Original Research Article

National Association for Music Education

Journal of Research in Music Education
2017, Vol. 65(3) 264–286

DOI: 10.1177/0022429417730043
jrme.sagepub.com
SAGE

Comparing Field-Teaching Experiences: A Longitudinal Examination of Preservice and First-Year Teacher Perspectives

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Abstract

The purpose of this longitudinal study was to examine preservice and first-year music educators' perspectives on fieldwork activities embedded within a music teacher preparation program. One cohort of students was tracked for 2.5 years as they participated in an elementary teaching practicum, fulfilled the student teaching internship, and ultimately entered the field. Drawing on data from a previous study of the same cohort's perceptions of a service-learning project (2013), this report provides a comparative analysis of the students' evolving perceptions of fieldwork over time. The perceived transfers of emergent skills and dispositions to the first year of practice also are explored with particular attention to the voices of first-year teachers. Findings suggested a wide range of benefits associated with each type of fieldwork, including overlapping and unique constructs. Perceived collective transfers included comfort and experience, habits of self-reflection, skills and knowledge for job interviews, and comfort with the observation process. These findings may assist higher education professionals as they design field-teaching activities and make informed decisions about best practices in music teacher preparation.

Keywords

music teacher preparation, service-learning, practicum teaching, student teaching, first-year teaching

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Experiences in real classrooms are considered a critical part of music teacher preparation, and various hands-on teaching activities are thought to allow students to make connections between theory and practice in real time and in authentic contexts. Research has shown that practicing teachers rate fieldwork as one of the most valuable parts of teacher preparation and also recommend more of these authentic field-teaching activities (Brophy, 2002; Conway, 2002, 2012; Groulx, 2016; Legette, 2013; Roulston, Legette, & Womack, 2005). Teachers also have consistently recommended broader approaches to the preservice music education curriculum incorporating more "detracked" experiences outside of the chosen music specialization (Conway, 2002; 2012; Groulx, 2016). This recommendation is particularly important considering that many music educators teach outside their primary music specialization (i.e., band specialist teaching general music; Groulx, 2016). Both the perspectives of practicing teachers and the trends in employment indicate a need for more fieldwork experiences in more diverse teaching contexts throughout the curriculum. While research has shown that preservice fieldwork is perceived as valuable, there are relatively few empirical studies that examine specifically the knowledge, skills, and attitudes derived from differing kinds of field-teaching experiences. The present investigation contributes to this literature, focusing on the value of various types of fieldwork experiences embedded within a music teacher preparation program.

A number of researchers have explored in-service music teacher perceptions of their preparation utilizing both case study (Conway, 2002, 2012; Roulston et al., 2005) and survey (Brophy, 2002; Groulx, 2016; Legette, 2013) designs. Field-teaching activity consistently emerged as one of the most highly valued components of preservice preparation, and in every case, participants advocated for more hands-on teaching as part of music teacher education. In examining the perspectives of in-service cooperating teachers, MacLeod and Walter (2011) found that student teacher mentors also recommended more and earlier field-teaching requirements in order to better prepare preservice teachers for the student teaching experience.

A limited number of scholars alternately have turned their attention toward preservice perceptions of fieldwork activity undertaken as part of music teacher preparation programs, investigating what is learned from and valued about fieldwork experiences. Haston and Russell (2012) explored preservice participants' perceptions following a yearlong fieldwork experience, noting increased pedagogical knowledge, heightened self-knowledge, awareness of the complementary nature of teacher and performer roles, and new perspectives on music education. Hourigan and Scheib (2009) examined student teacher perceptions of the value of teacher preparation program components, including fieldwork. Participants noted that early fieldwork experiences were critical to readiness, providing opportunities to make applications to authentic teaching contexts and to begin student teaching with more confidence.

Fredrickson and Pembrook (1999, 2002) conducted studies of student perceptions of student teaching and a practicum teaching experience as expressed in student journals. While these studies did not focus specifically on the perceived value of the fieldwork, participants did note increased comfort in the classroom and a more student-centered orientation following a semester-long practicum experience

(Fredrickson & Pembrook, 2002). Student teachers described increased stamina and responsibility as notable features of the student teaching experience (Fredrickson & Pembrook, 1999).

Only one study to date focused on the relationship between participation in fieldwork activities (defined as authentic-context learning, or ACL) and initial teaching effectiveness. Paul and colleagues (2001) found that a high level of ACL participation correlated with higher scores on an effectiveness measure, suggesting that participation in ACL activities has a significant positive impact on teaching behaviors. All studies linked to the value of fieldwork among preservice music educators suggested students enjoyed some pedagogical, professional, and/or personal benefits that contributed to their preparedness for successful classroom teaching.

Another related line of inquiry has investigated the impact of service-learning embedded within music teacher preparation. Preservice music educators participating in service-learning projects as part of their teacher preparation program have reported an increase in pedagogical skills, a more self-reflective mind-set, and a more student-centered approach. Following a service-learning experience, students also described a stronger commitment to music education as a career and a growing sense of teacher identity (Reynolds, 2003; Reynolds & Conway, 2003; Reynolds, Jerome, Preston, & Haynes, 2005).

In an earlier intrinsic case study (Bartolome, 2013), I examined specifically the impact of a service-learning project undertaken as part of a music teacher preparation program. Following a 10-week service-learning experience at a local prekindergarten center for children with and without disabilities, students identified preparation, planning, patience, creativity, and collaboration as skills developed as a result of participation. They also mentioned a growing sense of teacher identity, a growing awareness of the realities of teaching, and satisfaction with music education as a career path. Additional emergent dispositions included an individual orientation toward the children and comfort with working with children with special needs. Many students noted increased empathy toward individuals with disabilities, increased maturity, and an appreciation of the required reflective work. For this cohort of students, service-learning was valued as an effective form of fieldwork, and students identified myriad benefits to participation.

The purpose of the present investigation was to explore the changing perspectives of preservice music educators regarding three different types of field-teaching experiences (service-learning, elementary practicum, and student teaching) as well as later reflections on how the skills and dispositions acquired through fieldwork transferred to their first year of teaching. The following questions guided the study: (1) What do preservice music educators learn from different kinds of field-teaching activities? and (2) Which skills acquired through field-teaching activities did novice teachers identify as transferable to the first year of teaching?

I adopted a longitudinal approach to the research questions, tracking the same cohort of students who were involved in the initial service-learning case study as they participated in an elementary teaching practicum, completed student teaching, and ultimately entered the field. This approach (also adopted by Berg & Miksza, 2010;

Miksza & Berg, 2013; and Conway, 2002, 2012) allowed for the integration of previously collected data into the analysis of a larger, longitudinal data set and more holistic analysis of the participants' evolving perspectives on the impact of fieldwork. By investigating the perceptions of preservice music educators over time, we might learn more about the value of field-teaching activities and how those experiences transfer to the first year of service in the field. For the purposes of this study, a *field-teaching activity* was defined as a sustained, cocurricular teaching opportunity in which the individual student engages with the same group(s) of students weekly over the course of a semester.

Method

Because I was interested in exploring deeply and comparing three discrete fieldwork experiences, I selected a collective case study design to answer the question of "how" different kinds of fieldwork experiences contribute to the preparation of preservice music educators (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2014). The data from the original intrinsic case study (Bartolome, 2013) were drawn into the analysis, and each phase of data collection (service-learning project, elementary practicum, and student teaching) composed an embedded case unit (Yin, 2014).

Participants

The participants in this study comprised a single cohort of undergraduates enrolled in a music education program at a large southern university in the United States. Participants were tracked over the 2.5 years following the initial investigation (Bartolome, 2013), engaging in two additional phases of data collection as seniors and as first-year teachers. Of the 18 music education sophomores involved in the first service-learning case study, nine students participated in the elementary teaching practicum, completed student teaching, and secured teaching jobs immediately following graduation. These nine students were the focus of the present investigation and included seven band directors, one elementary general music specialist, and one choral music educator. Attrition was attributed to participants leaving the program ($n = 1$), delaying graduation ($n = 2$), pursuing a master's degree in performance ($n = 3$), pursuing a career outside of music education ($n = 2$), and working as an educational outreach coordinator for a local symphony ($n = 1$). Despite this attrition, nine participants remained a viable cohort for a collective case study (especially given its longitudinal nature) and provided a rich data set. A list of participants, their music education emphasis, their student teaching placement, and their first teaching position is presented in Table S1 (see Appendix A in the online version of this article).[1]

Overview of the Field-Teaching Activities

As part of a foundations course that I teach, sophomores enrolled in the music education program of study are required to participate in a semester-long service-learning

project at a local public preschool for children with and without disabilities. Students visit the school site for 30 min each week, providing 5 weeks of general classroom service followed by 5 weeks of simple music experiences for preschool children. The project culminates with a music-sharing session in which several classrooms come together to share songs and the undergraduates demonstrate their own musical talents. Students are not observed in the teaching environment but instead are graded (by me) on learning (as evidenced by the quality of the reflective work), effort, and attendance. The course itself addresses the topics of general teaching effectiveness, classroom management, special learners, and multicultural education. Students complete weekly reflections, utilizing a describe–connect–apply format, describing their experience in the classroom, making connections to course content, and making applications to their goals, values, and attitudes as preservice music educators (for reflective prompts, see Figure S1 in Appendix B in the online version of the article).

During the senior year, students are required to enroll in my elementary music methods course that features a 10-week teaching practicum at a local public elementary school.[2] Each student is assigned a kindergarten or first- or second-grade class to work with across the semester, planning and implementing 10 weekly music lessons, watching their weekly teaching video, and submitting a written reflection after each visit. The same describe–connect–apply format described previously is utilized for these reflections (see Figure S2 in Appendix B in the online version of the article), although students are required to watch their teaching video as part of their practicum reflection process. Nine out of 10 lessons are observed by either me or a graduate teaching assistant. Although verbal and written feedback is provided after every lesson, I observe each student three times formally for a grade.

Following this experience, seniors typically spend the entire spring semester in the student teaching internship, working alongside a practicing music educator every day and participating in all aspects of the teaching and administration of the music program. Students may choose to complete student teaching in band, orchestra, or choir at the middle or high school level or in elementary general music, and they spend the entire semester in a single placement. For an overview of the three fieldwork requirements, see Table 1.

Data Generation

Following the completion of the initial service-learning case study, I tracked the cohort of students over 2.5 years as they participated in each of the subsequent field-teaching activities and later entered the field. After each additional fieldwork requirement (elementary practicum and student teaching), students ($N = 9$) participated in 30- to 60-min semistructured interviews exploring the benefits and challenges associated with each experience and the skills and knowledge acquired through the fieldwork activities (Fontana & Frey, 2005). I asked all participants to compare the fieldwork requirements, noting unique and complementary features. I conducted the final round of interviews approximately 6 months into the school year to explore the impact of the fieldwork experiences from their perspective as first-year teachers. First-year teachers

Table 1. Overview of Fieldwork Requirements.

Variable	Service-Learning	Practicum Teaching	Student Teaching
Year	Sophomore	Senior	Senior
Length	10 weeks	10 weeks	Entire semester
Frequency	30 min/week	30 min/week	Every day, all day
Level	Prekindergarten	Grade K, 1, or 2	K–5 or middle or high school
Activity	5 weeks service, 5 weeks music activities	Teach 10 music lessons	All aspects of the music program
Frequency of observation	None	Every lesson by GAs or professor	Daily by cooperating teacher; three lessons by professor
Graded or ungraded teaching	Ungraded; grade on reflection, effort, attendance	3 lessons formally observed/graded	Formally assessed three times by professor; pass/fail

Note: GA = graduate assistant.

also were invited to describe how skills developed during fieldwork transferred to the field (for interview protocols, see Figures S3 and S4 in Appendix C in the online version of the article). All interviews were transcribed in full for analysis and were added to the existing pool of interview data from the service-learning project, resulting in approximately 225 single-spaced pages of data.[3] In addition to interviews, I retained hard copies of reflective writings submitted as part of the service-learning project and the elementary practicum teaching experience. During the elementary teaching practicum, I also observed each participant working with elementary students at least four times and prepared observation reports that identified strengths, weaknesses, progress, and goals for each participant (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

Analysis and Interpretation

Due to the longitudinal nature of this research, data from the initial intrinsic case study (service-learning project) were drawn into the analysis. Each phase of data collection was treated as an embedded case unit in the larger collective case study design, providing an opportunity for both within-case and cross-case analysis (Creswell, 2007). The cyclical and emergent nature of qualitative research required ongoing analysis throughout the data collection period, and I developed "assertions-in-progress" (Saldaña, 2002, p. 5) that informed the later phases of data collection. Within-case analysis initially took the form of open coding (Creswell, 2007), defined as a process in which researchers "assign a truncated, symbolic meaning to each datum for purposes of qualitative analysis" (Saldaña, 2014, p. 8). I read and reread the entire data set (interview transcripts, observation reports, and reflective writings) to identify emergent patterns and to designate codes to "represent and capture a datum's primary content and essence" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 3). Once a set of emergent codes was identified, a process

of closed coding (Creswell, 2007) was undertaken as I purposefully reread the data looking for instances of each code. I then categorized the codes, grouping similar or related codes for deeper analysis of patterns and interrelationships between groups. Through a process of reflective memo writing (Saldaña, 2014), I considered the interrelationships between codes and categories and made logical and interpretive assertions (Saldaña, 2014) based on my analytic process. In order to complete the cross-case analysis, I adopted Saldaña's (2002) approach to longitudinal data, using framing questions, descriptive questions, and analytic and interpretive questions as tools to identify changes in the participants' teaching behaviors, dispositions, attitudes, and perspectives over time. Following the identification of codes and the development of assertions, quotes from participants and observed phenomena were selected as "evidentiary warrant" (Saldaña, 2014, p. 39) to weave a credible testimony grounded in participant experience. I also completed negative case analysis (Creswell, 2007), revisiting the full data set to identify disconfirming evidence.

Validation and Trustworthiness

In an effort to increase trustworthiness and credibility, I used seven of the eight validation strategies suggested by Creswell (2007).[4] *Prolonged engagement* is an integral feature of longitudinal design, which also facilitated the cultivation of deep, long-term relationships with the participants. I collected data from multiple sources (interviews, observations, and reflective writings), resulting in several different kinds of data (interview transcripts, observation reports, written material culture). *Triangulation* was achieved through a comparison among these data sources. By virtue of the longitudinal approach, *member checking* was built into the design: During each subsequent interview, I was able to elicit feedback on emergent assertions-in-progress. Following the final round of data collection, participants also had an opportunity to review their interview transcripts as well as a draft of the manuscript and to provide additional comments to clarify, confirm, and/or challenge the findings. A *thick description* of the context was created to provide the reader with a clear understanding of the program being discussed and allow for logical and informed naturalistic generalizations. I also completed a thorough *negative case analysis*, reviewing the full data set to identify disconfirming evidence. A colleague served as a *peer debriefer* throughout the research process, acting as a critical sounding board and "devil's advocate" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) during research design and analysis, and reading multiple iterations of the final manuscript.

I took steps to mitigate any *researcher bias* related to my teacher-research role,[5] striving to foster a strong and open rapport with students and explicitly encouraging students to be honest (and even to complain) to get an accurate representation of their experiences. It was made clear that academic success was not tied to their opinions, and whenever possible, interviews were conducted after grades were submitted. Additionally, the purpose of the project to improve music teacher preparation was emphasized, and all participants enthusiastically agreed to participate in subsequent phases of research after reading the initial service-learning case study (Bartolome,

2013). Anecdotally, this was a particularly honest and articulate cohort of students, as evidenced by their reflective work and responses over 3 years of interaction. Due to the long-term relationships we developed and their desire to contribute to the evolution of music teacher preparation, I am confident the participants felt comfortable reporting their perceptions honestly.

Findings

The analysis revealed both unique and overlapping constructs attributed to each type of field-teaching experience (see Figure S5 in Appendix D in the online version of the article) as well as a collection of skills and dispositions that, according to participants, transferred to the first year of practice (see Figure S6 in Appendix D in the online version of the article). Comparative findings will be presented first (drawing in findings from the initial case study), followed by a deep exploration of the ways the skills and dispositions developed during the field-teaching activities transferred to the first year of teaching.

Comparing Fieldwork Activities: Evolving Perspectives

Participants reported a wide range of unique and overlapping constructs that emerged from participating in these fieldwork experiences. Cross-case analysis suggested that the service-learning project seems to have had the greatest impact on the students' developing global dispositions, as evidenced by the unique emergent themes associated with this case (i.e., maturity, empathy, comfort with students with disabilities, and individual orientation; see Figure S5 in the online version of the article). These dispositional constructs were not linked to either of the other fieldwork activities. The emergence of these teaching sensibilities may be related to the students' first real experiences interacting with children in the classroom context as well as the focus on students with disabilities.

In examining the unique emergent themes associated with the elementary practicum, it is apparent that these constructs were related more concretely to pedagogy and instruction (i.e., management, sequencing, clarity, pacing, and affect; see Figure S5 in the online version of the article). These improvements seem to derive from the course emphasis on curriculum and instruction and the frequent ongoing feedback loops that characterize the practicum teaching requirement. Unique emergent themes from the student teaching case revealed a primary emphasis on administrative duties and paperwork associated with the profession. According to participants, student teaching provided an opportunity to practice all of these elements while embedded in the day-to-day realities of teaching, especially the skills of rehearsal technique and listening and diagnosing from the podium.

While participants asserted that all experiences fostered overall preparation, it is apparent that unique skills and dispositions were derived from each type of fieldwork. The exploration of the following overlapping constructs (planning and preparation, collaboration, career awareness, and teacher identity) provides insight into the ways

particular skills are built or refined over time. The complementary nature of the fieldwork experiences also is discussed.

Planning and preparation. Although students frequently commented on the teaching skills of planning and preparation after all three experiences, their comments became more focused and refined after each subsequent fieldwork activity. Following the practicum, Noel B. noted,

> I thought I knew how to prepare a lesson and go in and teach, but I realized that there is so much more on the planning end that has to go into it. I feel like my biggest learning thing here was just sitting down and asking, "What do I want to do? What can they do? How can I build on that?" And then planning how to actually implement that.

Although she mentioned increased awareness of preparation following the service-learning project, here Noel expressed a more refined approach to lesson planning. Students' increased ability to plan effective lessons also was evidenced by a decreasing need for revisions to the lesson plans and more successful implementation of lesson plans across the elementary practicum semester.

Student teaching was seen as an opportunity to put these developing lesson-planning skills into action and, in most cases, to make concrete applications to the rehearsal context. First-year teacher Paul P. simply stated, "After all those [fieldwork experiences], it's really easy to lesson plan now." It appears students moved from a general awareness of planning and preparation to a more detailed, explicit understanding of the realities of planning and preparation and then ultimately to a more global integration of these skills into their day-to-day routine. As a first-year teacher, Noel B. offered, "Now within an hour I have a week's worth of lesson plans written and I feel confident about them!"

Collaboration. Collaboration was another overlapping construct, although the service-learning comments were more focused on collaborating with teachers and aides in the classroom ("Having a teacher there with me, working with that adult for the first time definitely helped prepare me"); practicum comments more frequently alluded to peer collaboration ("I would talk to my peers and get ideas for lessons"; "We encouraged each other!"). Student teaching comments often referred to both the developing relationship with the mentor teacher ("Being with someone that was so demanding, so precise, so purposeful on what she was doing and seeing it every day was so beneficial") and the student teaching cohort support network ("We really supported each other during student teaching"; "We kind of became a network"). These findings corroborate two previous investigations in which participants expressed the value of "educative communities" (Schmidt, 2010, p. 140) and supportive peer networks (Haston & Russell, 2012) developed as a result of fieldwork experiences.

Career awareness. Students discussed a growing sense of career awareness following the service-learning project and the elementary practicum, stating a confidence in their

chosen career path. After the service-learning project, students were more likely to discuss this in broad terms ("I know I am in the right career" or "I am happy to have chosen this career"), while following the elementary practicum, they frequently spoke more candidly about their desire or lack of desire to work with children. Seven participants noted that they felt willing and prepared to teach in the elementary context if a job in their primary specialization (band or choir) were not available. Similar "professional perspectives" were reported previously by Haston and Russell (2012, p. 381) and MacDowell (2007). Interestingly, participants did not comment specifically on career choice when discussing the student teaching experience, suggesting perhaps that their commitment to the career of music education was solidified prior to entering the student teaching semester.

Teacher identity. An emergent sense of teacher identity was evident in the comments of students, but following the elementary practicum, students often noted that the service-learning project was "not really teaching." They are quite accurate: While they are engaging with and working with children, the course is not a methods course but a foundations course. Following the practicum experience, Bethany H. explained,

> Looking back at the service-learning, I feel like didn't really necessarily "teach" them anything. I am sure they learned stuff, but I wasn't consciously sitting down and saying, 'I'm going to teach them rhythm" or "I am going to teach them this." And for my practicum, I did do that. I looked at the National Standards, I made objectives, things like that.

This demonstrates their evolving sense of themselves as teachers and the recognition of the skill sets they developed across their time in the music education program. After student teaching, participants also described a sudden awareness of the responsibility associated with truly becoming "the teacher." Paul P. commented, "I had to learn how to become a responsible adult from my first moment of student teaching." These comments highlight a refining of the teacher identity as the student moved into the world of daily teaching and truly became "the grown-up" in the room. These findings corroborate earlier reports suggesting fieldwork activity contributes to an emerging teacher identity (Reynolds et al., 2005).

Fieldwork as complementary. Participants also noted expressly how the three fieldwork experiences worked together to provide a broad skill set applicable to a variety of teaching contexts. Noel B. explained, "I feel like the field-teaching experiences were complementary because those skills do build on top of each other." Samuel M. corroborated:

> With the service-learning, it was, "OK can you get out there? Can you schedule yourself to actually get to the building on time and then can you manage the class for however long?" Then for elementary practicum it focused more on your teaching, rather than your responsibilities. Even though your responsibilities were still there it was more about the

> teaching and management aspect. And then I felt like student teaching was just a combination of everything up to that point.

Simon B. expressed an appreciation of the gradually increasing responsibility embedded within the sequence: "In each one you had a responsibility to the kids, but in each one the amount of responsibility kept increasing, from a small group of students, to a full class, and then a program of 300 kids." Participants expressly noted the sequence of the fieldwork activities as instrumental in building their confidence in front of increasingly larger groups of students.

First-Year Teacher Perspectives on Transfer

Service-learning transfers. During the interviews with first-year teachers, we explicitly discussed the important things from each of the fieldwork activities that directly transferred to their first year in the field. From the service-learning project, all first-year teachers made frequent connections to working with special learners, referencing a sense of comfort with students with disabilities, a willingness to include them in music programs, and an understanding of how to integrate students with disabilities through modifications and accommodations. Samuel M. noted, "If I had never experienced any students with disabilities before I got to my first job, I would probably look at them like, 'I don't know how to help you. I'm sorry.'" Rosie L. surprised colleagues with her willingness to support an English-language learner in the band:

> Apparently, I was much more open to having him in my classroom. I said, "Yeah sure, not a problem. Tell me, what's his experience level? What kind of interactions can I start with him to get him towards speaking English? How can I support what you're doing?" Which I think definitely shocked the [English as a Second Language] teacher who was handling his case, because that was apparently not something the previous band director would have put up with.

Their comments indicated careful attention to their students as individuals and a commitment to making the accommodations and modifications necessary to serve each learner's needs.

The first-year teachers also spoke knowledgeably about individualized education programs (IEPs) and 504 plans, where to find pertinent information about students with disabilities, and where to seek help in accommodating the needs of special learners.[6] Noel B. stated,

> The service-learning project was the first time that I really saw the IEPs and 504s and that kind of stuff because I actually got to work with my teacher and see some of those made. So, I knew what to expect in my first job and I knew what to go look for whenever I needed to ask about it.

All the teachers enthusiastically offered examples of how they accommodated students with disabilities in their performance-based classrooms and directly referenced

the service-learning project as providing skills and knowledge that made these accommodations and modifications possible. Previous studies also have linked preservice experience with students with disabilities with increased comfort and ability making accommodations in the music classroom (Hourigan, 2009; VanWeelden & Whipple, 2005). These findings are also notable given that previous research has demonstrated that teachers are often underprepared in the area of music and special education (Colwell & Thompson, 2000; Salvador, 2010; VanWeelden & Whipple, 2014). For a list of the most frequently mentioned service-learning transfers, see Figure S6 (in the online version of the article).

Elementary practicum transfers. In discussing the elementary practicum, participants most frequently mentioned preparation, planning, affect, and pacing as the most important skills developed and applied to first-year teaching. Four participants noted that they occasionally utilized the scripted-lesson format used during elementary practicum to plan for tricky transitions or important evaluation lessons. Noel B. noted,

> Actually, as much as I complained about them, I find myself scripting out stuff all the time. Like getting ready for observations. It was like, "All right, I'm going to script this so that I know what I'm saying." [Laughing] Sometimes I hated doing it but I still find myself doing it.

Participants were also surprised to note that the affect and energetic pacing cultivated in the elementary teaching context also transferred to middle and high school ensemble settings. Simon B. applied the pacing he practiced with kindergarteners to his choir: "You always have to move, move, move. You can't be doing the same thing for more than 10 minutes. It applies especially for the middle school!" First-year teachers reported that the classroom management strategies and motivational programs developed during elementary practicum were utilized, sometimes even in their middle and high school band and choir settings. Bethany H. asserted,

> Without the practicum, I wouldn't have strong classroom management skills. I would have still been afraid of the kids. I went from being like, "Oh my gosh I'm scared of these kids" to "Oh my gosh, these are kids and I can handle them."

Angie A. also attributed her strong classroom management to the practicum experience: "I feel like that's where I gained that confidence that I did feel prepared at least in my ability to control the room or to maintain discipline." A number of previous studies reported improvements in preparation, pacing, affect, and classroom management following the completion of field-teaching requirements (Haston & Russell, 2012; Hourigan & Scheib, 2009; Schmidt, 2010). For a list of the most frequently mentioned practicum transfers, see Figure S6 (in the online version of the article).

Student teaching transfers. Given the authentic nature of student teaching, it is unsurprising that all the first-year teachers made very global statements regarding transfer

to in-service practice ("I learned *everything*!"; "Oh my gosh! I learned *so* much!"). With some probing, students also identified stamina ("I had to teach *all* day!"; "I learned how to teach eight classes a day!"; "You're there from 6 a.m. until 10 at night!"), collaboration ("Just having that mentor every day, all the time really helped me"), and responsibility ("I was suddenly in charge of a hundred kids") as specific transferable skills developed during the student teaching semester. Increased stamina and responsibility previously were noted as features of the student teaching experience (Fredrickson & Pembrook, 1999), while Schmidt (2010) reported collaboration as a perceived value of fieldwork. On the pedagogical side, eight participants (all those who had ensemble-based student teaching placements) expressed developing a larger repertoire of rehearsal techniques and a better ear for error detection.

Interestingly, participants overwhelmingly mentioned extramusical "stuff" as the one of the biggest takeaways from their student teaching experience. Noel B. commented, "I started seeing the whole paperwork thing. Yes, you have an hour and a half of planning, but you're not sitting at your desk writing lesson plans. You're really responding to parents' emails, grading papers, and dealing with administrators." Angie A. similarly noted, "I learned a lot of logistical-type things from student teaching. Trips and paperwork and things that aren't necessarily covered in a course, but you still need to know how to do." All nine participants commented on the student teaching experience as a crash course in the "nonteaching realities" of the job. Apparently, the opportunity to immerse themselves in the day-to-day running of a music program is valued highly by first-year teachers and represents content and skills not easily addressed in course work or weekly fieldwork requirements. Administrative and organizational skills also were identified in one previous investigation of perceptions of student teachers (Hourigan & Scheib, 2009). First-year teachers in this study did note expressly that student teaching represented an opportunity to practice all the teacher skills they had developed through earlier required fieldwork, especially classroom management, planning and preparation, and pacing. For an overview of the themes that emerged from discussion with the first-year teachers, see Figure S6 (in the online version of the article).

Perceived Collective Transfers

In addition to discussing each fieldwork requirement in turn, we also talked in broad terms about collective transfers attributed to the fieldwork requirements as a whole. First-year teachers identified comfort and experience in the classroom, habits of self-reflection, a broad base of knowledge and skills for interviews, and a comfort with outside observations as developing through the series of fieldwork requirements.

Comfort and experience. The most common response of first-year teachers when asked about the value of fieldwork activities from their perspective as a first-year teacher was that they were grateful for extensive preservice teaching experience and felt an increased level of comfort working with students as a result. Samuel M. asserted, "Off the bat, I was already a lot more comfortable dealing with kids. So, being in those three

field experiences and having to deal with kids and managing them really helped me." Paul P. echoed these sentiments, noting a general comfort derived from repeated opportunities to practice teaching skills in authentic contexts:

> I felt like those three things put together gave me a very complimentary skill set. You know if I had just gotten, "OK, we lesson planned like this three times," I would have been really good at lesson planning but I probably could have still been a really crappy teacher. But you know, there are things that I have experienced and I can do with a slight facility that I feel like some or many 1st-year teachers don't have.

It was apparent that for this cohort of students, having three varied fieldwork experiences assisted them in feeling more comfortable and prepared as they entered the field. These findings corroborate several previous investigations related to preservice fieldwork and preparedness (Hourigan & Scheib, 2009; MacDowell, 2007; Powell, 2011).

Habits of self-reflection. Students identified compulsory reflective work as useful in developing continuing habits of self-reflection into the first year of teaching. While all nine participants alluded to the experience of writing weekly reflections as time consuming or "a pain," they also all were able to identify specific ways that reflective behaviors (some informal, some formal) continued to help them to improve their practice. Some initiated regular reflective discussions with colleagues and mentors, some engaged in self-reflective commuting, and others journaled or made notes for themselves following each lesson. Bethany H. commented,

> There's a lot less writing down of the self-reflection, but almost constant thinking about self-reflection: "Did that lesson work? How did that lesson work? Can I do it better next time? Is there something I can do differently? Should I change it for the next class? Should I do this or that? I am constantly, not writing it down, but thinking about how did I do on that lesson? How did the kids do on that lesson? Did they understand the concept? Did they kind of get it? What can I do better to make it easier for them to understand? What am I gonna do next? How is this gonna work?" There's a lot of self-reflection.

Bethany H. attributed these self-reflective tendencies to the habits instilled through fieldwork activities. Noel B. also explained, "I still have a video camera in my room. Every now and then I'll just film a lesson to see how things are going and then watch it again, because there are so many times I catch things I didn't notice in the moment." Rosie L. described a self-reflective mind-set and a healthy attitude toward the ups and downs that characterize first-year teaching:

> I definitely am reflecting pretty much constantly. Like, "So, that lesson didn't go well. Where did it go wrong? How can you do that better?" And then you just come back the next class and do it all again and hopefully do better. The fieldwork reflections, for me, encouraged me not look at the rough days that happened to all of us as a failure. It was, "OK something didn't work. Pinpoint what it is. It's not that you failed, it's that something didn't quite go right." Which is critical, especially this first year because quite a few things don't go right.

While it is impossible to provide preservice music educators with all the skills and knowledge they will need to be successful across their careers, a self-reflective mindset and a willingness to continue their professional growth will assist them as they hone their teaching practice and evolve to serve the needs of changing student populations. It appears that the reflective components of preservice fieldwork may be an effective mechanism to instill habits of self-reflection in beginning career teachers.

Knowledge and skills for interview situations. Each of the first-year teachers noted that their extensive fieldwork contributed to their sense of preparedness for and success in job-seeking endeavors. Five participants specifically identified varied fieldwork as being attractive to potential employers, noting that their long-term, hands-on teaching in a variety of teaching levels and contexts was a marketable trait. Samuel M. asserted,

> The fieldwork experiences definitely helped in interviews, because I didn't just have to rely on my student teaching. So, if they asked me management questions, yes, I could go back to student teaching, but at the same time I could go back to elementary practicum and then just talk about all the things I worked through in those situations. It definitely helped in the interviews.

In preparing her teaching portfolio to share with potential employers, Bethany H. noted, "I wouldn't have been able to fill those portfolios with things if I didn't have those fieldwork experiences to back them up." Also, participants' facility speaking in educational terms (including special education language) was perceived as valuable. In an unsolicited email, Rosie L. asserted,

> While student teaching is something they see in every prospective hire, the breadth and diversity of my experiences in the classroom pre–student teaching was not. And where student teaching tends to be very level specific (elementary, middle, or high), I had a portfolio of work from a variety of age groups that I could talk about at length. Another point that I think impressed my interviewers was my ease at using the terminology of the field. Throughout the service-learning experience in particular, we felt compelled to adopt the professional terminology as we learned it and then saw it in practice—being able to describe a student with autism who is displaying an uncontrolled repetitive behavior either verbally or physically, and knowing that symptom is called "rooting" are very different.

In an interview, Rosie L. later expressed,

> I honestly can't think of one interview where I didn't end up having that conversation with them, about students with disabilities and the fact that I was comfortable having them in my classroom and participating with a class of typically developing students.

Other participants confirmed perceived transfers to the interview process and expressed gratitude for having had so much diverse field experience upon which to draw ("It was helpful for them to see that I've worked with all of these kids"; "Yes, I am a 1st-year

teacher, but I have had all this experience in front of students"). In today's competitive workforce, a variety of field-teaching experiences may contribute to beginning teachers' ability to secure employment. This finding was unique to the present investigation.

Comfort with the observation process. Long-term, supervised, preservice fieldwork also may assist graduates as they navigate recent trends in teacher accountability and evaluation. All the participants described a lack of discomfort with being observed in the teaching setting and attributed their relative comfort to the number and frequency of teaching observations they experienced as undergraduates. Furthermore, they tended to view the observations as an opportunity to receive positive critical feedback and to make changes in practice as a result. Christian B., a first-year band director noted,

> [Observations are] not a big deal. When the principal walks in my classroom I don't take a double look and freak out and start losing my mind. It's just another person in there watching me do what I do. Having so many observations by you guys [faculty] almost desensitizes you to it. You don't notice it; you don't pay attention to it. It's just another person watching you and if they are critiquing you, great! It should be a positive thing.

When asked about the value of frequent preservice observations in the field, Neil P. similarly noted, "It makes it really easy to have formal observations. Other teachers freak out, but it's not a big deal to me. . . . I don't feel any pressure when anybody walks in." For this population of teachers, repeated opportunities for structured observation in preservice teaching contexts fostered a healthy appreciation of the positive benefits of the evaluation process and its intended purpose: the improvement of teaching practice. This attitude may contribute to a willingness to seek out help, to accept and apply feedback from mentors and observers, and to navigate national or district teacher evaluation procedures successfully. This theme has not been reported in any previous studies. For an overview of the themes that emerged from discussion with the first-year teachers, see Figure S6 (in the online version of the article).

Areas of Perceived Underpreparedness

Given the challenges associated with first-year teaching and a desire to explore any identifiable "holes" in their training, I gave the first-year teachers an opportunity to share any areas in which they felt underprepared or unprepared. The most frequent comment was related to interpersonal interactions in the workplace, with all participants describing challenges with some aspect of professional interaction. Comments pertained to struggles with administration ("I wish we had more time spent on dealing with administration, especially administration that doesn't understand what you are doing"), parents ("It's hard to deal with parents who are either more or less involved than you would expect!"; "How do run I run a booster program and deal with all the parents?"), and colleagues ("When I team teach with the other assistant director, I don't know where my line is"; "Some of the other teachers are so gossipy!"). The experiences of this cohort of first-year teachers indicated that they felt unprepared to

face the realities of the interpersonal relationships that are required in school cultures. While this is not a skill that is taught easily in the context of teacher preparation, many felt that they would have benefited from a better awareness of school cultures and what they might expect as they entered the field. Interestingly, all participants referred to collaboration as a benefit of each kind of fieldwork yet still struggled interpersonally as first-year teachers.

Three participants discussed surprising incompatibilities between their training and/or philosophy and the realities of their teaching situation. Rosie L. explained,

> The way that we were trained to approach different things is very different than many of the teachers here. So, some of the things that I learned to be very ready to do and to accept, to try and be part of a cohesive unit, aren't necessarily what I encountered when I joined this staff. I expected there to be more collaboration. It's very lonely, at least in my school. I feel sometimes like a beacon of naiveté. Like super naive. Yeah, I'm willing to try anything. I want to see if I can make it work. I want this band program to be a part of what they are doing in their other classrooms. And that's just somewhat of a foreign idea at the school I'm at.

Samuel M. also shared his experiences grappling with philosophical differences:

> At first, I was really excited and I was pushing a lot of my philosophies and my colleague would go with it. And then there were phases where he was like, "No, we don't have time to do it this way." So, that thing about time and getting the product down, that really hindered it. And during those phases, I would kind of get depressed and it was like, "Well, I guess this is what the real world is. It can't be all rainbows and stuff."

While these situations described by participants were idiosyncratic and context specific, it is worth noting that integrating into an existing school culture presented challenges for these newly graduated music educators whose recent experiences in higher education might run contrary to the philosophies of those who have been in the field for many years.

There was a single participant who felt underprepared with regard to classroom management and discipline. Simon B., the middle school choir director, asserted,

> I'd say I was surprised by some of the behavior by some of these kids. It's middle school and you should definitely prepare for the worst. The only part I wasn't ready for was the discipline. We went over it in class, but I don't feel like it was heavily emphasized in student teaching. I wasn't actually doing it. I wasn't confrontational enough to handle it.

Notably, Simon B. was the only middle school choir director in the cohort and the only one who expressed significant struggles with management. All of the other participants noted feeling particularly well equipped to handle classroom management, with many echoing Angie A.'s perspective: "[The fieldwork] is where I gained that confidence, that I did feel prepared in my ability to control the room or to maintain discipline."

There were several other issues that emerged through the negative case analysis. Three instrumental band directors felt underprepared when it came to selecting literature for their high school bands, and two lamented a lack of engagement with marching band methods. Three expressed a desire for more attention to teacher evaluation procedures, and one felt unprepared to teach the high school Fine Arts Survey required in his position. While it is not possible to prepare preservice music educators for every possibility they may face in their first teaching position, it is worthwhile to consider the perspectives of early-career teachers as preservice curricula are evaluated and revised.

While each participant was able to identify some perceived shortcomings, all of the participants specifically commented on the positive value of the fieldwork experiences and how prepared they felt to enter the field. Noel B. noted,

> I am so glad I had those experiences. I have talked to many other people at different universities that have not had that experience. They literally went into student teaching and they struggled through student teaching and now they are out and they are still struggling. I feel like I had 4 years of student teaching almost, 4 years of prep work, and now I am on my own, as opposed to a semester of it.

Seven of the nine participants noted that even more fieldwork would be beneficial. Samuel M. suggested, "I mean, more wherever you can. That fieldwork helped out a lot, just helping me feel more comfortable. Definitely include more wherever you can, more variety and more experience."

Implications for Music Teacher Preparation Programs

These findings suggest that continuous field-teaching experiences embedded in teacher preparation programs across time are beneficial to students as they transition from preservice to in-service music educators. Music teacher preparers might consider the multiple benefits identified by participants as they structure preservice field-teaching opportunities. It is notable that participants valued the variety of features associated with the fieldwork activities, including the opportunity to work with different grade levels and with diverse populations of students. Varying degrees of supervision may have allowed students opportunities to at times experiment unobserved without fear of consequence and also get critical, ongoing feedback from expert teachers through formal observation processes. More- and less-structured experiences also may allow students to be freely creative at times while also having a more structured format in which to hone skills.

Music teacher preparers may wish to include formal self-reflective work as a component of fieldwork experience as a means of developing long-term habits of self-reflection. These skills may be critical to the development of teaching competencies and may transfer directly to the first-year teaching context. Self-reflection also must be paired with frequent ongoing expert feedback and multiple opportunities to refine teachings skills based on reflection and feedback. While self-reflective work is

critical, it is not always accurate (e.g., Cassidy, 1993) and must be corroborated with expert opinions. Emphasizing the importance of ongoing self-reflection in the field and modeling this practice as a music education professional also may foster a healthy valuing of the self-reflective process.

It also may be worthwhile to inform learners explicitly of the value of the skills derived from long-term fieldwork experiences as they enter the job market and, later, the profession. Fieldwork components can be, at times, taxing and frustrating due to the time and effort required for planning and preparation and the incremental progress made. Directing students toward the larger goals of job acquisition and a successful career as well as making frequent connections between developing competencies and a variety of teaching contexts might aid students in understanding the value of these requirements.

Limitations

Due to the nature of qualitative research and the limited number of participants, these findings are not generalizable. However, they do provide evidence that multiple and varied long-term fieldwork experiences are valued by preservice and early-career music educators as well as initial insight into why these experiences are perceived as valuable. One issue worth noting is the skewed nature of the participant pool. While it is encouraging that participants across specialties found value in prekindergarten and elementary fieldwork, the seven band directors and the one choir director may have had different responses if one of these sustained fieldwork activities had focused on middle or high school ensembles. A more balanced pool of participants representing instrumental and vocal backgrounds and ensemble and general specialties might have revealed more nuanced data as related to the context of teaching.

Although I took measures to mitigate researcher bias, there is the possibility that my role as teacher-researcher influenced participants' responses. Additionally, there are issues related to the veracity of self-report data that may have impacted the findings. While I did not look at teacher evaluations or corroborate the evidence with mentors or evaluators, the first-year teachers were quite frank in discussing their preparation and perceived shortcomings. Through the cultivation of long-term relationships and a shared commitment to the improvement of teacher preparation, I believe that the nine participants were comfortable in providing the honest feedback that informed this study.

Directions for Future Research and Conclusions

It may be beneficial to continue this vein of inquiry, examining the changing needs of modern music educators and the ways preservice teaching experiences contribute to preparedness and success. Following up with the participants of the present investigation after 3 or 5 years may provide information related to the evolving needs of music educators as they gain experience in the beginning stages of their careers. Additionally, examining participants' teacher evaluations and eliciting feedback from teacher

mentors, colleagues, and evaluators would provide some corroborating evidence to the self-report first-year teacher data presented in this study. Replicating the study with another cohort of students may provide a broader base of data on which to draw conclusions, and conducting similar studies at other universities across the country may offer insight into the ways varied context and program structure impact preservice music educators' experience of fieldwork activities. Specifically seeking to include more choral and general music teachers would provide a more balanced portrayal of the ways preservice fieldwork assists educators working in a variety of teaching contexts. An examination of the ways early-career teachers develop interpersonal skills also may provide a better understanding of how teacher educators might prepare preservice educators for the realities of integrating into a school culture.

This study was a first attempt to examine preservice and in-service music teacher perspectives of field-teaching activities longitudinally. The present investigation illuminates some of the myriad benefits associated with three types of fieldwork, the ways these experiences may complement each other in a comprehensive music teacher preparation program, and how the skills derived from these experiences may transfer to the first year of teaching. This information may prove valuable for music educators in higher education who wish to reflect on the effectiveness of programs and to make informed decisions about best practices in music teacher preparation.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Supplemental Material

The Appendices are available in the online version of the article at https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429417730043.

Notes

1. All participants are represented by pseudonyms.
2. The students do engage in other more limited fieldwork experiences as part of the junior year choral and instrumental methods courses (taught during the research period by me and my instrumental music education colleague, respectively), but these cocurricular teaching episodes involved an entire class of undergraduates working with a single ensemble for a shorter period of time (for example, students take turns leading 5-min warm-ups or 10-min rehearsal segments each week, interacting with the ensemble three or four times across the semester). Because these experiences did not allow for individual students to engage with the same group(s) of students every week across the semester, they were not considered fieldwork as defined in this study.
3. This total includes compiled data from all three phases of data collection.

4. Creswell (2007) advises using at least two of the eight strategies.
5. I taught the classes associated with the service-learning project and elementary teaching practicum. I did not supervise the student teaching experiences of any of the participants.
6. An individualized education program, or IEP, is a document created for public school students in the United States who are eligible for special education services. IEPs are mandated by the Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and provide educators with specific information regarding the student's disability as well as any required accommodations and modifications. Section 504 is a federal law that protects individuals with disabilities who participate in programs receiving federal funding from the U.S. Department of Education. Under Section 504, students with disabilities must be provided a free and appropriate education, and 504 plans are created to assist schools in achieving this goal.

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Submitted April 1, 2016; accepted September 21, 2016.