parades and playing for graduation. The other teachers in the school were referenced one time, and she discussed seeing them during assemblies.

Between the student and the teacher interviews, there were three themes that were the same throughout. Both the students and teachers referenced sports, community, and the student body. Sports was talked about the most between all of the interviews. It was referenced eleven times throughout primarily in relation to the band at football and basketball games. The student body was referenced ten times ranging from friends in the band as well as not in the band to other students just watching the band during assemblies. Community was referenced six times between students and teachers primarily focusing on parades and playing at sporting events.

Overarching Themes

Friends. Friends was the biggest theme that occurred in all student interviews as well as in the interviews by the teachers. The students talked a lot about the social aspect of band being one of their favorite parts of the program, with one student saying, “I would say that the part about band that I enjoy the most is getting to hang out with my friends and go to the basketball and football games.” Another student said, “I like band because it gives me the opportunity to hang out with my friends more.” Both of these quotes show how important the social aspect of band is to these students. Their friends are important to them and they enjoy getting that extra opportunity outside of the normal school day to do an activity with their peers. Some of the sub themes that fall under this theme are peers and school culture.

Another aspect of friendship that came up in the student interviews was the discussion of their non-band friends. I asked what other students in the school thought about the band, and one student said, “Some of my friends that are not in band like watching us play but that is just because they have friends in the group.” One teacher in the interview also said something similar. I asked what she hears about the band from other students in the school. She said, “It is

not something that comes up in conversation. Unless they are friends with a member of the band, it is not really talked about a lot, except for at assemblies when the band is playing.”

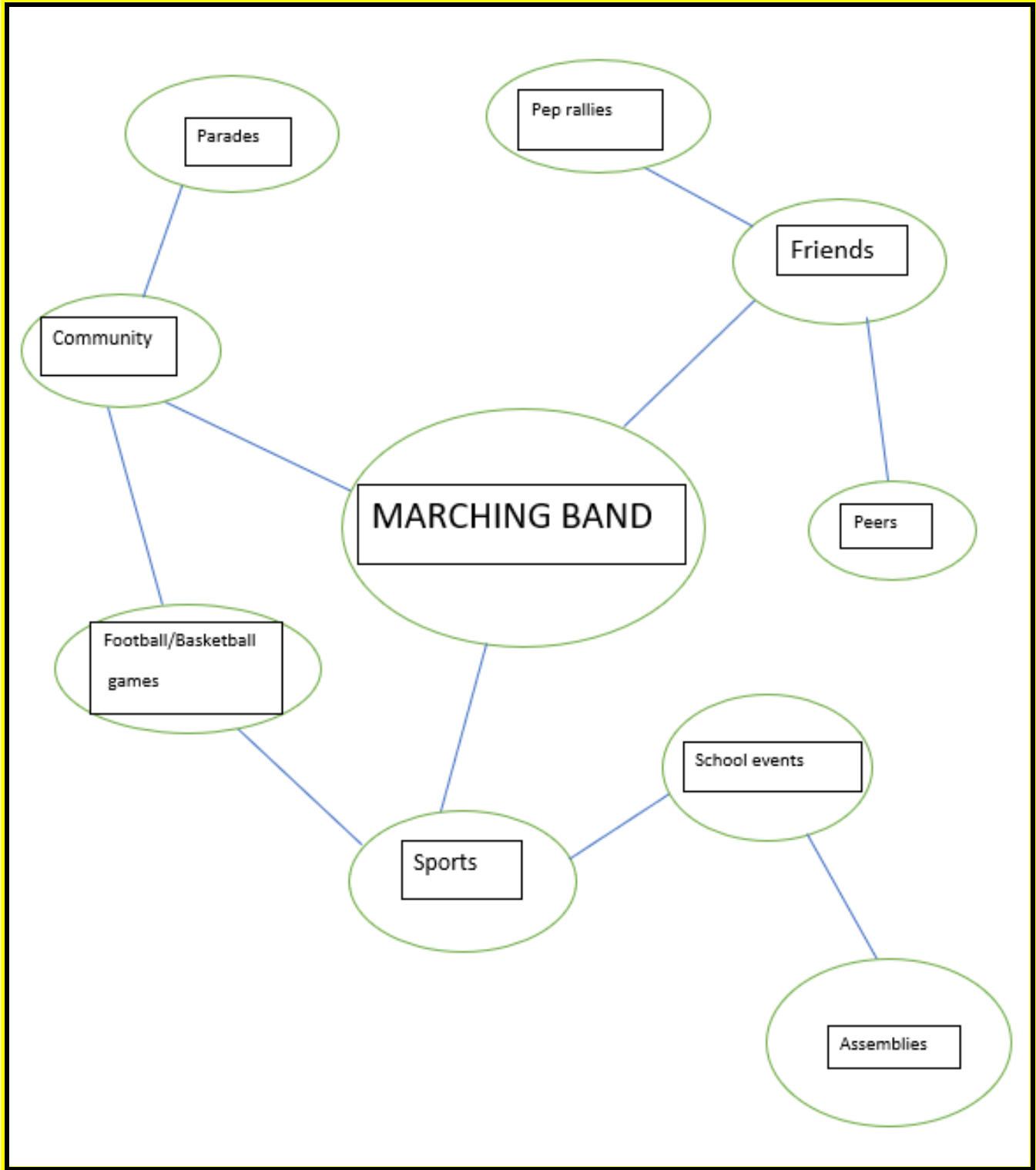
Sports. Another big theme throughout all the interviews was sports. The band plays at all home football and basketball games for the varsity teams. When the students were asked about their favorite aspect of being in band, one student said, “I like getting to watch all of the basketball and football games at the school.” Another said something similar: “I enjoy getting to hang out with my friends at the football games.” When asked about what they think the community thinks of the band, one student pointed out, “I think they like it when we are at the football games and we play during the time outs or the fight song when the team scores.” Some of the sub themes that fall under this theme are school culture, small school, and peers.

During the teacher interviews, something frequently addressed was about only seeing the bands at assemblies and sporting events. One teacher said, “I enjoy watching the football and basketball games so I go to most of them. I see the band when they play at the varsity games.” When asked what she thinks of the band she added, “I like when the band plays for halftime or during time outs. It really hypes up the crowd and I like the songs you all play.” The teacher was then asked about the high school she attended. She mentioned how she was not in band in high school but had friends in the program. “They would always talk about competitions they were going to and while they did play at assemblies and at the football games, we didn’t have pep rallies like we do at this school.”

Community. The last theme that was common in all four interviews was community. The students were asked how they think the marching band interacts with the community. One student said, “We play a lot for the school community but outside of that we don’t really do a whole lot except for the parades.” Contradicting this statement, another student stated, “I feel

like we do a lot for the community with the parades and playing for the football games.” The students all agreed that parades were the biggest thing that the band does for the community with one student saying, “When we do parades or pep rallies before the football games, that is really just for the community I think.” Finally, students were asked about community perception of the band. All three students agreed that the community appreciates and enjoys watching the band. One of the students said, “I think that the community enjoys watching us at halftime even if they don’t have a kid in the group.”

The teachers had less to say about the band and its relationship to the community. They were asked how they think the marching band contributes to the small school community. One stated that, “I think being in a small school allows for the band to play at a lot more events. The community is a lot closer than it would be at a larger school and the group feels a lot closer.” This teacher also pointed out that the band here does a significant amount of more pep rallies and parades than the band from her big-town high school band did. Some of the sub themes that fall under this theme are small school, parades, and pep rallies.



Conclusion

In this chapter I reported my findings from this case study on a small school marching band program. I first discussed the quantitative data from the surveys and included pie charts for the results of each question. I then considered the qualitative data and discussed the results from coding the three student interviews and two teacher interviews. I noted the common themes and sub themes throughout all the interviews. In the next chapter, I will offer a discussion of these findings and discuss possible implications for future research.

Chapter V: Discussion and Implications

Chapter One provided an overview of this project. In Chapter Two, literature regarding different aspects of marching band were discussed in the areas of recruitment, school culture, and community culture. Chapter Three I explained the research project design and shared my analysis methods with the subsections: Process, Participants, Mixed Methods Research, Data Collection, and Analysis. In Chapter Four, I reported my findings from the data. Chapter Five offers a discussion of common themes, as well as implications for others as well as any future research.

Friends

One major theme that emerged in the findings for this study was friends. This refers to the social aspect of band, and how this is a major motivating factor for why many students participate in school band programs.

One student that was interviewed said, “I started band in sixth grade and made all of my best friends from that class. I am still friends with them all today. We were always guaranteed to at least have one class together every year because we always did band together.” This goes to show how important the social aspect of school is for students. There are a lot of kids that pick classes or stay in clubs just because their friends are doing it too. Another student interviewed said that, “My favorite part about marching band is getting to hang out with my friends after school and going on trips with them together.” There are a lot of things that students get to experience because of being in band that they might not get to have experienced otherwise. Giving students these opportunities to travel and hang out with their friends at school events after school is another benefit to being in band and is something that will keep students involved in the program.

As noted in Chapter Two, there are several reasons that students join band and stay in band. Nussbaum (1999) talked with students with one even saying, “I saw all of my friends get to play music at the football games and I wanted to be a part of that.” This was a student who had never played an instrument before but saw the impact that it had on their friends and wanted to be involved.

When I was choosing electives in sixth grade, I remember talking with my friends about what classes they were planning to take. I had originally wanted to join orchestra but when I found out my friends were taking band, I changed my mind and signed up for band. As I continued throughout middle school and as I was signing up for high school classes, I enjoyed doing band but I still wanted to take classes with my friends. I encouraged them to sign up for band going into high school as well. During high school, I knew several people that had never played an instrument before, learned how to play percussion and join band so they could spend more time with their friends.

As students are signing up for classes at school, you will always hear students ask their friends what classes they are taking and some even plan which classes to take together with their friends. Everyone wants to have a friend in every class they take and when it comes down to electives, sometimes it doesn't even matter what the specific class is as long as they have a friend in there. I see everyday that students enjoy the social aspect of band and that this is a huge factor of why so many kids stay in band.

Sports

Another major theme from these findings was the topic of sports. This refers to mainly the basketball and football games that take place at the school and how this is also a motivating factor for many students to join the band program at their school.

A teacher that was interviewed said, “When I go to the football games I really enjoy listening to the band play during the time outs and then march at half time. I think it's a good way to hype up the crowd and keep everybody having a good time.” This shows how the marching band affects all of the games that they play at as well as the crowd. It is cool to see recognition from non-music people that they enjoy listening to the group. In a student interview, one kid said, “Going to the football games are a lot of fun because I enjoy watching the game and to be able to cheer them on is awesome.”

As discussed in Chapter Two, Breske (2019) noted his opinions on the impact sports has had on his marching band program. He pointed out that, “When I first started teaching twenty years ago, you would never have seen a kid give up football for band. Now, there are multiple students who are in sports as well as band.” This is a situation that is very common especially in small schools. A lot of the time there will be students who do multiple activities. The fact that students are able to participate in sports as well as music is a great thing and a great way to keep students involved in extracurricular activities.

One of my favorite parts about being in high school band was being in the marching band and more specifically going to the football games. It was a lot of fun to go support our school and hang out with our friends while sitting in the stands and playing music. Being in high school is oftentimes the first time that you have a school community come together to root for their school sports team. Going to the basketball and football games are a very popular activity to do

among friends throughout high school. Being in the marching band gives students an opportunity to go to all home games with their friends and do something that they enjoy. I think that being able to play music at these games is a big factor for why students choose to be in marching band and continue it in high school.

Community

The last common theme throughout the finding is the idea of community. This refers to events the band does for the community, how the community responds to the band, as well as the culture within the community towards music in a small town.

In the interviews, students were asked about which part of band they feel like the community enjoys the best. Several students pointed out that the parades during the holiday season are really big for the band and it is something that they feel like the community looks forward to. One student said, “The Christmas parade that we do every year is really cool to go to because so many people come to the parade and are all cheering for us as we march by.” Another student said that they feel like the community really enjoys it when we play outside the stadium for the football games right before the games start. This student said, “I always see parents and little kids dancing while the drums play cadences as the football team is heading into the stadium.”

In Chapter Two, it is discussed how important community support is as well as what events that small school bands can do for the community. Berman (2018) said that the biggest advantage that you can have is the support of the community. “Getting to know my students and their families on a more personal level is an advantage of the small school environment. I can make the program about the community itself, getting parents and local businesses involved.” If

you spend the time to get to know the people you are working with, you can better grow relationships and have a long-lasting effect on the community.

Even though I went to a larger high school and we had a big band, we still did several events for the community. There were a couple of parades we would do, play songs at car wash fundraisers, as well as playing for local events around the city. It was always fun to go out and watch people have fun while we played and marched. When observing the marching band in the school district I currently teach in, there were several events the band did for the community. These consisted of parades, playing for ceremonies, as well as pep rallies before the games. Even though a band is small, there are still a lot of things they could do for the community. Not every band needs to have a traditional marching band halftime show. As long as you do what you can and do your best to connect with the school and community, you will have their support.

Implications

For Others

This research offers several implications for a variety of different people in the field of education. For band teachers that work in a small, rural area, this can offer suggestions for what events their small school band can do and what they are capable of. Even if you do not have a large enough band to have a full halftime show, you could create a small pep band and perform at the home games. This is a huge way to build a relationship with the community. Administrators at schools can support music teachers and the marching band program by allocating time and resources for instruction as well as communicating with all staff openly. In a small school there are often many students who participate in many different activities. You never want students to have to quit something they love to do because of scheduling conflicts so the administration can

help by creating a culture where open communication is the norm. Having supportive administrators will likely increase the success of a program in any given school.

For the field of music education

Other music educators across the country can hopefully gain several ideas about not only ideas for marching band in small schools but also how to deal with scheduling conflicts, recruitment, and community support. No matter the size or location of a school, there are several different ways that a marching band can function and there is no right or wrong way to do things. This could also have an impact on current music education students right before they become teachers. As high school students, you are typically only exposed to one type of marching band within one community. When you get your first job, it likely will not be exactly how your high school functioned. Learning more about different styles of marching band and how it differs due to size and location is very beneficial for all music educators. Although this research started with the goal of studying a small school marching band, the findings in here could be applied to any ensemble of any size. The best way to plan your teaching is to get to know and understand your situation and the community that you are in.

For future research I'm going to do

In my future research, I plan to study additional marching bands from different areas of the country. My experience with marching band has only been within two states and I know that there are several more ideas and styles of marching band that exist out there that I do not even know about. Diving deeper into different populated areas/inner cities would be eye opening as I learn more about how different programs and communities view the role of marching band.

Another way to further my research is to widen the search to more rural areas across the county. It is very common to have small marching band programs. Learning more about how other school music programs function in different areas will benefit a variety of teachers and school communities.

Conclusion

In this study, Chapter One provided an overview of this project. Chapter Two reviewed literature pertaining to this study including topics on recruitment, school culture, and community culture. In Chapter Three, I explained the research project design and shared my analysis methods. Chapter Four presented the findings from the study including survey data, subthemes, and overarching themes. Finally, Chapter Five discussed the importance of the common themes found throughout the study as well as described the implications for others and my future research.

Over the course of the last two years, I have learned that there are many different ways to structure your marching band. No matter your size or location, you can always get a band together and work within your community. The students will always appreciate the different opportunities given to them. One student said it best, “At the end of the day, I just want to get together to hang out with my friends and play music.”

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Survey

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Informed Consent to Participate in Human Subjects Research

Dr. Rachel Brashier and Alli Moore, a professor and graduate student at University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, would appreciate your participation in a research study designed to explore the small school marching band and the role it plays in the community. You are being asked to complete an anonymous survey with Alli Moore that should take no more than 15 minutes of your time.

Your participation is completely voluntary and will remain anonymous. The benefit of this study is a greater knowledge about marching band at the small school and how we as teachers here can give you a better high school band experience.

We anticipate no risk to you as a result of your participation in this study other than the inconvenience of the time to complete this survey. This will not affect your grade and the two of us will be the only people to see your answers.

While there may be no immediate benefits to you as a result of your participation in this study, it is hoped that we may gain valuable information about the small school marching band and the role it plays within the community which will then be of future value to this school and other schools like it.

While this could be done as an interview, we feel that this way is the best way to get more people to participate quickly and effectively. You may also choose not to participate as an alternative.

The information that you give us on this survey will be recorded in an anonymous way. We will not release information that could identify you or the school. All completed surveys will be stored in a password protected digital file account. This will not be available to anyone not directly involved in this study.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you want to withdraw from the study at any time, you may do so without penalty. All identifiable information will be removed from the study and deleted or destroyed. Data from this research will not be used for any other research.

Once the study is completed, you may receive the results of the study. If you would like these results, or if you have any questions in the mean time please contact:

Alli Moore or Dr. Rachel Brashier

Amoor710@uwsp.edu

rbrashie@uwsp.edu

University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point

If you have any complaints about your treatment as a participant in this study or believe that you have been harmed in some way by your participation, please call or write:

David Barry, PhD IRB Chair

Associate Professor, Sociology 2100 Main St.

Old Main 208

University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point and Extension Stevens Point, WI 54481

715.346.3799

irb@uwsp.edu

Although Dr. Barry will ask your name, all complaints are kept in confidence.

I have read and understand the information provided to me; that my participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Informed Consent Interview

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Informed Consent to Participate in Human Subjects Research

Dr. Rachel Brashier and Alli Moore, a professor and graduate student at University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, would appreciate your participation in a research study designed to explore the small school marching band and the role it plays in the community. You are being asked to complete a confidential interview with Alli Moore that should take no more than 15 minutes of your time.

Your participation is completely voluntary and will remain confidential. The benefit of this study is a greater knowledge about marching band at the small school and how we as teachers here can give you a better high school band experience.

We anticipate no risk to you as a result of your participation in this study other than the inconvenience of the time to complete this interview. This will not affect your grade and the two of us will be the only people to hear your answers and know it you.

While there may be no immediate benefits to you as a result of your participation in this study, it is hoped that we may gain valuable information about the small school marching band and the role it plays within the community which will then be of future value to this school and other schools like it.

While this could be done as a survey, we feel that an interview is the best way and quickest way to get the most information done efficiently. You may also choose not to participate as an alternative.

The information that you give us on this interview will be recorded in a confidential way. We will not release information that could identify you or the school. All completed interviews will be stored in a password protected digital file account. This will not be available to anyone not directly involved in this study.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you want to withdraw from the study at any time, you may do so without penalty. All identifiable information will be removed from the study and deleted or destroyed. Data from this research will not be used for any other research.

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Although Dr. Barry will ask your name, all complaints are kept in confidence.

I have read and understand the information provided to me; that my participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw at any time

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Minor Assent to Participate

University of Wisconsin Stevens Point Assent to Participate in Research

Title of Research Study: The small school marching band and the role it plays in the community.

Principal investigator: Dr. Rachel Brashier

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

A research study is usually done to find a better way to treat people or to understand how things work. You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are a student in a small school marching band.

What should I know about a research study?

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to do so. It is up to you if you want to participate. You can choose not to take part now and change your mind later if you want. Your decision will not be held against you. You can ask all the questions you want before you decide. Your grade will not be affected based on your choice.

Why is this research being done?

In this study, I want to find out more about opportunities for students that are in a small school marching band and what more we could be doing within the community.

How long will the research last?

I expect that you will be in this research study for no more than a half hour of your time in one session only.

What happens if I say “Yes, I want to be in this research”?

If it is okay with you and you agree to join this study, you will be asked to fill out some surveys or do an interview with how you feel and how you think about being in a small school band program. Participation in both a survey and an interview is not required.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

There is nothing bad that will happen to you although you may feel uncomfortable with some of the questions that I will ask. You can skip any questions you do not want to answer and you can stop at any time. Your grade will not be affected at all.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Interviews will remain confidential and surveys will be anonymous. All information collected will be stored in a password protected account through UWSP and will be deleted. Only people directly related to the study will have access.

What else do I need to know?

If you agree to take part in this research study, your grade will not be affected at all.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, about the research, talk to the research team at amoor710@uwsp.edu. This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You may talk to them at (715) 346-3799 or irb@uwsp.edu if: your questions or concerns are not being answered by the research team; you want to talk to someone besides the research team; or you have questions about your rights as a research participant.

Signature of child _____

Printed name of child _____

Printed name of person obtaining assent _____

Signature of person obtaining assent _____

Date _____

Appendix B

Student Interview Questions

- How long have you been involved in band?
- What activities have you enjoyed in the past specific to marching band?
- Are there any activities you wish your school did?
- What do you like the most about marching band?
- What do you like the least about marching band?
- How do you feel like the marching band interact with the community?
- Do you think the community knows a lot about the band?
- What aspects of marching band do you think are related most to the community?
- What aspects of marching band do you think are related most to school culture?
- What do you think people in the community think about the marching band? What about other people in the school?

Teacher Interview Questions

- How long have you taught?
- When do you see the school band?
- How often do you go to the football or basketball games?
- What do you think of the band?
- What do you hear about the band from students?
- What do you hear about the band from other teachers?
- How do you think the band contributes to the small school community?

- Did you grow up in a small or large community? How did the band at your high school compare to the band at this school in regards to events they participated in?

Survey Questions/Statements

- How long have you been in band?
- The marching band does a lot for the community
- The student body enjoys the marching band
- The community enjoys the marching band
- The marching band contributes to the school culture
- Being in a small school allows us to interact with the community more
- The marching band is valued and respected within the community
- The marching band is valued and respected within the school