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EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY MUSIC
EDUCATION

By
COLETTE STEFANIAK

A RESEARCH PAPER

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Music Education in the School of Music
of the College of Music and Performing Arts
Belmont University

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Submitted by Colette Stefaniak in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Music in Music Education.

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Introduction

Initial Impacts of the Pandemic

The unprecedented 2020 outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic forced many schools, businesses, and entertainment venues to drastically change or halt their normal routines through various degrees of lockdowns and quarantine procedures. Statistics show that “60% of schools canceled in person classes, jeopardizing the education of over a billion students throughout the world” (Barbosa 2020). This included hundreds of thousands of students in school music programs. Children no longer participated in group music instruction, ensembles stopped in-person rehearsals, and music educators were forced to “provide meaningful instruction in a subject that typically depends on students interacting throughout the learning process” (Hash 2021). Prior to 2020, music departments worldwide were already experiencing decreased levels of funding and participation, so with the COVID-19 virus accompanying the strains of budget cuts and perceived online instruction difficulties of music education, music programs were often the first to be considered for some measure of downsizing when schools made initial emergency changes (Barusch 2020). Some schools may have chosen to suspend extracurricular or fine arts classes because they were unfamiliar with how to implement them online or did not have the technologically trained staff they needed to make a successful transition (Biasutti, Philippe, and Schiavio 2022). Music teachers who were fortunate enough to keep their positions during the shutdown experienced “widespread

depression and anxiety” from the strains of switching to remote learning (Parkes, Russell, Baur, and Miksza 2021). Consequently, many teachers chose to leave their profession during 2020 and 2021 (Zamarro et al. 2022). Music education as everyone had known it would take up to two years to reach some kind of normalcy again, and many programs are still working through significant changes in their participation numbers and curriculums.

Technology and Remote Learning

The initial focus of educators during the first month of the shutdown was transitioning classes to some type of online platform. Due to the lack of experience many teachers had with using technology as their sole method of teaching, Phillip Hash suggested that the first “6 months of remote learning in Spring 2020 was ‘emergency teaching’ rather than online distance learning” (Hash 2021). This meant that teachers were more concerned with making their content available to students without losing too much education time rather than being concerned with students’ overall experience with the content. By the time educators felt more comfortable with online learning, students and school programs were already drastically behind their normal teaching schedules. Platforms like Zoom, Google Classroom, and Google Meet became standard learning environments for elementary, secondary, and college students. While online platforms made educational materials more available under social distancing circumstances, it was difficult for students’ individual needs to be met with any level of consistency. Schoolwork needed to be blended with individual family needs, the amount of space they had available, and each student’s network connectivity (Reimers 2021). One study shows that students in low-income (or more rural) schools lost as much as twenty-two weeks of instruction when classes went fully online, while students from high-income schools

averaged a thirteen-week loss, due to available technology resources (Schwartz 2022). Music presented a unique challenge because of the materials and sound needed to teach that subject. Not every student had the necessary instruments or recording and sound quality on their devices to fully participate in online music learning. The utilization of technology during the pandemic for both elementary and secondary music and how it has changed our current music teaching methods will be discussed in further detail later in this thesis.

Elementary Music During Lockdown

In 2021, only thirty-two states considered the arts a core subject in their public elementary schools, with some states having “fewer than 10% of elementary school students receiving music instruction from certified specialists” (Shaw 2021). In the K-5 schools that did offer music as a core subject, class instruction decreased dramatically or was stopped altogether at the onset of the pandemic. For early childhood education, music standards are based on experiences such as playing instruments, moving, singing, and interacting with other students (Virginia Department of Education 2015). The “shift to remote learning” meant “a complete re-thinking of the delivery of early years programs” because teachers could no longer facilitate exactly how they wanted their students to experience music (Timmons et al. 2021). Online elementary music became more about “listening lessons, theoretical content, and watching videos,” which meant that music was then “completely devoid of the human interaction students crave when engaging in music-making” (Moniz 2022). There was also the issue of young students not “having the skills or experience required to navigate technology independently” (Timmons et al. 2021). Trying to clearly explain which buttons to press or how to navigate the computer screen without physically showing students took up precious time

during already-shortened lessons. Due to the amount of effort it took to help young students successfully navigate their remote learning platforms, subjects like math, reading, or writing were the priority and subjects like art or music were put on the backburner to allow for more time focused on core subjects. In summary, the 2020-2021 remote year of education translated into nearly a full year off from group music instruction for elementary students. Despite the unfortunate and often frustrating circumstances of 2020 virtual learning, it is possible that the gap year may have caused many educators to look at their current curriculums and edit them to better fit the needs of their students, both physically and emotionally.

Secondary Music During Lockdown

For the purpose of this research, secondary education will include grades 6-12, and will focus on general and instrumental education such as band, orchestra, and private lessons, as that pertains to my current teaching position as the author of this research. Secondary music programs were in no less danger of coming to a halt or drastic change in procedures during the 2020-2021 shutdown than they may have been the previous year. In 2020, most performing events and competitions were canceled, taking away most students' motivation to participate in their instrumental programs. There were, however, additional methods for these programs to maintain some level of structure during this period of remote learning. Private lessons could be completed on platforms like Zoom or Google Meet and group ensembles could play their pieces if students were able to record their parts individually. There were two main categories of disciplines that were affected during the transition to remote learning: theoretical lessons and performance lessons/applied skills (Ruscanda, Belibou, and Cazan 2021). Theoretical lessons would include subjects like general music, music history, or music theory and were easier to

transfer online. Performance-based classes were more difficult to maintain online because, similar to elementary music education, students lost “features of dynamicity, expressivity, and interactivity” which are crucial to performance-based music making (Ruscanda, Belibou, and Cazan 2021). Attempting to teach performance-based classes like orchestra, band, or private lessons online also presented issues with network connectivity. In a distance-learning study done by Yalcin Yildiz, Hakan Bağcı, and Ece Karsal, it was found that 55.7% of the subjects expressed that the most intense problem they experienced was a significant reduction of sound quality (Yildiz, Bagci, and Karsal 2021). Teachers faced the issue of trying to make virtual lessons as meaningful as possible despite not being able to hear sound as clearly. When performance-based classes did meet in person for rehearsals, the most common restrictions were increased distance, (three to six feet apart depending on the school), the use of bell covers, outdoor rehearsals, and shorter indoor rehearsals. Masks were also a requirement for any non-wind player (Fink et al. 2021). This unfortunately meant less productive rehearsals overall, and many instrumental programs are still trying to reconstruct participation figures and student playing skills after losing a year or more of normal practice. Some methods of technology usage in secondary music classrooms have stayed in music programs post-pandemic, but instrumental programs still face issues with rebuilding their numbers, morale, and skill sets, all of which will be discussed later in this thesis.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this thesis will be to provide analysis of available literature regarding music education during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as lasting effects it had on both elementary and secondary music education programs. This research will

provide an overall snapshot view of how music curriculums and standards have changed, technology uses and their place in a post-pandemic environment, and challenges that are still being addressed while music educators are in their rebuilding period. As a K-12 music teacher, I believe this research will benefit my own program as I seek to edit my curriculum to fit my students' needs in our changing society.

Chapter I

Elementary Literature Review

Elementary Music During Remote Learning

Since the coronavirus pandemic is still a recent event, there is a scarcity in available literature on full effects of the pandemic on music education. This chapter, and

chapter three, will be summaries of literature that are available now regarding the pandemic's short-term effects in music classrooms. Studies and conclusions regarding long-term effects of the pandemic in music classrooms may take several more years.

By April 2020, 199 countries had school closures in place, affecting over one billion students worldwide (World Food Program 2020). This meant that millions of K-5 students who had been used to hands-on learning and social experiences at school were now learning from behind a computer screen in isolated conditions at home. This was an incredibly difficult environment to which teachers had to adapt. Researchers Madalina Ruscanda, Alexandra Belibou, and Ana-Maria Cazan concluded that “even in the case of students with advanced technical skills, physical interaction is necessary for [children's] progress” (Ruscanda, Belibou, and Cazan 2021). Elementary teachers had also lost some of their academic authority over their young students. Variables such as parental supervision and oversight during remote instruction were hard to account for, and many students were “unaccounted for academically and could not be held accountable for their learning” (Moniz 2022). The sheer number of students an elementary music teacher might be responsible for (I personally teach over two hundred and fifty students every week) also makes keeping track of individual progress through an online platform a daunting task. While secondary students were generally more self-sufficient with independent homework, elementary students required more support and hands-on guidance from their parents and teachers (Vogelbacher and Attig 2021). Music was no

exception, and many parents were ill-equipped to help their children learn music the way they had been accustomed to in a classroom setting.

The interruption in elementary students' fine arts classes was perhaps more detrimental to them than it was to older students since it happened during a crucial time in their creative development. Most music educators would agree that the act of "doing music," especially at a young age, requires hands-on learning. The pandemic "interrupted music instruction for many elementary schoolers at a critical moment – in the years when their brains are just starting to make 'sound to meaning' connections" (Diamond 2022). Keeping children engaged over a computer screen when they need physical interaction became my main challenge, as it did with thousands of other music educators. Music teachers often felt "forgotten and left out" of their districts, since elementary music was deemed less important than other subjects, which added to a level of growing anxiety (Burns 2021). With music not being considered a core subject for many schools, a study in the UK showed that 68% of elementary schools had reduced their music instruction and 72% of elementary schools had halted their extracurricular programs altogether (Incorporated Society of Musicians, 2020). Based on these findings and the difficulties associated with trying to keep students musically engaged on a computer screen, it is safe to assume that most young students had a significant reduction of general music education during the 2020 covid shutdown.

For schools that did keep general music as part of their curriculum during remote learning, educators had to think of creative ways to adhere to their scope and sequences while keeping students engaged through online platforms. This need created a surge of online resources from teachers posting their ideas and solutions to YouTube, Teachers Pay Teachers, TikTok, and other similar platforms. Despite the unfortunate

circumstances, this consequential environment where teachers shared their ideas and lesson plans online with others helped to create a sense of unity and friendship among music teachers around the world, something that might not have otherwise happened under normal circumstances (Kibici and Sarikaya 2021). Online learning also meant a need for “higher discipline and planning” from educators (Kibici and Sarikaya 2021). Careful research had to be done before each lesson for small things like simple warm-up activities that would work over an online platform, whereas a teacher might have previously been able to use available room supplies (instruments, scarves, toys, etc.) to improvise different warm-ups in day-to-day learning. Despite the outpouring of online resources and engaging videos, young students still struggled to successfully engage in their online music classes. In student interviews, David Moniz found that many of them said that they “disliked sitting and listening the entire class” because music class is where they expect to “sing, dance, move, and play” (Moniz 2022). Students often form lasting opinions based on their experiences at young ages, so for students who may have been taking music for their first time (kindergarten or first grade), negative experiences associated with the subject may pose problems for their future attitudes about music class.

Restrictions for 2020-2021 In-Person Learning

Once schools started to open back up, strict distancing procedures were put into place to help manage the spread of the virus, and many fine arts teachers had to make changes to how they taught their subject in person. These procedures and the transitional period between remote and in-person learning meant “fewer overall learning opportunities for students” as administrations tried to accommodate new protocols (Moniz 2022). Many music teachers had to travel to classrooms with their music

materials on a cart so students could stay in their assigned, distanced spots in their own classrooms. Administrators hoped that this would help reduce exposure to the virus. One study done by Karen Koner, Jennifer Gee, and Brianne Borden discussed one elementary music teacher having to “travel to thirty-eight different classes with thirty-eight various technology and sound systems, not knowing if the SmartBoards would be working when she arrived to teach her class” (Koner, Gee, and Borden 2022). These experiences brought on high levels of stress for music educators trying to plan their day around travel-time and music lessons based on what they could fit on their supply cart and the technology they had available in each classroom. I personally remember dragging boxes containing dozens of ukuleles to each of my fifth-grade music classes every day, and then wiping each of them down after every class. Recorders could not be used because of the potential for the virus to spread through air particles caused by blowing into an instrument. Procedures like these, while beneficial to the students’ safety from the COVID virus, slowed down my overall class flow. My fourth-grade classes missed out on the piano portion of their music curriculum, where they would learn about chords and lead sheets, because I was unable to carry twenty keyboards from class to class. By staying in their classrooms for specials classes, students also missed out on opportunities for variety in their day by traveling from class to class.

Elementary Instrumental Programs

Elementary instrumental programs were challenged to maintain student recruitment and retention from 2020-2021 and overall participation dropped in elementary instrumental programs during 2020. One study of thirty-one elementary band directors showed that first year bands (primarily fourth and fifth graders) saw a drop of about 42% in their enrollment (Weller 2021). The initial shutdown happened so abruptly

that some teachers and students were unable to retrieve personal belongings that had been left in classrooms. This included instruments that had been left in school band and orchestra rooms, creating a large gap between students who had their instruments at home and students who had to “watch from the sidelines as their peers tried to keep time with each other over Google Meet” (Diamond 2022). This divide presented further challenges for an academic subject that is supposed to build unity amongst learners, especially at a socially critical time in their young lives.

As mentioned earlier, studies have also shown that family income played a large role in students’ access to materials such as instruments, significantly widening the gap between students. Directors in “higher poverty” schools had “significantly greater challenges with parental support and student access to instruments and other materials” (Hash 2021). With unemployment rates rising from 3.5 percent in February of 2020 to 4.9 percent by October that same year, many families were unable to spare the income to rent or buy supplies for extracurricular activities like music (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 2022). Those that had financial access to renting or purchasing instruments or online private lessons during the pandemic were able to keep up with their music skills whereas those who did not have financial means for instruments or lessons outside of the school system were unable to practice for almost a year. Similarly, one study showed that “teachers working at private schools had significantly higher online learning readiness than their colleagues working at state schools” (Kibici and Sarikaya 2021). Schools that had more funding had more advanced technology (or the means to send students home with tablets or Google Chromebooks) as well as a larger percentage of staff members who were able to utilize the resources. Since the pandemic has caused an increase of technology use in classrooms worldwide, the income divide will inevitably become even

more apparent, favoring the families and schools that have financial access to the latest technology and potentially further isolating students that do not have the same privileges. (Katzman and Stanton 2020) Long-term effects from the financial divide within music education remote learning may take several years to become evident.

Due to the challenges of making access to music equal for everyone online (instruments, music, internet connection, etc.), many schools decided to make instrumental classes like band or orchestra optional, especially at the elementary level (Hash 2021). The goal of this policy was also to allow students to focus more on core subjects like math, science, or reading. This unfortunately resulted in many students, especially K-5, “disengaging” from their music classes (Hash 2021). In my experience, I had also found that many parents felt that music was simply not worth the effort for their children amidst the other struggles they faced through remote learning and staying at home. Private lessons via Zoom, Google Meet, or FaceTime allowed many students to continue their progress on their instruments and were usually easier to manage than group ensemble classes. Virtual private lessons will be discussed in further detail in the secondary education portion of this thesis.

Lasting Effects of the Pandemic on Elementary Music Programs

While most music educators, parents, and students would agree that the pandemic created more problems for music programs than it solved, there were still some positive outcomes of the pandemic that deserve some discussion. One positive outcome has been the outpouring of online teaching sources that are still being published and uploaded post-pandemic. Many online music lessons designed for students at home during the shutdown have also proven to be very effective (and more engaging) in a classroom setting. For example, a YouTube channel titled “Mr. Boom Boom’s Music Room” was

created in 2020 with the goal of creating music lessons for young students to watch and participate in at home. Even though schools have been operating under normal procedures for at least a year now, the channel is still producing new videos because many teachers (myself included) have found that their students love watching and participating with the video activities in class along with their peers. Channels like this one have given teachers additional ways to utilize classroom technology in an engaging way in their classroom while also giving students a variety of outlets to learn music. There have also been several digital-based learning applications specifically designed for music education that have become more popular in the last three years such as Chrome Music Lab, Scratch Music, Groove Pizza, earSketch, and others (Ozer and Demirbatir 2023). These applications were useful during the pandemic for at-home learning but now also help students to creatively develop necessary computational skills in an ever-increasing technological-based educational system.

Teachers are also able to adapt more successfully to technology and online learning in the post-pandemic learning environment. A teacher's ability to remain flexible is essential for music education to continue moving forward (Joy 2021). Phillip Hash said that "the success of remote learning in the future will depend on music educators developing plans, creating materials, building an infrastructure, and preparing students for online and offline instruction" (Hash 2021). I believe that a year of online instruction has given teachers the time and practice necessary to teach remotely more successfully. Planning for online lessons has become more of a normal procedure for many educators, and the surplus of online materials available now will make any potential transitions to online learning in the future more manageable. One educator commented that "adapting to online teaching revealed gaps in [his] technological pedagogical knowledge that [he]

had not expected” (Lewis and Maas 2022). While this may have seemed like a disadvantage at first, the pandemic has forced educators to review their current teaching methods and improve on them to adapt to an increasingly technology-oriented educational environment. In my classroom, I now have a plethora of videos and online games to incorporate into my normal lesson plans that I would not have had pre-pandemic.

One of the negative impacts of the pandemic on elementary students that could have a lasting effect on musical skills is reading and math fluency. While definitive research is not yet available for the correlation of post-pandemic reading and math fluency related to development of skills in the arts, some predictions can be made. It comes to no surprise to educators that elementary students saw a drop in their reading and math scores after the pandemic shutdown. One study tested over 450,000 fourth and eighth graders across the United States and found that over 60% of fourth graders were “basic and below” average math and reading scores, which was a significant increase from previous years (Mervosh and Wu 2022). Students who are testing below average in math may also struggle to read music or notate rhythms, since many studies have shown the two subjects to be “positively associated” (Vaughn 2000). Similarly, studies done where math and music were integrated showed “significant gains in numeracy achievement” (McDonel 2015). In research done by Anja Brezovnik, results of a study done with two thousand students on math, science, and language scores showed that students who participated in arts curriculum at primary levels showed greater creativity, expression, problem solving, and perception (Brezovnik 2015). If the arts and other core subjects are interrelated to a child’s overall academic development, then the lack of arts education during the pandemic shutdown may have affected other areas of students’

learning. Will elementary students' drop in math or reading performance during the pandemic year affect their performance in music, and vice versa? This question may take a longer period to reveal an answer and to see quantifiably accurate results.

Handwriting skills may also influence young students' ability to notate music. A national survey done by Schofield and Sims in the UK showed that 83% of teachers saw a negative impact on their students' handwriting abilities after the pandemic shutdown, since almost all coursework was done online via computers or tablets from spring through the fall of 2020 (Schofield and Sims 2021). Many schools are still using computers and tablets in their daily lessons, which means students may not be developing their fine motor skills through handwriting as much as they might have in the years before the pandemic. Many general music lessons involve students notating music and rhythms or writing reflections on music they have listening to in class, so once again, there is potential here for a correlation between the loss of handwriting skills and music notation for young students. I have also found that several of my private piano students seem to enjoy piano applications on their tablets more than the effort it takes to play an upright piano. Older students tend to gravitate towards the quick YouTube tutorials rather than learn with a private teacher. With the increase of technology use in classrooms, educators need to be aware of students becoming too interested in the virtual world and therefore developing an apathetic attitude towards physical learning.

The next several years will bring to light many of the potential effects the pandemic may have had on young students' overall music development. Overall, many elementary music teachers, while frustrated with the lost time with their music students, saw the pandemic as a time to "expand and reflect on their pedagogy" (Hall 2022). Adapting lesson plans to the pandemic environment helped teachers to "come out of their

stuckness and into a space of possibilities that required deep and intentional critique” (Lewis and Maas 2022). Educators listened more to what students wanted out of music class and incorporated more culturally diverse lesson plans to unify students of all backgrounds. These changes will hopefully create a more well-rounded K-12 music education for years to come.

Chapter II

Secondary Literature Review

Secondary Music During Remote Learning

For the purposes of this thesis, secondary music will refer to instrumental instruction (band, orchestra, or private lessons) and general music courses such as music appreciation. Like elementary music, secondary music classes went fully online (or came to a halt) during the spring 2020 shutdown. Music classes were conducted either synchronously or asynchronously. Synchronous learning “encompasses real-time actions and the simultaneous interaction of participants during a musical performance,” group class, or private lesson (Biasutti, Philippe, and Schiavio 2022). This would include lessons and meetings that involve some form of video calling like FaceTime, Zoom, or Google Meet so teachers and students can communicate with instant feedback. Asynchronous learning allows the student to complete their work in their own time with “pre-recorded videos or game-based learning tasks” (Glossary of Education Reform n.d.). Most music classes were conducted synchronously since they relied so much on the

teacher-student relationship, especially when it came to instruction on instruments. Synchronous learning also allows teachers to be more involved with their students, rather than having them attempt to complete a lesson on their own without immediate guidance.

There were three main secondary learning contexts used in music that were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic: individual, group, and theoretical learning. Theoretical learning refers to general music courses like music theory, history, or literature; individual learning refers to private lessons; and group learning encompasses all ensemble groups. Theoretical learning was deemed the simplest form of education to transition to online, and individual and group learning were more difficult for both educators and students to make the adjustment (Ruscanda, Belibou, and Cazan 2021). While theoretical learning was easier to make an online transition, many teachers would agree that the overall quality of learning suffered. One teacher remarked that he had no way to determine how his students reacted to the content he was teaching over zoom since he could not always see everyone's screens, and therefore missed opportunities to help students who may have needed more help (Lewis and Maas 2021). Theoretical learning such as music theory or history is more common in collegiate education, but many elementary and secondary teachers used these subjects instead of their usual in-person education from 2020-2021. Attempting to make theory or history engaging and meaningful for young learners using only a computer screen was a difficult and time-consuming task for teachers. Methods such as screen-sharing were helpful but did not fully solve the problem.

In-person rehearsals for instrumental groups were not allowed in most schools and institutions from March to August 2020, so many band and orchestra directors attempted to make virtual accommodations in order to rehearse. These accommodations may have included virtual lessons or collecting recorded individual orchestra or band parts from each student and compiling them together in an “ensemble” recording (the influence of which will be discussed in further detail later in this thesis). Some schools used hybrid learning to maintain in-person rehearsals. Hybrid learning “combines face-to-face classroom instruction with online activities which reduces the amount of seat time in a traditional classroom setting” (Pennsylvania State University). Rehearsals were usually held outside and for only thirty minutes at a time to limit students’ potential contact with the coronavirus. Practicing at home for many students proved to be difficult due to space, access to instrument materials, or individual family needs and attitudes. One study done by Gülnihal GÜL showed that some students did not feel comfortable practicing at home due to their parents’ negative attitudes towards the noise (GÜL 2021). My band and string students expressed that they felt self-conscious practicing their instruments when they could be heard by their siblings, parents, or even neighbors and therefore did not practice with confident projection or repetition. Teachers were not able to regulate desired parent-involvement or support from an online setting.

Regularly scheduled performances and competitions were cancelled across the world, including soloist events like the MTSBOA Solo and Ensemble (mtsboa.org n.d.). These events function as milestones for many students, a tangible point to which students can see the result of their hard work in rehearsals or the practice room. These canceled events meant students did not have their normal performance goals to practice. This lack of motivation presumably affected many students’ desires to put forth effort in practicing

their instrument. Teachers who had been preparing with their students for any number of Music Performance Assessments faced a great deal of loss and grief when they had to tell their students there would be no more band, orchestra, or chorus for the rest of the year (Burns 2021). When competition and performing events resumed the following year, there was still a fear of the unknown amongst many students and educators. In the ensembles I direct, many students expressed a lack of motivation to practice their performance music because the possibility of our concerts being canceled due to coronavirus exposure was still high. They had also become accustomed to a smaller amount of practice due to less performances and competitions, and it was difficult for them to dive back into their normal practice routines post-covid.

Virtual Private Lessons

Due to private lessons being a large contributing factor for students deciding to continue learning their instrument, most teachers switched to online platforms rather than postpone lessons during the COVID-19 lockdown (Lierse 2005). Virtual private lessons still provided a one-on-one, student-teacher relationship, but had several implications that made them less than ideal compared to in-person lessons. The biggest issue by far with the virtual process was network connectivity and audio. Some of these implications included “video delay, impersonal dynamics, limited visual controls, and restrained movement and sound control” (Biasutti, Philippe, and Schiavio 2022). The ability to hear sound is a crucial element in music education, especially in an ensemble or private lesson setting, but the inconsistency of internet connections on video platforms makes it difficult for sound to always come through. In the distance-learning study done by Yalcin Yildiz, Hakan Bağcı, and Ece Karsal, it was found that 55.7% of the subjects expressed that the most intense problem they experienced was not being able to hear sound quality (Yildiz,

Bagci, and Karsal 2021). Teachers faced the issue of trying to make virtual lessons as meaningful as possible despite not being able to hear sound as clearly. As mentioned earlier, it was also difficult to rely on each student's internet connection, financial means to have an instrument at home (especially larger instruments such as pianos or drums), and availability to practice. In some cases, I had to end private lessons early due to the connection being too poor, which left both my student and I feeling helpless and frustrated. Even with successful internet connections, several teaching elements like "correcting a student's posture via touch . . . and modeling by demonstrating sound, rhythm, and phrasing" are more difficult or completely impossible in virtual teaching environments, devaluing the benefits of virtual private lessons (Biasutti, Philippe, and Schiavio 2022).

Some aspects of virtual lessons have brought positive, impactful changes to both in-person and online lessons moving forward. Teachers had to compensate for some activities in lessons they could no longer participate in, like playing duets with their students, accompanying them, or demonstrating. This led to students being assigned several tasks such as "finding videos of well-known performers, listening to other performer's interpretations, and making a video of one's own performance (Biasutti, Philippe and Schiavio 2022). This forced students to look further outward in their musical education rather than just focus on what happened in their individual lessons. Students learned how to analyze and reflect on multiple performers' interpretations of pieces on a weekly basis, a habit that has hopefully stayed with them now that their normal in-person lesson routine is back.

Teachers also had to adjust their delivery of content in a virtual lesson setting. With limited time, audio, and resources, learning how to be clear and concise was crucial.

After interviewing fifteen music educators about their private lesson experience, Leon R. de Bruin of Melbourne Conservatorium of Music concluded the following:

Adaptive questioning realized additional changes to teachers' pedagogical practices. The teachers slowed down the pace of delivery as teachers realized the benefits of spending more time enquiring about student learning rather than quickly assuming it and moving on. This allowed time for students to be more purposeful in their language and to articulate their reasoning and thinking behind their answers. (Bruin 2021)

The increased use of adaptive questioning created a conversation-lead lesson environment rather than an environment where the teacher does the majority of the speaking. During the pandemic, I maintained approximately twenty online music students. Spending more time allowing students to reflect on the lesson content and asking more direct questions is a technique that I have kept in my lesson structure post-pandemic and gives me more insight into what my students are understanding.

Virtual private lessons also provide a level of convenience that may have been overlooked pre-pandemic. While the lessons are less ideal than physical interaction, they allow the student to maintain their educational routine if something hinders them from being at their lesson physically, like weather-related school closures, quarantining, or scheduling conflicts. They also allow more flexibility with scheduling since teachers and students can participate in virtual lessons almost anywhere, including their own homes. While in-person lessons are generally more ideal, virtual lessons provide opportunities for students to learn an instrument with a private teacher they might not have regular access to outside of a virtual context.

Effects of Pandemic on Instrumental Ensembles

To better understand how drastic post-pandemic changes were to instrumental ensembles, it is useful to recall band and orchestra classrooms before the pandemic.

Students sat close together, and two students—or stand partners—often shared one music stand. Sharing of instrument equipment such as rosin, cleaning cloths, oil, or even the instruments themselves was normal. Band and orchestra classes were often the largest group a student sat in during the day with some groups having as many as fifty or sixty musicians in them, ranging from sixth to twelfth grade. Ensemble classrooms were places students could have lunch or spend time in before and after school with their peers, which helped to solidify many students' relationships with each other and the rest of the music department, creating a family-like environment. When schools closed for COVID-19, music students lost a unique part of their musical and social routine almost instantly.

When instrumental groups were finally allowed to rehearse in person again, several safety precautions were put in place to prevent the spread of the virus. These precautions included “masking, increased distancing, improved ventilation, bell covers, outdoors when possible, and shorter indoor rehearsal periods” (Fink and Ogale 2021). The Center for Disease Control required members in a group setting to be six feet apart, which meant that many large ensembles would not all be able to fit in the same room (cdc.gov 2020). Students were not allowed to share instruments, stands, or sheet music, and all equipment had to be sanitized after each rehearsal (National Association for Music Education 2020). This process was often tedious and cut into necessary rehearsal time. Due to aerosol emissions, wind instruments and singers had to make the most adjustments to their playing, often needing masks, bell covers, and glass or plastic barriers around them (Weaver 2020). In my ensemble, students often had a hard time understanding my instructions due to my mask muffling my words and preventing students from seeing my facial expressions. I often found myself getting frustrated after needing to repeat myself multiple times. The guidelines made it difficult for students to

stay motivated enough to continue playing their instruments, as many felt that the amount of work being put in for CDC guidelines was not worth the effort of playing an instrument, especially when there were not any concerts, competitions, or festivals in the near future.

The pandemic also left many ensembles with large “morale” problems, whose members, when forced not to meet in person, suffered a “widespread mood of defeat” (Burns 2021). There have been several studies that have shown an “increase in fear, anxiety, depression, and loneliness during the social distancing period” (Ziv and Hollander-Shabtai 2022). Music students found it difficult to “find ways to negotiate musical learning, feel ownership over their learning, and navigate social activities” in a COVID-19 classroom setting (Nickel 2021). Regarding elementary education in this paper, a child’s Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is an “integral part of education and human development.” Social Emotional Learning can be defined as “the process through which all young people...acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, and achieve personal and collective goals” (CASEL 2020). This process in a music classroom “directly supports creativity and achievement” and due to the amount of time a student spends with their music teacher, they often go to them for emotional support (Burns 2021). Without in-person rehearsals and class time, middle and high school students lost a key part of their relationship with their music teachers, who had less time to be emotionally supportive for them. There was little to no way for teachers to “engage their students individually” in an online setting (Lewis and Maas 2021). Even when schools returned to normal procedures, masks made it difficult for teachers to make important face-to-face connections with their students,

especially new students. This may have affected students' overall attitudes towards their music teachers once in-person learning resumed.

Emotional Health of Secondary Students

The shutdown of 2020 caused an increase of anxiety, depression, and apathy amongst middle and high school students, especially those already struggling with various mental health problems. Keeping a steady routine is often a helpful coping mechanism for students struggling with mental health, so the disruption in daily school routines during the shutdown caused an increase in anxiety and stress for students who relied on predictable schedules (Lee 2020). In 2021, the Centers for Disease Control created the Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey to conduct research on high school students' health and behaviors during COVID-19. (cdc.gov, 2020) According to the results of the survey, approximately one in three students experienced poor mental health to some degree during the pandemic. About 44% expressed that their sadness or anxiety took away their desire to do normal, everyday activities. For musicians, this might have included practicing instruments, which would lead to a drop in performance scores the following year.

Once coronavirus cases decreased, and pandemic restrictions lifted, teachers and students still faced many emotional hardships in the classroom, from fearfulness to apathy. Feelings of anxiety or depression can have a direct influence on a musician's desire to practice or do other coursework. Ensembles also provide a natural outlet for many musicians to express themselves in a social context and can help with multiple coping strategies (Ziv and Hollander-Shabtai 2022). The absence of group rehearsals and

performances left many musicians feeling isolated and disconnected, which took time to heal from once in-person rehearsals resumed. However, the spike in mental health issues during 2020 has led to an increased awareness of student and teacher mental health, which will hopefully lead to improved musical environments and curriculums moving forward.

Virtual Ensembles

At the onset of the pandemic, many ensemble directors believed communal playing, no matter what format, was extremely important for students' overall wellbeing, which led to the popularization of virtual ensembles (Galván and Clauhs 2020). The creation of virtual ensembles began in 2010, with Eric Whitacre's virtual choir performing *Lux Aurumque*. The video received over one million hits in the first two months of being posted and has become inspiration for hundreds of ensemble directors since (Whitacre 2010). When ensemble rehearsals had to adjust to remote learning, ensemble directors had no choice but to attempt the virtual ensemble method if they wanted to keep their students playing pieces as a group. Virtual ensembles "allowed for asynchronous collaboration and flexibility with unlimited potential performers" (Galván and Clauhs 2020).

To achieve a virtual ensemble video, directors assign students individual parts (as they would for an in-person piece) and give students a click track to play along with or assign a specific metronome marking (Parsons 2020). Students then record themselves playing their parts with accurate notes, tempo, and dynamics, and submit the video to their instructor. The instructor then compiles the videos together using video editing software, giving each student's video a section on the screen so the entire ensemble can be seen at the same time. Students are then able to watch themselves perform with other

members of their ensemble. While this may not be as exciting as performing live, virtual ensembles give students musical goals to work towards as a group, keeping their collaborative relationship solidified despite not being in one room together. Now that rehearsals are back to normal post-covid routines, we will most likely see less of these virtual ensembles, but they have given directors and ensemble members the opportunity to perform music with other musicians from around the world from the comfort of their own homes. These collaborations will no doubt continue to be utilized moving forward.

Social Media in the Music Classroom

As mentioned earlier, the coronavirus pandemic created a spike in online community between music teachers on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok. Social media has not only been a useful tool for teachers but has also become a way for teachers to facilitate learning in a way that is familiar to pre-teens and teenagers. Utilizing social networks for learning during the pandemic helped to create online communities that encouraged student participation and reflection within their ensemble groups. For example, when using Google Classroom, a teacher can upload a video or audio clip and then “facilitate a discussion about what constructive feedback looks like, model it for students, and then have students contribute their own comments” (Albert 2015). During the pandemic, this became a standard way for students to still have class discussions and engage with one another, which helped to keep the feeling of community within the music department. Social media can also be useful for a student’s individual learning. In a pedagogy study focusing on virtual learning for violin and piano, participants noted social media helped them study various playing techniques, styles, and musical genres from multiple perspectives (Lei et al. 2021). Now that schools are in-

person, virtual platforms like online discussion boards or video uploads are still used to extend learning outside the normal school environment.

Of all available social media, video-sharing platforms and social networking sites are the most useful for teaching and sharing music (Lei et al. 2021). Social networking has been an immensely beneficial conduit for reaching millions of people on a variety of important subjects, including music education. In September 2020, the Save the Music Foundation partnered with TikTok and kicked off their new #MusicSaves initiative. The goal of the initiative was to raise awareness on the importance of music education and the “powerful social, emotional, and cultural benefits it provides” (Peralta 2020). The hashtag already has over one hundred million views on a variety of videos from educators, performers, and famous musicians. Initiatives like these help students to realize how much content is available online that benefits their musical knowledge or instrument playing and shows students that they are part of a unique community that expands across the entire world. The pandemic showed both educators and learners how impactful social media can be when used in the correct contexts, which means that moving forward, educators must continue to embrace and utilize social platforms to reach our students in a way that is relevant to them. Use of social media in the classroom should be left to each teacher’s or administration’s discretion and should be done with regards to social and emotional well-being of students.

Chapter III

Core Standards and Curriculum Changes

Music curriculums worldwide have gone through several stages of change over the past ten years to modernize what is being taught in the music classroom. Even with the push for change prior to 2020, the coronavirus pandemic exposed a need for curriculums to be more student-centered, both emotionally and culturally. It is still too soon to come to conclusions about specific content that will be added to standardized curriculums, but this chapter will highlight some of the areas of change that were a result of virtual learning and isolating conditions in schools.

Social Emotional Learning

One major area of curriculum that needed adjustments during the pandemic was SEL. Social Emotional Learning has been an important aspect of education for decades, focusing on a “student’s development through self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making” (Rosanbalm 2021). Social Emotional Learning revolves around a student’s relationship to others and the world around them. The National Association for Music Educators created the graphic shown in Figure 1 to give a simple understanding of how SEL functions in a learner’s life:

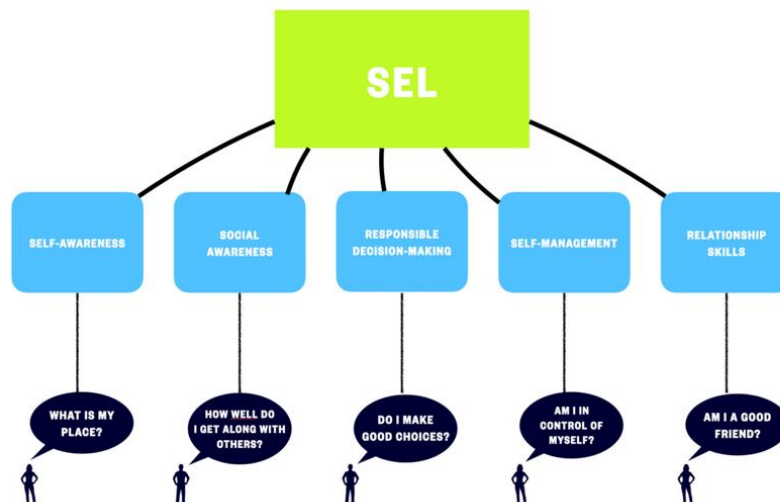


Figure 1. Anchor Standards for General Music 2020, 4

Music educators utilize the skills of SEL through rehearsals, collaborations, reflections on music and performances, discussions, and teaching self-discipline with practice (Edgar 2019). SEL, whether taught in music or other subjects, teaches students how to overcome challenges, manage stress, socially adapt to new environments, and become more perceptive of the world around them. For example, the act of achieving self-awareness in the music classroom might happen when “students can identify and articulate their frustrations when attempting to perform a challenging piece of music” (Moniz 2022). The impact of COVID-19 left students with new frustrations such as the removal of daily routines, social isolation, loss of health or loved ones, difficulty managing school virtually, and depression. This made the incorporation of SEL in virtual learning settings more important than ever (Rosanbalm 2021). Since there was not the usual time allotted for in-person group rehearsals, teachers engaged more with individual students through reflections and discussions. This gave students a platform to express how music made them feel, both positively and negatively, and have their feelings shared with other classmates thus facilitating discussions that might not otherwise have

happened in a fast-paced rehearsal setting. The inclusion of more SEL methods during the pandemic led to a greater incorporation of SEL in normal music classroom settings. In my own music classroom, I now have time set aside each class to allow students to share their thoughts, frustrations, or questions about the content we are learning, rather than just teach the content for the full class time. While this shortens the content of my lesson, I have found that students are more actively engaged and feel more confident to share and perform in front of one another.

Virtual Accommodations to Music Standards

While the COVID-19 pandemic created many problems for music educators, it forced them to look at our current curriculums and examine areas that needed improvement. Standards for music education were changed to accommodate in-person, hybrid, and virtual learning, which had not existed prior to 2020. The National Association for Music Education and other educational associations published new core standards with the goal of helping teachers rewrite their scope and sequences, as seen in Figure 2). Each anchor standard has an SEL (Social Emotional Learning) Bridge pertaining to in-person, hybrid, and virtual learning. These bridges ensure that educators are attempting to reach students emotionally rather than just teaching content.

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make music.			
CONNECTING	In-Person	Hybrid	Virtual
	With guidance as appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In groups of 2 or 3, students work together to create speech rhythms related to a given topic or song. These become rhythmic <i>ostinati</i> to be performed using body percussion and transferred to instruments. Social distancing and frequent cleaning of instruments will be employed. 	With guidance, as appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using materials suggested or provided by teacher (e.g., a personal music kit containing craft sticks, small shakers, laminated staff paper, etc.), students will participate in activities such as rhythmic/melodic dictation, composition, performance. Students predict events in an instrumental programmatic piece such as “In the Hall of the Mountain King” or a movie score, based on expressive elements. 	With guidance, as appropriate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The individual student will use materials found in the home to create/recreate/perform simple rhythmic and melodic patterns. The student will perform a new or familiar song that is introduced or reviewed by the music teacher. The student will perform rhythmic or solfège echo-patterns using Curwen hand signs and found objects.
	SEL Bridge: Students collaborate on composition project. Classmates and teacher give feedback.	SEL Bridge: Individual student creates/recreates/performs simple rhythmic and melodic patterns. Teacher feedback, student reflection.	SEL Bridge: Student explores materials in the home through the lens of musical relevance. Teacher feedback, student reflection.

Figure 2. Anchor Standards for General Music 2020, 5

Standards like these helped to unify what was being taught virtually while keeping as close as possible to original in-person standards. Like Figure 1, many curriculums or sample lessons include options for virtual or hybrid learning now. This will help music education continue to be more accessible and will also provide music educators with more preparation if there is ever a need to switch to emergency online learning again.

Cultural and Emotional Change in Music Curriculums

When music classes went online, many educators had to adjust their lessons to reach everyone at an individual level, particularly more vulnerable groups of students. These students included children in low-income or single parent families, ethnic minorities, immigrants, youth with differing sexual orientations, and those with special education needs (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2020). The need to make music relevant and accessible to all groups of learners surged during the 2020 isolated settings, and educators realized that for their students to succeed, teachers had to be “culturally literate” regarding their students’ backgrounds (Katzman and Stanton 2020). This would help learners to feel less isolated and able to relate to music on

a more personal level. With concerts, rehearsals, and other musical activities canceled during 2020, educators had the space to explore new methods and subjects of music education that might otherwise not have been explored under normal circumstances (Joy 2021). Since the pandemic, educators have realized the need to teach students in a way that benefits them both emotionally and culturally in their current life experiences. Teachers discussed the opportunity for more “empathetic and compassionate teaching approaches” to combat the “chaos” from virtual learning in 2020 (Lewis and Maas 2021). In his 2007 article discussing the need for change in music education, John Kratus said that “rather than develop curricula that complement the ways people actually experience music in their lives, teachers typically base their curricula on their own goals and the way they were taught” (Kratus 2007). Prior to the pandemic, many music curriculums for elementary, secondary, and even collegiate programs were often rooted in elements that were exclusionary of race, gender, and more traditional genres of music. Later in his article, Kratus suggests that the best way to improve music education is to “look at how music is actually used in the world, not the ways it exists in schools” (Kratus 2007). We must “move away from a ‘one size fits all’ curricula and move to include specific cultural education pertinent to the target audience” (Katzman and Stanton 2020).

While inclusivity in music education is still far from perfect, there has been a significant change in the past ten years, with an even larger surge for inclusion since 2020. Since the pandemic made it impossible to teach music the way it had been taught in schools previously, educators had no choice but to adapt to what was happening in the world around them in order to reach students as impactfully as possible. The events that took place in 2020 confirmed the need for education that was more diverse, inclusive, and culturally relevant to better serve the world in which we currently live (Joy 2021).

When considering content to teach in a music curriculum, one must first have an understanding of the groups of learners they are trying to reach. While there has been a push for more diversity in music education over the past ten years, many curriculums are still rooted in a Western view of music, with classical music being the most common form of musical experiences taught (McHale 2016). While it is important to understand Western music and the influence that classical music had on modern music, educators must continue to research and teach musical genres that are relatable and meaningful to the students they are teaching. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development discussed the importance of making sure vulnerable students felt welcome in their learning environment during online learning. For example, LGBTQ+ students may experience exclusion or even abuse at home and therefore need an outlet or a safe space to express themselves (Organization for Economic Co-operation 2023). This became even more evident during isolating conditions during the pandemic, but subjects like music-which have more freedom in their curriculum structure-were able to include subjects that related to that specific group of learners. Regarding gender inclusion in curriculums, Dr. Lori Schwartz Reichl encouraged educators to turn to their students and ask if *they* saw a representation of women in the music classroom. Honest feedback like this from students exposes potential gaps in content being taught and helps educators to continue to add inclusive material in their lesson plans. The utilization of more student-lead discussions and reflections during virtual learning showed educators the importance of student feedback for classroom content. Moving forward, “educators must listen to students’ candid responses, consider the thoughts shared, and employ strategies that reflect an inclusive curriculum representative of all learners and cultural differences” (Reichl 2022).

Chapter IV

Conclusions

Elementary Music

The 2020 pandemic interrupted music education for elementary students at a crucial point in their developmental learning. However, despite the interruption, there have been several positive results from the year of distance learning. The pandemic brought forth a plethora of new online resources such as videos, lesson plans, and games to aid in early music education, which can be used both at home and in the classroom. The outpouring of online content created a stronger bond between music teachers all over the world, and there are now hundreds of useful elementary music social media accounts for teachers to interact on. Teachers are more mindful about how their students interact and respond to music, since the pandemic emphasized a need for emotional empathy in education. Teachers are also better prepared for situations that require virtual or hybrid learning and have become more comfortable with various technological programs and tools. Virtual learning also forced music educators to be more creative with how they delivered their content to young learners. Many of the creative teaching methods developed during the pandemic are still being utilized in music classrooms today, which has helped to make the elementary music classroom more inclusive, diverse, and entertaining.

While several positive changes in elementary music emerged from the pandemic, there were also many negative effects from which it may take up to several more years to recover. During virtual learning, elementary teachers had to spend large amounts of class time helping their students navigate their computer screens, which meant there was less

time to teach musical content in each lesson. With the return to in-person learning, educators need to be mindful about young students becoming too attached to technology, which can lead to an apathetic attitude towards parts of musical learning that do not utilize technology. An overuse of technology may also affect basic fine motor skills that are useful for musical notation and instrument playing. Many elementary music programs were not seen as “essential” during the pandemic, so music programs all over the world experienced cuts in their funding, lack of support from school administration and the government, and having their class time cut to accommodate other subjects. Teachers worldwide experienced high levels of anxiety, stress, and even depression, which will take time to recover from and even drove some educators to quit or retire from their profession early. The loss of learning during the year of online schooling, the lack of support many elementary music teachers received, and the loss of teachers in the field has resulted in potentially weaker elementary music programs.

Secondary Music

Like elementary music, secondary music had to adjust to remote learning for music classes, but transitioning to online learning was easier for older students to navigate. Private lessons were able to continue virtually through video conferencing tools, and many teachers and students enjoyed the flexibility that virtual lessons provided. Virtual ensembles provided a creative way for students to perform with one another from their homes and gave many directors experience in video and sound editing, an increasingly important skill in the current era. Social media provided multiple outlets for musical content to be shared and was helpful for raising awareness on the importance of music education. The pandemic exposed the need of teaching music with more empathy and overall diversity in order to reach all learners at a relatable level. This included

asking students to share their opinions and feelings about the content being taught. Students were able to build meaningful relationships with one another through sharing and teachers gained more insight on more culturally diverse content they should include in their music curriculums.

Mental health was perhaps the most detrimental effect of the pandemic on secondary students. Due to unprecedented isolation, both students and teachers suffered anxiety, stress, and even depression. Without concerts, competitions, or festivals, many students lost important practice goals and therefore felt less enthusiastic to put forth effort on their instruments. This loss in morale was difficult to overcome once ensembles resumed in-person meetings and CDC guidelines for the fall of 2021 made it difficult to gain momentum from lost time. Lasting effects of the pandemic on secondary music classes may take several years to come to light.

Elementary and Secondary Music Curriculums

Thanks to the National Association of Music Education's new anchor standards, music educators have classroom and SEL standards for in-person, hybrid, and remote learning. These anchor standards provide goals for music teachers to work towards in their curriculum while staying flexible with their teaching setting. SEL methods have developed further over the past three years to accommodate students' emotional needs during the pandemic. Many music educators have taken a more student-centered approach to their curriculums, gearing their lessons towards the cultural and emotional needs of the students to make the lessons more relevant and meaningful. The content of most music curriculums has been largely based on a classical Western view of music, but the last several years have been a time of expansion into other countries and genres of music for a more inclusive experience for both teachers and students. Women, LGBTQ+,

African Americans, and other minorities have been given a more equalized role in music education, especially during and after the pandemic when teachers attempted to reach every cultural background of their students to prevent the feeling of isolation in music class. While the pandemic created an inconvenient teaching platform for music educators, it led to teachers being more emotionally and culturally aware of their students, thus creating more culturally and emotionally diverse content in elementary through collegiate level music courses.

Conclusion on Overall Effects of the Pandemic on Music Education

Based on the research of available literature for the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on elementary and secondary music, many of the lasting effects have been found to be largely positive. The pandemic has led to a greater understanding of technology in the music classroom, deeper interaction between music educators and students via social media, and exposed the need for more emotional and cultural awareness in music curriculums. While the pandemic created chaos and confusion in 2020, it reminded music educators “how much there is to learn and know about teaching” (Lewis and Maas 2022). Teachers learned the importance of adapting to circumstances beyond their control and have come out of this experience more knowledgeable and confident in their fields. The pandemic taught educators that our work to create an ideal teaching environment is never done. Learning how to successfully manage emotions, technology, and culturally diverse musical content is something we as educators will continue to improve on even as the pandemic moves further and further into the past, so music education can continue to impact the lives of future learners.

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