

Creative Musical Activities in Ensemble Rehearsals

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Why Creativity?



Federal Initiatives

- ◆ Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965)
- ◆ No Child Left Behind (2001)
- ◆ Every Student Succeeds Act (2015)

Creativity in Music Education

- ◆ Contemporary Music Project (1959-1973)
- ◆ Bennington Institute (1962)
- ◆ Yale Seminar (1963)
- ◆ Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project (1966-70)
- ◆ Ann Arbor Symposium III (1982)

Music Standards

- ◆ National Standards for Music Education (1994)
- ◆ National Core Arts Standards (2014)

National Core Arts Standards

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS

Cr

Creating

Pr

**Performing/
Presenting/
Producing**

Re

Responding

Cn

Connecting

The Problem

Creative musical activities (CMAs), including composition and improvisation, are rarely included in the public school music curriculum. Many music teachers perceive numerous obstacles preventing them from including these activities. The National Core Arts Standards call for all students to “conceive and develop new artistic ideas and work.”

(National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2016)

Relevant Literature

- ◆ Survey of Indiana music teachers:
Only 5.9% of teachers use composition tasks often
(Strand, 2006, p. 154)
- ◆ National survey of elementary general teachers:
Lack of time, resources, and teaching space
(Fairfield, 2010, pp. v-vi)
- ◆ Survey of 243 NY high school band directors:
Few band directors offer regular instruction in
composition and improvisation
(Schopp, 2006, p. 169)

Purpose

To explore and examine the variety of **creative instructional practices** of New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) member teachers.

Research Questions

1. For teachers who include CMAs, what perceived obstacles might exist that inhibit creative musical instruction?
2. What resources may exist that help facilitate the instruction of CMAs despite the presence of perceived obstacles?
3. What motivates these teachers to include CMAs in the curriculum?

Procedures

- ◆ Quantitative Survey Study
- ◆ RSRB Proposal with letter of support from Dr. Steven Schopp
- ◆ Survey emailed to 5,299 active NYSSMA members (May, 2017)
- ◆ Follow up email to 15 NYSSMA zone representatives and all 67 county MEA presidents (May, 2017)
- ◆ Survey closed (July, 2017)
- ◆ Primary analysis complete, still in secondary analysis phase

Survey Statistics

- ◆ 252 usable responses
- ◆ Average response rate for NYSSMA mailings
 - ◆ 1429 (34%) opened
 - ◆ 156 (11%) clicked link to survey
- ◆ Confidence level = 95%
- ◆ Margin of Error = 6

What is Creativity?



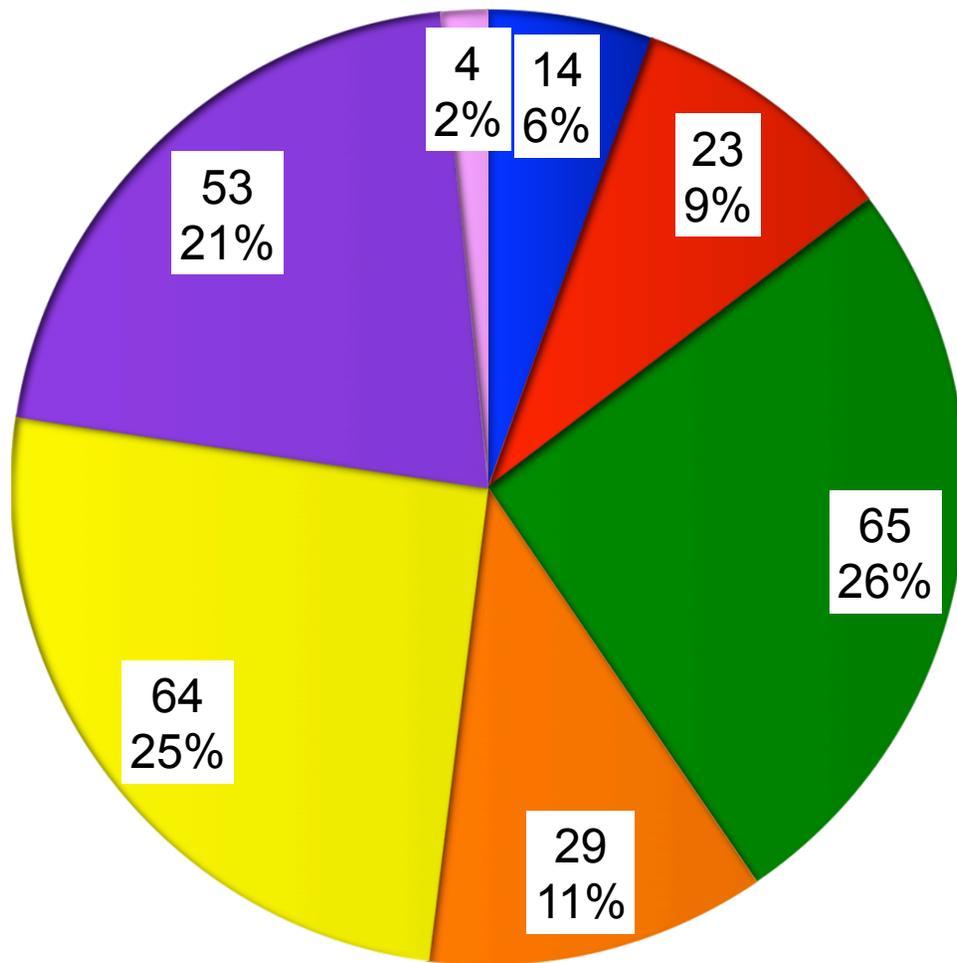
Creativity Definitions

- ◆ The ability to generate a musical product that is novel or unique.
(Amabile & Pillemer, 2012)
- ◆ Any musical idea or product that is original, valued, and implemented.
(Csikszentmihalyi, 2015)
- ◆ The willingness to take musical risks; imagining and interpreting music in new ways.
(Hickey & Webster, 2001)

Creativity Definitions

- ◆ The process of manipulating and organizing musical sound.
(Nelson, 2004)
- ◆ A blend of generating (improvising and composing) and recreating (performing existing repertoire).
(Snell, 2013)
- ◆ The engagement of the mind in the active, structured process of thinking in sound for the purpose of producing some product that is new for the creator.
(Webster, 2013)

Responses



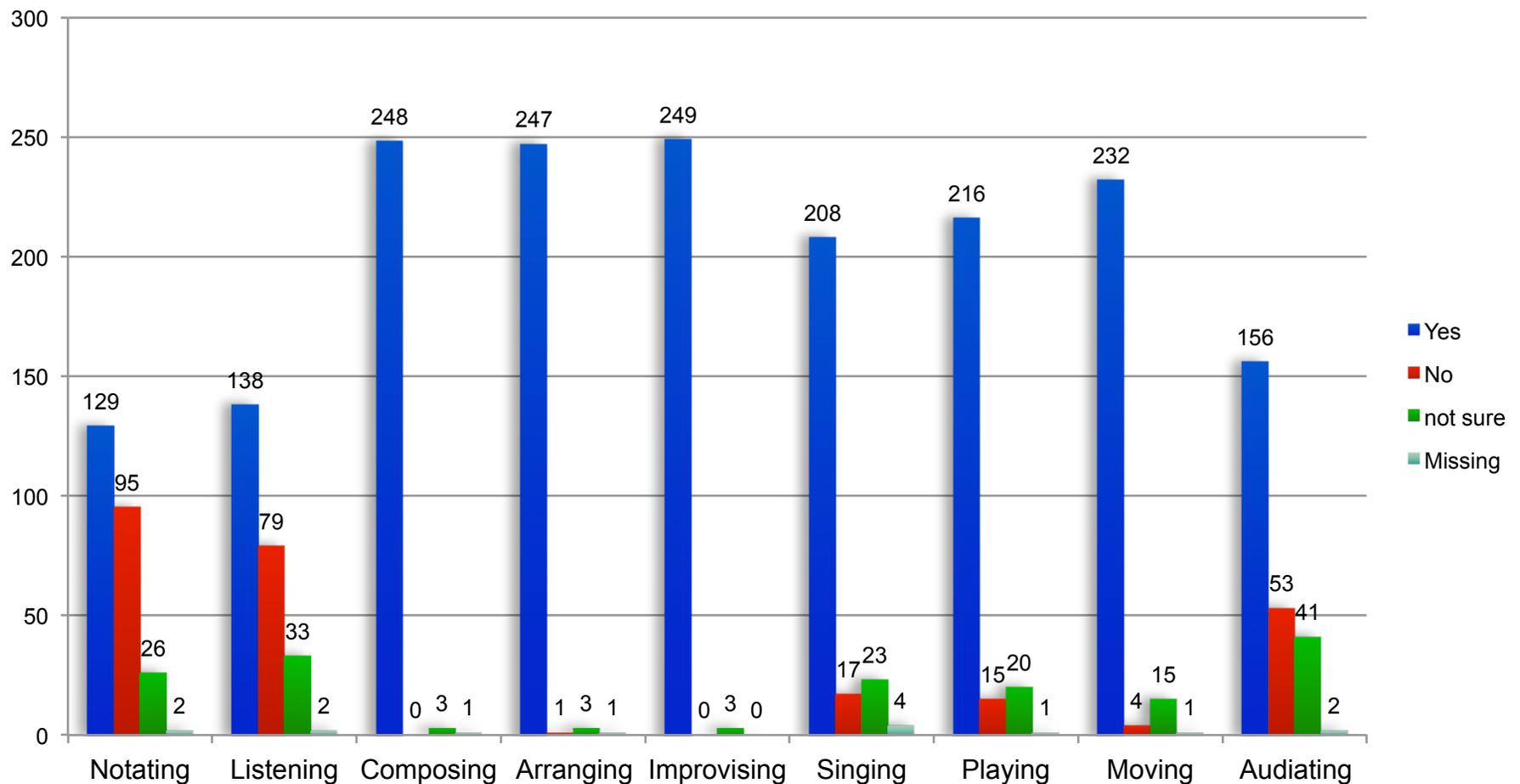
- Generating a product that is novel or unique.
- A musical idea that is original, valued, and implemented.
- Imagining and interpreting of music in new ways.
- The process of manipulating and organizing sound.
- A blend of generating and recreating.
- A process of thinking in sound to make a product new for the creator.
- Other

CMA definitions

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Notating | the act of writing music notation |
| Listening | activities which include ear training; learning to play by ear |
| Composing | the creation and preservation (with or without notation) of original ideas |
| Arranging | the manipulation of preexisting musical ideas to create an original work |
| Improvising | spontaneous creation of original musical ideas (without revision) |
| Singing | making musical sounds with the voice, with or without lyrics |
| Playing | making musical sounds with instruments |
| Moving | intentional physical motions through time and space |
| Audiating | "inner-hearing," when there is no sound physically present; like thinking in language |

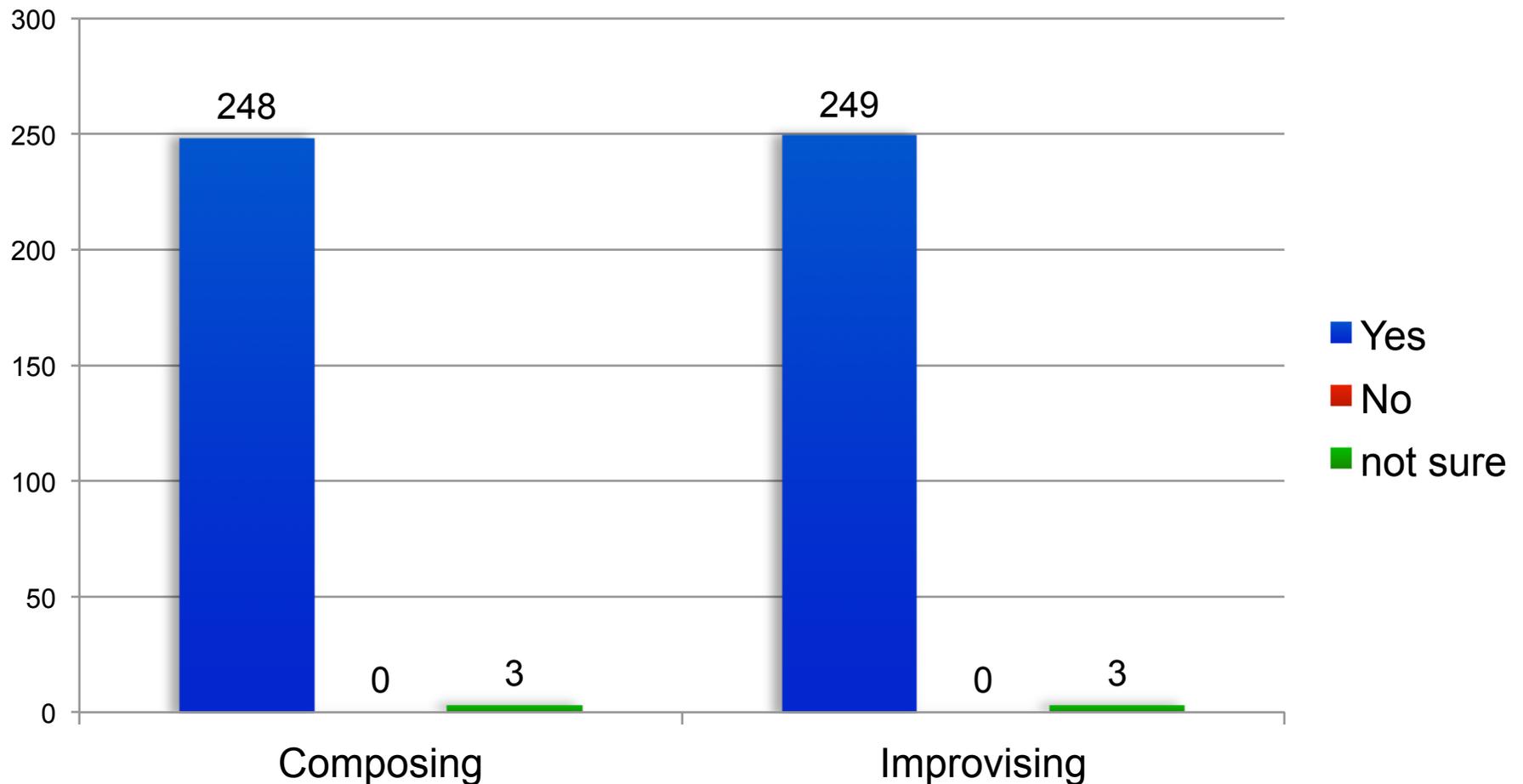
Descriptive Statistics

Question 9: *Which of the following do you consider to be creative music activities?*



Descriptive Statistics

Question 9: *Which of the following do you consider to be creative music activities?*



Research Question #1

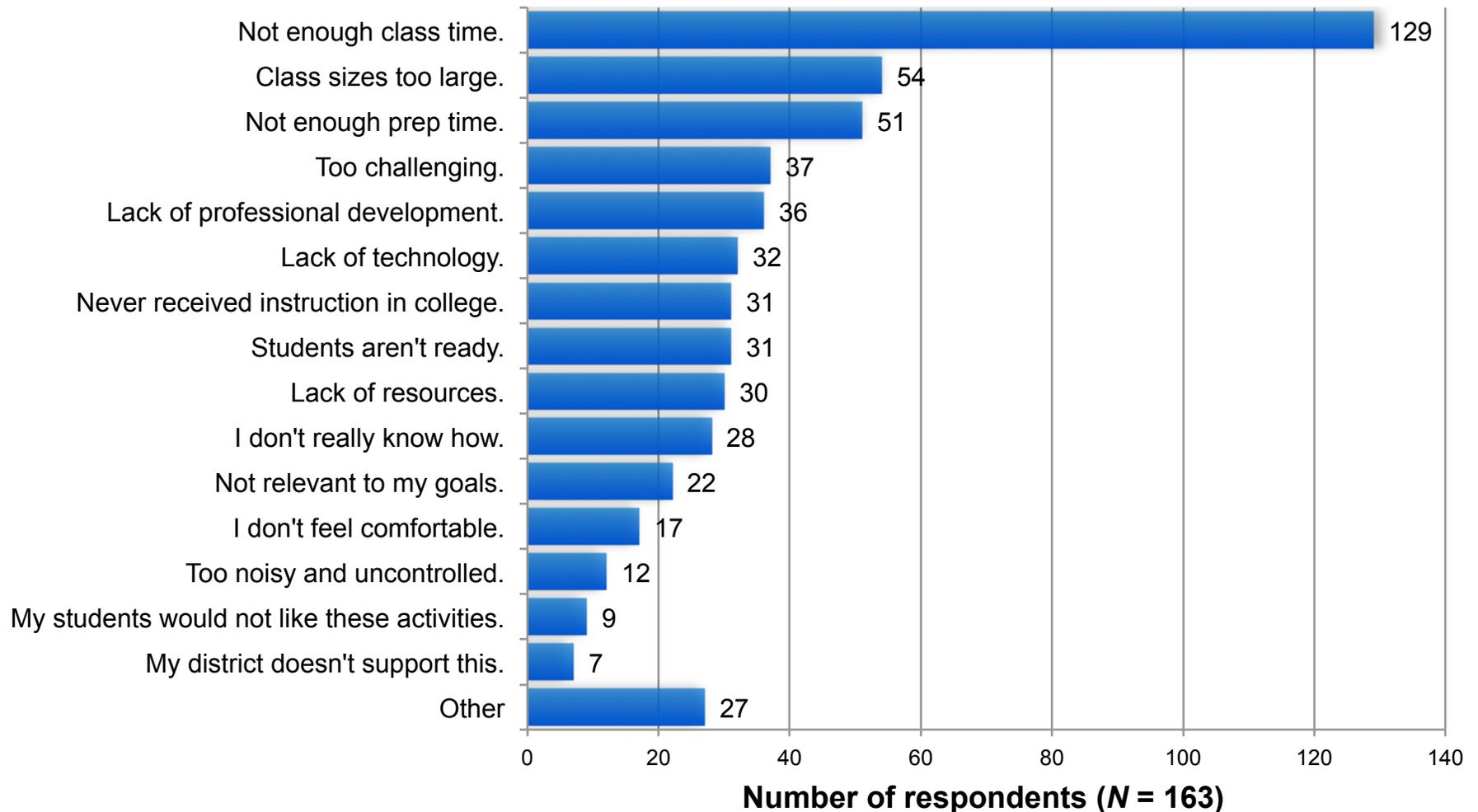
Research Question 1:

For teachers who include CMAs, what perceived obstacles might exist that inhibit creative musical instruction?

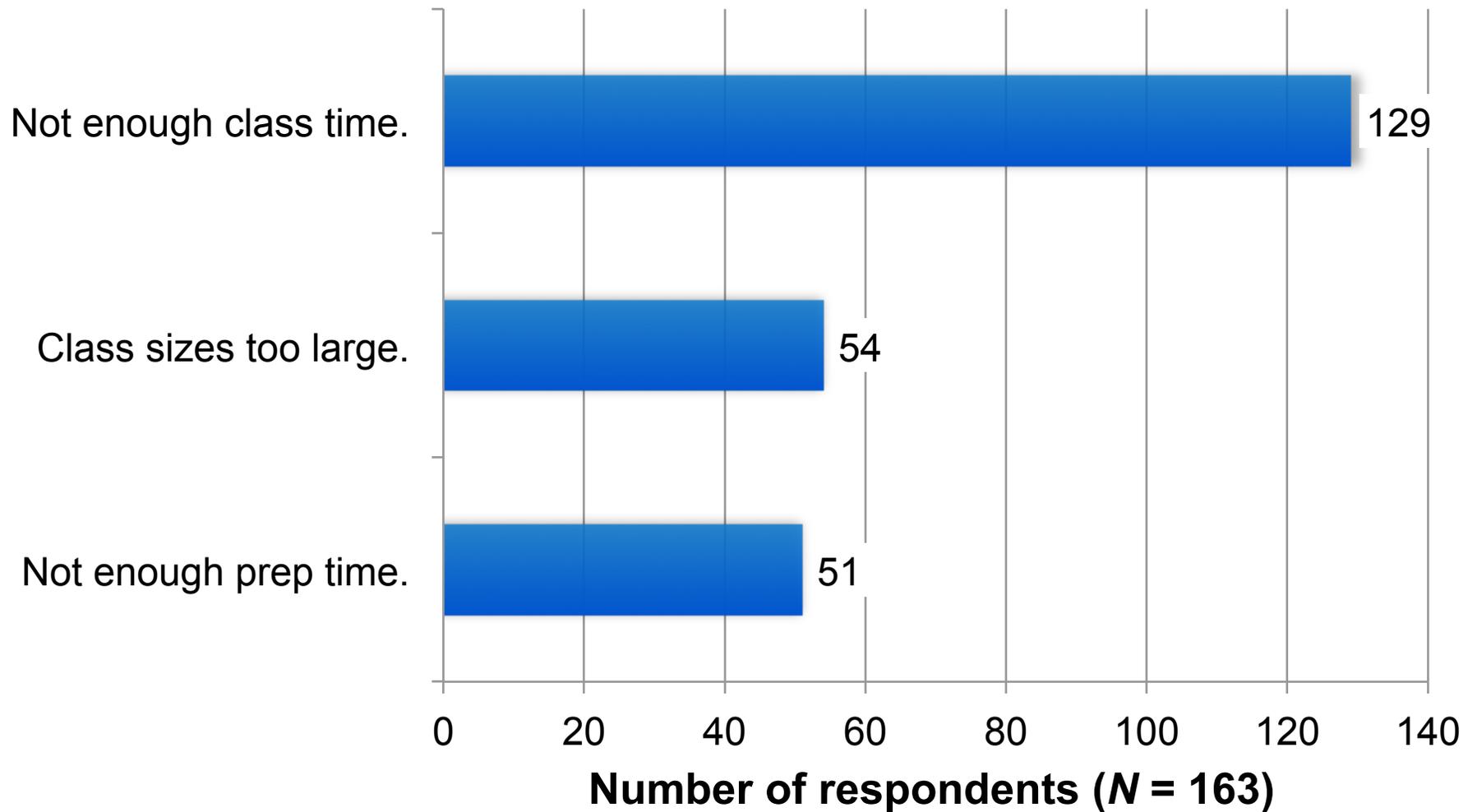
Survey Question 30:

In your opinion, which of the following factors inhibit your ability to include creative activities in the curriculum, if any?

Perceived Obstacles



Perceived Obstacles



Secondary Analysis

Average **class time** per week

Number of rehearsals (out of 10) that include composition or improvisation

| | Band/Orch/Chorus | Lessons |
|-------------|------------------|---------|
| Composing | .170* | -.127 |
| Improvising | .025 | -.167 |

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Research Question #2

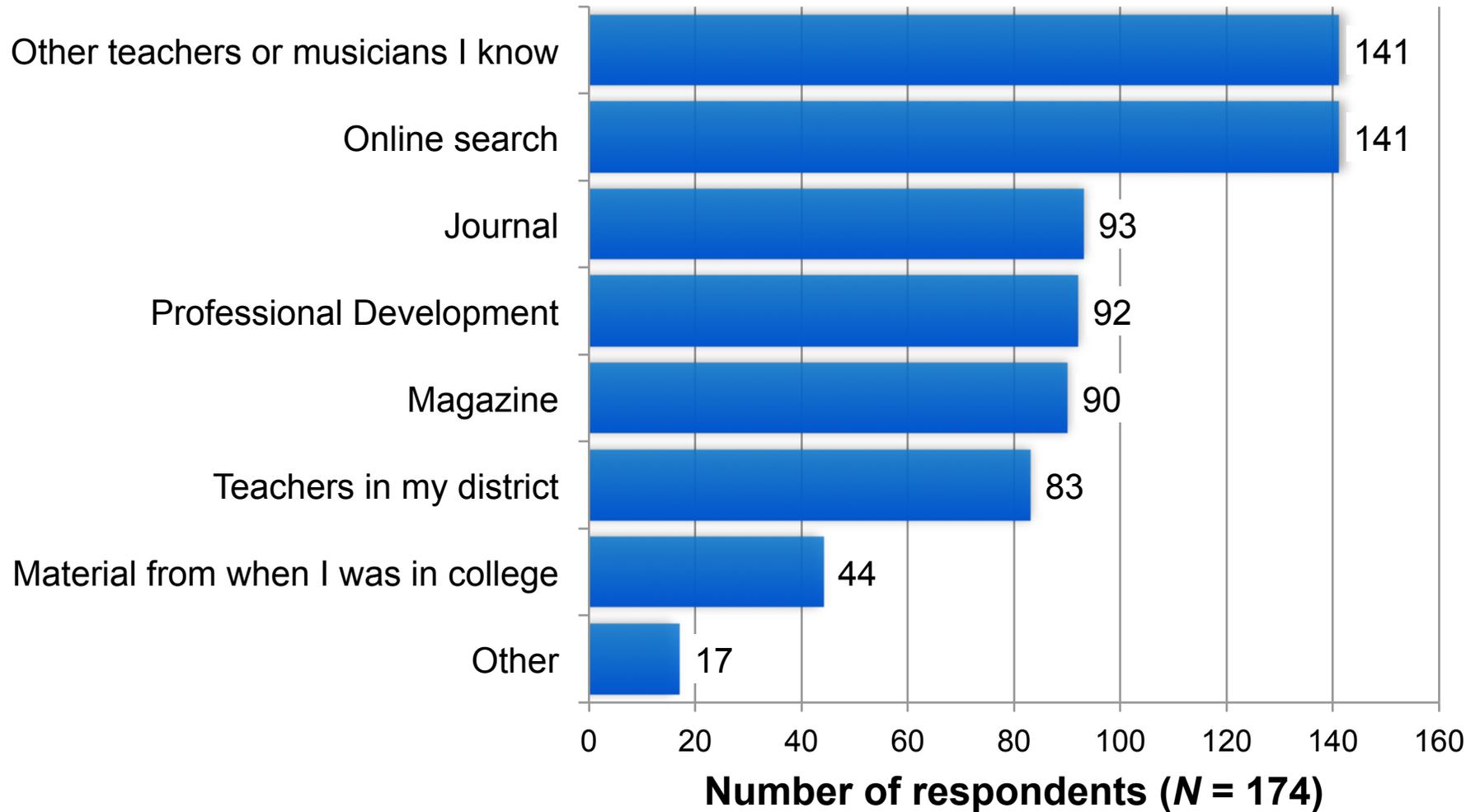
Research Question 2:

What resources may exist that help facilitate the instruction of CMAs despite the presence of perceived obstacles?

Survey Question 30:

If you were to include previously listed creative activities in your classroom, where you would likely look for support?

Resources



Research Question #3

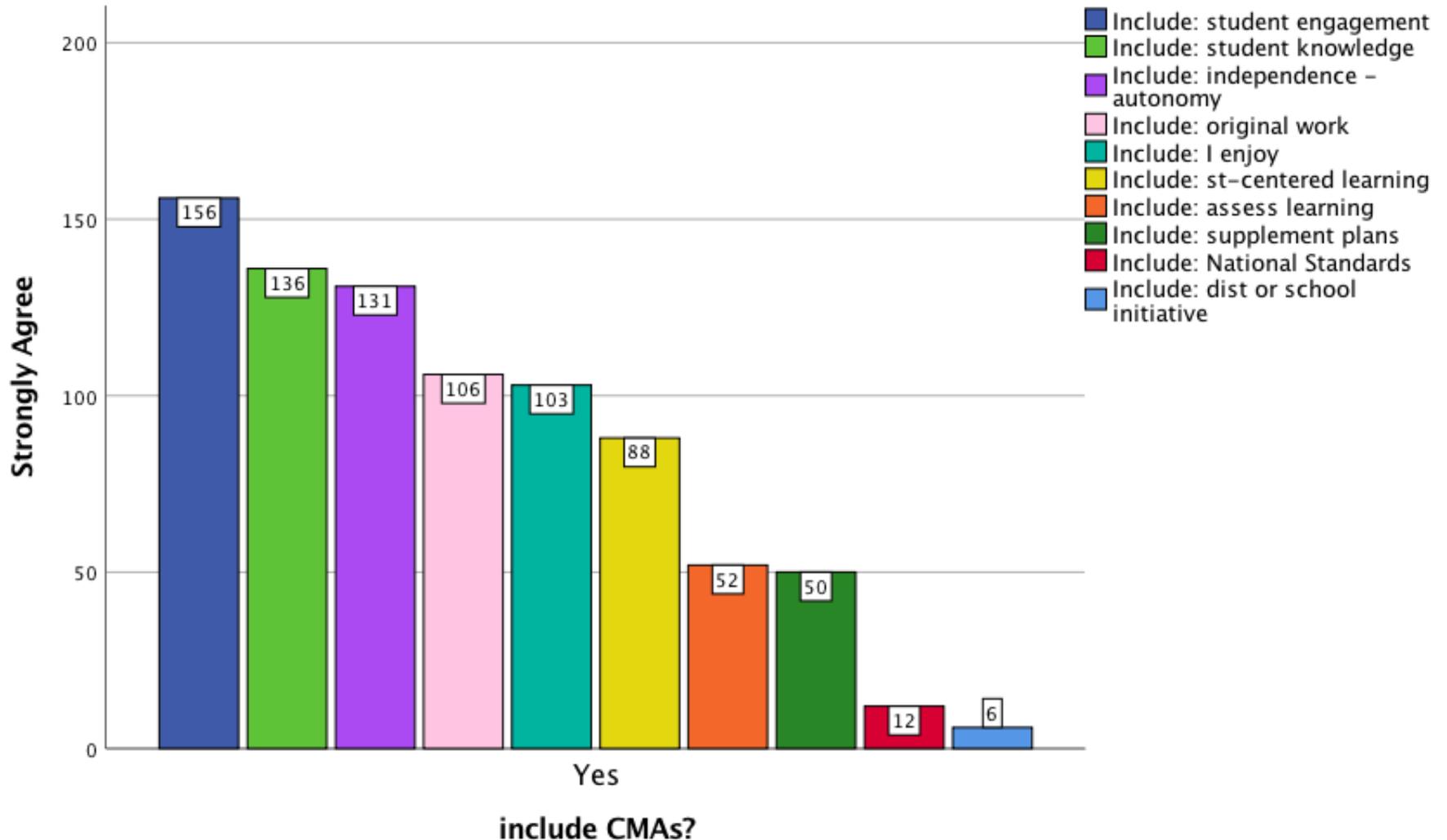
Research Question 3:

What motivates these teachers to include CMAs in the curriculum?

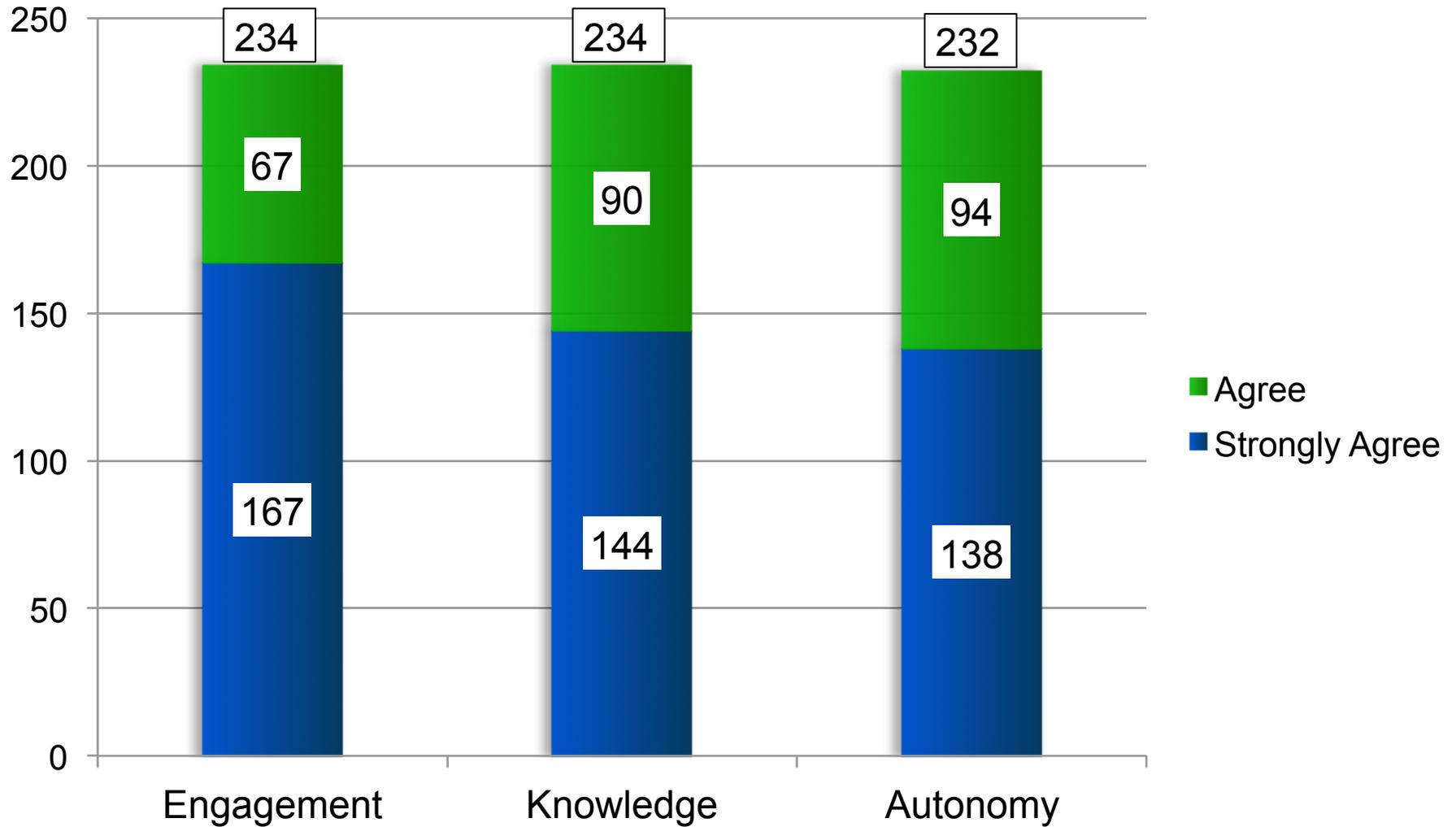
Survey Question 8:

I include creative musical activities...

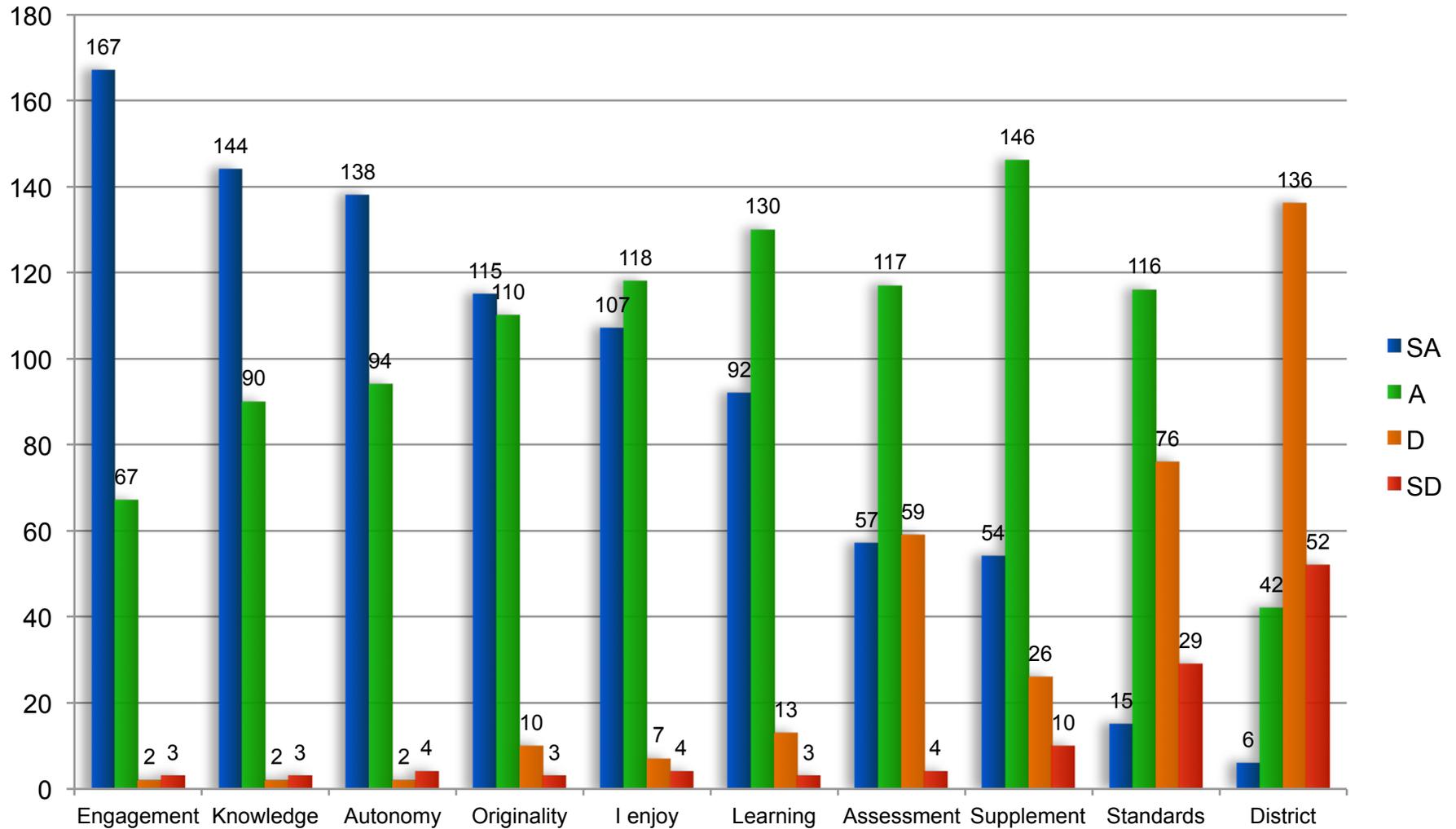
Expressed Motivation



Expressed Motivation



Expressed Motivation



Secondary Analysis

Extent to which activities are **discussed**
among teachers in the district

Number of rehearsals (out of 10) that
include composition or improvisation

| | Band/Orch/Chorus | Lessons |
|-------------|------------------|---------|
| Composing | .283** | .261** |
| Improvising | .280** | .316** |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Motivation

- ◆ Teacher-expressed level of importance of CMAs and their inclusion in the classroom ($r = .560^*$).
- ◆ Teachers who consider themselves to be **personally creative** are most likely to include CMAs in ensemble rehearsals ($r = .204^{**}$).
- ◆ The biggest influence for inclusion of CMAs in ensemble rehearsals is the extent to which CMAs are **discussed** among teachers within the district.
 - ◆ Composing ($r = .283^{**}$)
 - ◆ Improvising ($r = .280^{**}$)

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

- ◆ Low response rate, though typical, could be problematic.
- ◆ Caution must be used when generalizing to entire population of NYS music teachers.
- ◆ Possibility that teachers were uncomfortable acknowledging lack of confidence / ability.

Further Research

- ◆ Regression analysis
- ◆ Relationships between inclusion of CMAs and:
 - ◆ Class time
 - ◆ Discourse among teachers
 - ◆ Increasing pre-service music teacher creative experiences.
- ◆ Qualitative study – exploring use of CMAs

Questions?



References

- ◆ Amabile, T. M., & Pillemer, J. (2012). Perspectives on the Social Psychology of Creativity. *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 46(1), 3-15. doi:10.1002/jocb.001
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Including CMAs in Ensemble Rehearsals



Improvisation



Improvisation Ideas

- ◆ Call and response
- ◆ Rhythm only
- ◆ Major – three notes
- ◆ Minor – three notes
- ◆ Embellish a melody

Twinkle Variation



🟢 Alex – age 4.5

Embellishment

Repetition

Inversion

Original

Embellishment

Inverted

Repetition

Improvisation Exercise 2

- 🟢 Melody
- 🟢 Bass
- 🟢 Rhythmic improvising
- 🟢 Guide tone lines
- 🟢 Big beat improvising
- 🟢 Add passing/neighbor tones

The image shows four staves of musical notation, all in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and 4/4 time. Each staff contains four measures of music, with a double bar line at the end of the fourth measure. The notes in each staff are as follows:

- Staff 1: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter).
- Staff 2: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter) with an 8va marking below the note.
- Staff 3: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter).
- Staff 4: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter).

Notation



Notation

cnayuoraedtihssnetnece?

Name: _____

Band: Day 1 / Day 2

Perf
listen

cna yuo raed tihs snetnece?

$\frac{2}{4}$

Copy the rhythm above onto this blank staff below:

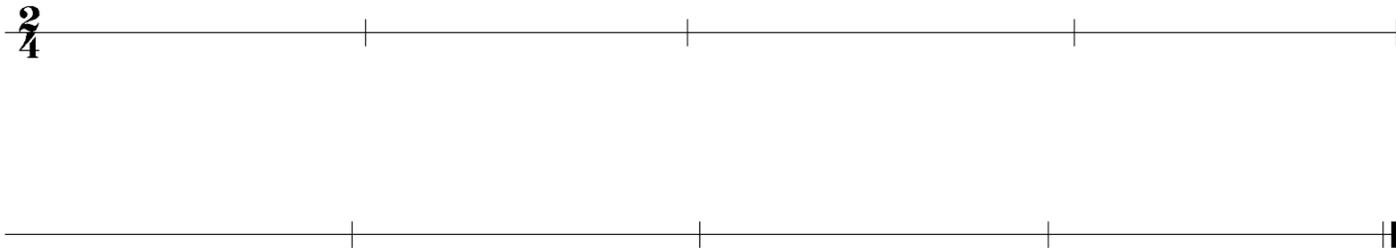
$\frac{2}{4}$



Notation

Improvise your own rhythms with a partner.

Using only quarter notes and paired eighth notes, create your own eight-measure composition. Make sure that each measure contains only two beats.

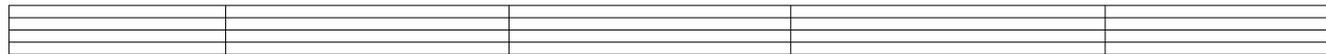


From Improvisation to Composition

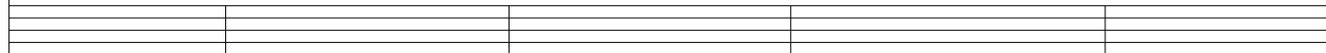


Composition

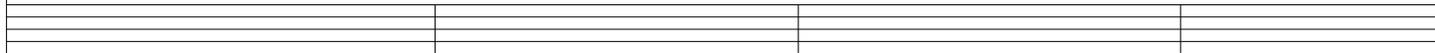
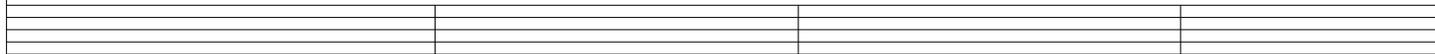
Melody



Bass Line



Original



Composition Example 1

Melody



Bass Line



Original



A handwritten red circle highlights a specific note in the 'Original' staff, and a red line is drawn under the final note of the same staff.



A second system of musical notation consisting of three staves. The bottom staff contains a handwritten red oval highlighting a group of notes.

Composition Example 1

The image displays a handwritten musical score for two systems, each consisting of three staves. The notation is in black ink on white paper. The first system includes a treble clef on the top staff, a bass clef on the middle staff, and a bass clef on the bottom staff. The second system includes a treble clef on the top staff, a bass clef on the middle staff, and a bass clef on the bottom staff. In the first system, a red circle highlights a note on the third staff, and a red arrow points to the next note. In the second system, a red circle highlights a note on the bottom staff, and a red arrow points to the next note. The score is flanked by two vertical black bars on the left and right sides.

Composition Example 2

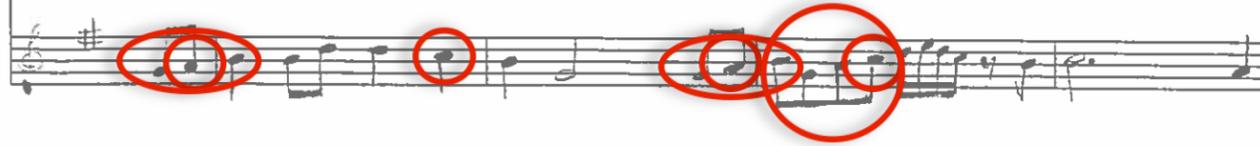
Melody



Bass Line



Original



Composition Example 2

The image displays a musical score for 'Composition Example 2', consisting of six staves of music. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first three staves are grouped together, and the last three staves are grouped together. Three specific passages are highlighted with red circles:

- The first circle highlights a quarter note G4 and an eighth note A4 in the third staff.
- The second circle highlights a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) and another triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) in the third staff.
- The third circle highlights a quarter note G4 and an eighth note A4 in the sixth staff.

Composition Exercise 1

1. Write a 4 line poem
2. Notate the rhythm
3. Add pitches to the rhythm
4. Write a bass line to accompany the melody

Composition Exercise 2

- ◆ Write an 8-measure, diatonic melody and bass line
- ◆ Major Tonality
- ◆ Use ONLY tonic, dominant, and subdominant
- ◆ You may use conventional notation, or any other means to preserve and share your composition

Student Perceptions

“I feel like the improv is a good step towards building musicianship. I think it would make more sense if we started it in younger grades. I liked the composition [arranging] project a lot. I like how we had the ability to collaborate with all the other instruments and write a piece of music. That being said, I wish when we composed music the groups could have started from scratch instead of stemming off previously composed songs.”

Kellan (2018)

Student Perceptions

“If you tell me to use the bass line to London Bridge, and write a composition using the same chord structure, I like that. I hate improvising because I can’t think that fast! Creative activities help me with tonal stuff - it helps me to be more in tune because I’m more aware of the intervals.”

Cindy (2018)

Student Perceptions

“The rhythm dictation and notation activities helps me to hear the rhythms in my head when I’m sight-reading something new.”

Eli (2019)

“If I want to compose or arrange a piece, that’s fun, but if it’s expected of you, that’s eh... If you were to ask me to make a composition of any song, without guidelines, that would be fun.”

Maryn (2018)

Student Perceptions

“Although teaching arranging and composing to students may take time, it is a fun activity and will also provide the students with skills that will help rehearsals go much more smoothly.”

Alex (2019)

Reflection

- ◆ Think about a typical ensemble rehearsal in YOUR high school.
- ◆ How could you adapt that model to provide students the opportunity to *create* something?

Thank you!

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