Extrinsic Motivators Affecting Fourth-Grade Students’ Interest and Enrollment in an Instrumental Music Program

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Abstract
The purpose of this study was to investigate fourth-grade students’ extrinsic motivators for joining and continuing in a school instrumental music program. Three research questions were investigated: (a) What extrinsic motivators have influenced fourth-grade students’ initial interest and continuing participation in an instrumental music program? (b) What are the musical backgrounds of these students? (c) What musical activities (in or out of school) are they involved in at the time of this study? Elementary instrumental music students (N = 6) were interviewed following Seidman’s three-interview series. Extrinsic motivators that influenced student decisions to join and continue in the instrumental music program were family, environment, social factors, and finances. Participants had varied musical backgrounds and their primary musical activity (in or out of school) at the time of the study was the instrumental music program. Study results indicate that participation in an instrumental music program may encourage students to become life-long musicians.

Keywords
elementary, enrollment, extrinsic, instrumental, intrinsic, motivation, music, qualitative, retention

Motivation is a topic pertinent to many areas of life and is valued because of the results it produces (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For teachers, understanding motivation has gained importance as pressure to produce results in the classroom has increased (Gabriel, 2010). As school arts programs face uncertain futures, music teachers are also feeling pressured to make music classes invaluable to schools (Winner & Hetland, 2007).

Motivation is inherent in human nature and is affected by social and contextual conditions (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination theory explores these conditions and helps determine factors that can enhance or diminish the two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic (Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 1997, as cited in Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is the desire to behave in a certain way, and extrinsic motivation is “the performance of an activity in order to attain some separable outcome” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 71).

To influence intrinsic motivation, cognitive evaluation theory (CET) suggests that one’s social environment affects three basic psychological needs: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Competence is how one views his or her ability for a task and can be positively influenced through the use of feedback, positive evaluation, and optimal challenges (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy is the concept that one’s actions are self-governed and can be enhanced through having choices, having one’s feelings acknowledged, and being given opportunities for self-direction. Relatedness is how connected and safe one feels and is optimized in a secure environment that promotes interconnectedness. When these three needs are fulfilled, intrinsic motivation is enhanced (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Extrinsic motivation has four stages that people can move through to become more intrinsically motivated. The first stage, “externally regulated,” is when activities are done to satisfy external demand. Second, “introjected regulation” is when a person is “taking in a regulation but not fully accepting it as one’s own” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 72). Third, “regulation through identification” is when a behavior or regulation becomes more valued and individually important to a person. Finally, “integrated regulation” is when an extrinsic value is transformed into one’s own value. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), “To integrate a regulation, people must grasp its meaning and synthesize that meaning with respect to their other goals and values” (p. 74). This is similar to being intrinsically motivated but reasons for doing an activity

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remain external, as it is done for other values rather than for inherent enjoyment.

Understanding the various stages of extrinsic motivation is valuable to people in leadership positions because this knowledge enables them to influence factors that affect behavior. For most, activities are not initially intrinsically interesting but begin as extrinsically motivating. People “are prompted, modeled, or valued by significant others to whom they feel (or want to feel) attached or related” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 73). Teachers can influence extrinsic motivation to a certain extent, and it is important that they guide students from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation to help students become independent learners and thinkers (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

**Review of Related Literature**

Existing literature on motivation and elementary instrumental music students focused on intrinsic motivation. McPherson and McCormick’s (1999) study suggested that instrumental music students who were more cognitively engaged while practicing had higher levels of intrinsic motivation for learning their instruments. This validated previous research; students who were more intrinsically motivated tended to be more cognitively engaged during learning, and therefore were also more likely to succeed (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990, as cited in McPherson & McCormick, 1999). Most of the research reviewed focused on the three basic psychological needs that enhance intrinsic motivation: competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In these studies, instrumental music students who credited success and failure to effort and ability had higher autonomy and competence (Asmus, 1985; Austin, 1988; Austin & Vispoel, 1992; McPherson & Gabrielson, 2002; Schmidt, 2005).

Research also explored reasons why students had an initial interest in instrumental music programs and what students thought about their future involvement. Abeles (2004) discovered that students who saw and heard an orchestra through an orchestra/school partnership showed higher interest in instrumental music than students from schools that were not partnered. Mitchum (2008) determined that students who had a personal love of music, perceived music as fun, and preferred the teacher were motivated to join an instrumental music program. Field trips and other social influences also motivated them to join. In Asmus’s (1986) study, student beliefs about what caused success or failure influenced future behavior. Students who attributed failure to strategies or effort (rather than ability) anticipated greater improvement in their future performances, effort, and strategies (Austin & Vispoel, 1992). McPherson (2000) further discovered that instrumental music students were able to predict how long they would play in an instrumental music program.

**Need for the Study**

All the literature reviewed explored intrinsic motivation, and most of the research methods employed in these studies were quantitative. The student voice was either inadequately represented or missing entirely. Hence, a need emerged for a study that gathered data on extrinsic motivation from a student perspective. According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 6), many qualitative methodologies attempt “to capture data on the perceptions of local actors.” Therefore, the present study employed the qualitative approach of student interviews to facilitate representation of the student voice.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to interview fourth-grade instrumental music students to discover extrinsic motivators for joining and continuing in an instrumental music program.

**Research Questions**

The research questions were the following:

- **Research Question 1:** What extrinsic motivators have influenced fourth-grade students’ initial interest and continuing participation in an instrumental music program?
- **Research Question 2:** What are the musical backgrounds of these students?
- **Research Question 3:** What musical activities (in or out of school) are they involved in at the time of this study?

**Research Method**

Seidman’s (2006) three-interview method was chosen because “interviewing provides access to the context of people’s behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior” (p. 10). As Seidman explains,

> The first interview establishes the context of the participants’ experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them. (p. 17)

The use of this methodology allowed participants to recreate their experiences that led to joining and staying in the instrumental music program. In-depth interviewing explored participants’ life history and highlighted personal experiences. Most of the interview items were open-ended questions, which were then expanded or built
on depending on participants’ responses. Sample items were used to initiate conversation, although interaction with each participant varied and ultimately defined what topics were explored (see the appendix).

Seidman’s (2006) three-interview series allowed for triangulation of the data from the three interviews to check for internal consistency in each participant’s statements. However, other sources of possible bias or error are acknowledged. Delays in approval of the research project by the Research Review Board caused the researcher to conduct the interviews at the end of the school year. Transcriptions were completed over the summer, and unfortunately, participants were not available at that time to perform member checks. If participants had been available to read the transcriptions, they could have affirmed or corrected what the researcher had transcribed and strengthened the validity of the study.

Participants
The participants were six fourth-grade students, aged 9 to 11, in their first year in the instrumental music program at a charter school. The school is located in the northeastern part of the country in an urban, low socioeconomic area (“Charter School-Homestead,” n.d.) where a majority of the school’s roughly 500 students received a free lunch (“Charter School-Homestead,” n.d.). At the time of this study, the instrumental music program had been established for 2 years and included students in Grades 4 through 8 on both wind and string instruments. Fourth-grade students were pulled from their classroom once a week for 25-minute small-group lessons.

At the time of this study, nine students from the fourth grade were enrolled in the instrumental music program. A parent permission letter and assent script explaining the study were sent home with all nine of these students. Parents were also contacted by telephone. Of the students contacted, six returned permission letters with parent and student signatures. Those agreeing to participate in the study comprised four females and two males; five played trumpet and one played clarinet. All participants were of mixed or African American race. An effort was made to include equal numbers of male and female participants as well as a diversity of instrumentation. However, because only six students returned permission slips, it was difficult to satisfy these goals. Study results may be biased owing to these imbalances of gender and instrumentation. The treatment of participants was in accordance with the Research Subjects Review Board affiliated with the University of Rochester.

Procedures
All interviews were completed over a period of 3 weeks. The length of each interview was set at a maximum of 30 minutes to accommodate the young age of the participants (Seidman, 2006). The homeroom teachers and the instrumental music teacher were contacted to determine an appropriate schedule for interviewing each student that would minimize missed class work. It was agreed that each participant would be interviewed individually on three separate occasions in the general music classroom during his or her instrumental music lesson time. Although an attempt was made to interview each student at a weekly interval during three successive instrumental lessons, some had interviews at shorter intervals owing to absences or testing commitments. Participants missed a maximum of three instrumental lessons for this study but were given opportunities to schedule make-up lessons with their instrumental music teacher during lunch, recess, or after school. All interviews were videotaped and then transcribed for analysis.

Each of the three interviews of each student had a main idea to guide questioning: focused life history, the details of the experience, and reflection on the meaning (Seidman, 2006). A set of guiding items for each main idea was adapted from Seidman’s sample items. These guiding items served as a basis for questioning that could be adhered to closely or expanded on freely (see the appendix).

Analysis of the Data
Videotapes of the interviews were uploaded to a computer for transcription and converted to DVD format for archiving. The interviews were transcribed and pseudonyms were assigned for each participant: Asia, Brianna, Courtney, Demetrius, Michael, and Unique. Seidman’s (2006) three-interview series allowed for triangulation of the data; internal consistency was checked and themes were explored between interview sessions and at the completion of the interviews. After transcription, the interviews were analyzed using open and direct coding methods. Coding was completed as suggested by Seidman (2006); information that was of interest was bracketed, highlighted, and then categorized by theme in an outline.

Direct Coding
For direct coding, information related to each of the research questions was selected and analyzed.

Research Question 1: What extrinsic motivators have influenced fourth-grade students’ initial interest and continuing participation in an instrumental music program?

All participants described strong family involvement in music prior to their participation in the instrumental
music program. At the time of the interviews at least two of the participants’ family members made music (vocally or instrumentally), and most had three or more family members involved with music in other ways, such as through dancing or mixing CDs. Students described how family members prompted their interest in joining the instrumental music program. Michael and Demetrius became interested because they had siblings already enrolled in the program. Asia’s mother had encouraged her to join, Courtney was given her mother’s trumpet, and Unique’s mother was a strong model for her interest in band, having played several instruments while growing up.

The environment in which participants grew up had a profound impact on their involvement in the instrumental music program. Although musical experiences varied, students had ties to their current or past environment that sparked their interest in the program or prompted their continued involvement. For example, a parade passing Michael’s grandmother’s house initiated his interest in joining the instrumental music program. He shared,

I went—I went to this parade at my grandma’s house, and there was these trumpet people. And I said to my grandma that I wanna be like them when I grow up. I wanna be in a big parade and play the trumpet.

Participants had one experience in common that influenced their decisions to join the instrumental music program. During the year prior to the interviews, the charter school hosted a tryout day for instruments. The instrumental music teacher brought one of each kind of instrument to demonstrate. Students in Grades 3 through 8 were able to try the instruments and to sign up. Out of the six interviewees, five clearly remembered that day and shared that it was because of that experience that they decided on the instrument they were playing at the time of this study.

Several social factors inspired participants to join and continue in the instrumental music program. Brianna stated that seeing her peers perform on instruments at her elementary school stirred her interest in joining. All participants agreed that they enjoyed spending extra time with their friends during instrumental music lessons. Michael and Asia shared that they also liked to play music during their lessons. All the students confirmed that their friendships were further strengthened through participation in the instrumental music program.

Finances had some effect on participants’ experiences in band. For one student, it limited the instruments from which she could choose. For another, her father emphasized the importance of her achievement because the instrument was expensive. This stayed on the student’s mind, as she later shared that she would let her future children participate in a band program only if she could afford it. Another student received a need-based scholarship from the school that covered the cost of renting an instrument. Although all six participants were able to successfully attain instruments for instrumental music lessons, half of them did communicate some stress about their financial situations.

**Research Question 2:** What are the musical backgrounds of these students?

All participants described an abundance of musical activities in their lives. In school, all of them took recorder and dance classes. In recorder class they learned to play songs and to read music. In dance class students learned a variety of styles, from hip-hop to modern dance. Outside of school, two female participants had dance experience through cheerleading. The rest danced at home with friends or along with video games. Participants described their enjoyment of the dance classes, while their statements about recorder class suggested that they received a good foundation of basic musical concepts and skills prior to learning to play band instruments.

All participants experienced singing in and out of school, most commonly at church. All sang as a congregation member at some point, but comfort levels and experience in singing at church varied. Students also sang at home, at the mall, and in the car. They sang with the radio, to video games, and with friends and family. Based on the participants’ singing experiences in church and in many other locations, all except one were comfortable with singing and included it in their lives daily.

One student took djembe lessons outside of school and was the only participant who experienced private lessons before joining the instrumental music program. This experience fed this student’s interest in joining the instrumental music program at school, but unfortunately the program did not offer drum instruction at the time. Even so, taking private lessons profoundly affected this student, as throughout each of our three conversations pieces of this experience were repeatedly discussed.

Participants not only described their experiences in making and moving to music, but also described the music they listened to at home and in other venues. At home, most participants enjoyed the music they heard while playing video games, the most popular being dancing or singing-based games such as *Dance, Dance Revolution* and *Michael Jackson: The Experience*. Most participants also listened to music on various television shows. Other sources mentioned were the Internet, gatherings at friends’ houses, church services, movies, neighborhood cookouts, and radio.

Beyond their neighborhoods, most of the participants heard music at parades when marching bands performed. The next most common location was at professional
performances of “The Nutcracker.” Other encounters with music varied greatly and included football games, ice skating shows, circuses, and fairs.

Participants also expressed their musical preferences throughout the interviews. In general, all participants preferred faster songs over slower songs. Most participants listened to R&B, hip-hop, and pop artists; Justin Beiber was the most popular, followed by Michael Jackson, Wiz Khalifa, Beyoncé, and Selena Gomez. Brianna was the only student to mention non–pop artists, as she sometimes listened to Beethoven or Mozart. Although some participants liked music from the classical genre, most liked to listen to a broad range of musical genres and artists that were popular at the time of the study. Overall, the participants had varied musical experiences prior to joining the instrumental music program.

Research Question 3: What musical activities (in or out of school) are they involved in at the time of this study?

At the time of this study, participants’ main musical activity was instrumental music class. Participants described the structure of the lessons, what they learned, and their likes and dislikes of the instrumental music lessons.

All participants described the sequence of a typical lesson: a warm-up, a review of the material, the start of new material, and a discussion on what to practice at home. Participants shared what they learned about music since joining the instrumental music program. All recalled reading and playing rhythms as the main skills acquired, and most said they learned how to read melodic patterns and produce a good tone on their respective instruments. When asked to recall songs, the most common that came to mind were “Hot Cross Buns,” “Cobbler, Cobbler,” and “Au Claire de la Lune.” “Cobbler, Cobbler,” a folk song set to reggae accompaniment, was commonly spoken of as a favorite song to play, mostly because of the fast tempo. Students revisited old songs that they had learned during recorder class and were introduced to new songs that presented new challenges.

Besides new songs, students also explored new genres of music during instrumental music class: jazz, blues, and reggae. Courtney explained an emotional connection she felt when playing these new genres on her instrument: “I learned that there are different types of music. And you can’t just judge music how it sounds—you have to judge the feeling of music.” Based on the participants’ emotional responses to and comments about what they learned in band, it seemed clear that the instrumental music program helped to expand the participants’ musical preferences.

Participants shared what they liked and disliked about the instrumental music program. All described feeling excited and happy on the day of their lessons. Unique enthusiastically said, “When I first come to school, I can’t wait until it’s time to go down to band.” All said they liked spending time with their friends and playing their instruments. Some saw lessons as an escape from classroom work. One student liked singing in class, while another liked playing warm-ups and learning new songs. Others enjoyed the sound of their instruments, playing jazz, and getting to meet a new teacher. Asia specifically expressed pride in getting closer to her goal of performing at the upcoming instrumental music concert. Among the varied responses from participants, it was evident that they had positive experiences in class.

Participants did not have much to say when asked what they disliked about band. They shared that they felt mostly nervous about the upcoming concert, and two said they would have liked more time to practice to show everyone how well they could play. The few complaints about instrumental music lessons were about broken instruments, classmates who fooled around or had bad attitudes, and the short length of the lessons. Overall, participants were very positive in their outlook on the instrumental music program.

Participants in this study had similarities and differences in their musical backgrounds and experiences. Their responses made it evident that many factors influenced their interest in the instrumental program. Based on the positive experiences they described having in the instrumental music program, it is likely that this helped to encourage their continued participation.

Overall, participants described positive past experiences with recorder playing, singing, dancing, and drumming. In the instrumental music program, they liked lessons and had few negative comments about them. They described having positive feelings on lesson days, with some participants even describing instrumental music class as an “escape” from the normal school day. These positive musical experiences created a musical environment in which participants appeared to be at ease and connected with their past musical experiences.

Open Coding

In open coding, several themes emerged that were unrelated in any direct way to the research questions, but which nevertheless bore analysis.

First, practicing their instruments at home appeared to have changed the students’ home routines. Students most commonly substituted practice for another activity they usually enjoyed, such as watching TV or playing outside. Unique explained the change she had to make, “Before I had—I could just do anything, like I could just sit and watch TV. Now I have to practice at home.” All students got some help during their practice time from parents or
siblings, but half of the students had a family life that prevented a consistent practice schedule. Family obstacles caused frustration for these students, but overall the participants expressed pleasure in their practice routines at home.

Participation in the instrumental music program appeared to have influenced the students’ interest in new songs and genres of music. Most of the students had never heard the songs in their instrument books before, but after hearing this new music, many began listening to other new music or described hearing music in a different way. About half of the participants spoke of searching the Internet for jazz, reggae, blues, and other styles found in the lesson book. All participants said that they were better able to hear individual instruments in music, particularly their own instrument, after they began participating in the instrumental music program.

For one student, using the CD with her instrument book greatly developed her inner hearing. She described it three times throughout the interviews. Once she said, “Sometimes if I’m tired I just—I just act like I’m listening to some music I play that’s really slow, and stuff, and I just play it in my head.”

The instrumental music program appeared to have positive effects on participants. They liked the new music they were learning and looked for additional examples on the Internet. They could identify their own instruments in music that they heard. The participants’ listening skills improved and musical preferences changed throughout their course of study in the instrumental music program.

Interpretation

Participants in this study had varied musical backgrounds and experiences that led them to join and continue participating in an instrumental music program. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation played a part in the decisions they made. In exploring the intrinsic motivators first, the reviewed literature on motivation can be reaffirmed.

Intrinsic Motivators

Competence, how a person views his or her ability for a task, is one of three major factors affecting intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Participants experienced increased feelings of competence because of the feedback and positive comments they received from family and friends during practice times. Demetrius demonstrated how feedback positively influenced him; he described how the instrumental music teacher would verbally reward him for songs played correctly, and how her comments made him feel good. Most participants described positive reinforcement during home practice. Asia’s interviews demonstrated the strong support for music from her family, friends, and neighbors. Asia said,

I’ve played for my neighbor, ‘cause I told him that I had a trumpet. He said um, “I wanna hear you play it.” And I started to play and he said, “Wow! All those practicing lessons is going really-really well, because you play very nicely.” And my mom said the same thing. And my brother, when I play the trumpet, he always dances, ‘cause he likes the music.

Although other participants did not go into as much detail about the nature of the positive feedback they received for their playing, they nevertheless made some general remarks about this. Participants also experienced optimal challenges, which increased feelings of competence. Brianna shared that she thought playing her instrument was not too easy or too hard; therefore, the challenge of performing on her instrument was at an optimal level for her ability.

Another factor influencing intrinsic motivation is autonomy, or the concept that one’s actions are self-governed. Giving people choices, acknowledging their feelings, and giving opportunities for self-direction all enhance autonomy, which increases intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The data in this research study did not reflect any factors that increased or diminished autonomy in any direct way.

The third and final factor affecting intrinsic motivation is relatedness, or being in a safe environment that is interconnected (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A safe environment is typically one in which participants feel comfortable making mistakes (Smith, 2011). Two participants shared that they were able to make mistakes and learn from them while having fun in their instrumental music lessons. Lessons were a safe environment in which to make mistakes, which corroborated the concept of relatedness. As Brianna explained, “It’s fun, because [the instrumental music teacher] sometimes make us go after each other. [slight pause] And to see who’s the one who didn’t mess up. And which note that got . . . that wasn’t right.”

It is important to note that if the three psychological needs of intrinsic motivation (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) are met, they will enhance intrinsic motivation only if people had an initial intrinsic interest in the activity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). If they are not interested, then cognitive evaluation theory is not valid. In comparison with McPherson’s (2000) study, it can be shown that participants in this study likely had an initial intrinsic interest in instrumental class. McPherson’s (2000) study focused on relationships between a student’s commitment to playing an instrument and musical achievement. The lowest achieving students had low commitment to the program from the start; most discontinued taking lessons after 12 months. Conversely, the highest achieving students had high commitment from the start; all continued taking lessons after 12 months. These “high commitment” students also had the most intrinsic reasons for playing an instrument (McPherson, 2000). Participants
for this research study were interviewed at the end of the academic year, 9 months after joining the instrumental music program. Although this time frame was shorter than the 12 months in McPherson’s (2000) study, it seems likely that the students interviewed for this study were among the “high-commitment” students because they were still in the instrumental program at the end of the school year. As in McPherson’s (2000) study, most or all of the participants for this study likely were those with a high commitment and who had intrinsic reasons for playing an instrument.

However, this is not to conclude that the participants of this study necessarily had intrinsic motivation for playing their instrument at the start of the school year. As Ryan and Deci (2000) pointed out, most activities people engage in are extrinsically motivating at first and can become intrinsically motivating. In exploring the levels of extrinsic motivation that can influence behavior (external regulation, introjected regulation, regulation through identification, and integrated regulation), the reviewed literature on motivation can be reaffirmed.

**Extrinsic Motivators**

Participants in this study went through two of the four stages of extrinsic motivation when they joined and continued to participate in the instrumental music program: regulation through identification and integrated regulation.

To review, regulation through identification is when an extrinsic value becomes more esteemed and personally important (Ryan & Deci, 2000). One participant shared that she joined the program to show everyone that she was good at music and that she was capable of playing an instrument. She further explained that she was considering becoming a jazz musician someday. “I could show everybody—I like all the parents at the ‘Celebration of Learning’ that it—I practice a lot and I show everybody that I can play trumpet. When I grow up I might be a jazz player.” Here, she was trying to show society (extrinsic) that she had the ability to play her instrument. Her comment on perhaps making a career out of music someday showed that she was beginning to internalize her reason for joining.

All participants in this research study demonstrated moving through the integrated regulation stage when they chose to join and continue in the instrumental music program. To review, integrated regulation is when an extrinsic value is transformed into one’s own value (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The reasons for doing an activity remain external because it is done to gain other values rather than for inherent enjoyment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Participants in this study experienced many extrinsic motivators that functioned in this way: family, environment, social factors, and finances.

Students in this study had rich and varied musical backgrounds, and although intrinsic motivation was present in their reasons for participation in the band program, extrinsic motivation played a large part in the choices they made. Whether they were family, environment, social factors, or finances, extrinsic motivators helped spark initial interest and hold sustained interest for participants in the instrumental music program. The good news is that most of the extrinsic motivators participants experienced were at the integrated regulation stage. As integrated regulation is very similar to intrinsic motivation, it would not take much more to guide students toward more intrinsically motivated reasons for continuing to participate in the instrumental music program.

**Implications for Music Education**

This study has uncovered important information about motivation for a small group of instrumental music students from which music educators can benefit. Teachers can exert some influence over the extrinsic motivators regulating behavior, but it is the transition to intrinsic motivation that will help students become naturally curious and active learners (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

This study showed that several extrinsic motivators initiated student interest in the instrumental music program: family, environment, social factors, and finances. These extrinsic motivators may be affected to a certain degree. Teachers can strengthen ties with families by finding out their musical interests and introducing favorite genres and pieces of music to instrumental music students. Teachers can also invite musically active family members into the classroom as guest artists. To encourage community and family support, performances can be given at more venues. Larger districts likely have band parent associations; perhaps other smaller districts can learn from and eventually copy that model. All these factors can help foster a more positive family and community view of instrumental music programs and increase family participation in students’ activities.

Although environment and social factors may be difficult to influence, teachers may be able to affect the school environment to a certain degree. Whatever is lacking at home in terms of musical variety and exposure may be partially mediated by a vibrant and energized music program at school. As in Abeles’s (2004) study, which discovered the positive effect of a school/orchestra partnership on student interest in instrumental music, more schools can enact partnerships with artists and musical groups. In this way, students can be presented with a variety of instruments, musical genres, performance groups, and musical experiences even if they are not receiving that in their home environments.

Finances can be addressed through finding financial options for students. Schools can offer instrumental music scholarships or gather an inventory of used
instruments to lend to students. Many people have old band instruments that they may sell to schools at a fraction of their retail cost. Internet sites such as www.freecycle.org and www.craigslist.org have also made finding used instruments more convenient. Many options can be explored when it comes to securing an instrument for a child who is interested and willing to participate in an instrumental music program.

Finally, this study showed how participation in an instrumental music program may encourage students to become life-long musicians. In the interviews, students discussed what they thought their involvement in music would be in the future. A majority of participants thought they would continue to play as members in a community band, as professional musicians, or as music therapists. Only one student said that he would not continue playing as an adult but would allow his future children to play if they showed interest.

Future Research

Teachers can guide extrinsic motivators regulating behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2000), but more research is needed on how to positively influence family, environment, social factors, and finances in order to encourage students to become life-long music makers. For future study, one could replicate this study with a larger population and in a variety of school settings. This study could be conducted with two sets of interviews, one at the start of the year and one at the end of the year. Perhaps different factors would emerge to benefit instrumental program enrollment and retention as the school year progressed.

Further exploration of how to influence extrinsic motivators would be beneficial for music teachers. As this study revealed, family, environment, social factors, and finances affected student choices to join and continue in an instrumental music program. Exploring ways to influence these extrinsic motivators would give music teachers more ideas on how to grow their instrumental music programs.

As music teachers face a future of budget cuts and expendable programs, it becomes increasingly important to recognize ways to make music programs relevant to school administrators and communities. Understanding extrinsic motivation among students is valuable to teachers because it provides a tool that can be used to encourage participation in music programs and to foster adults who consider making music to be a life-long endeavor.

Appendix

Sample Items

Interview 1: Focused Life History

1. Tell me about your family. Is anyone musical, or does anyone else play an instrument or sing?

Interview 2: The Details of the Experience

1. How did you find out about the band program?
2. How did you decide to join?
3. How did you choose your particular instrument?
4. Describe a typical band lesson.
5. What is practice at home like?

Interview 3: Reflection on the Meaning

1. Has band changed the kind of music you listen to? Why?
2. Do you see yourself playing for a long time? Into adulthood? Becoming a musician?
3. What have you learned about music and your instrument since being in band?
4. How has band changed your friendships and routines at home and in school?

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