

Prof analyzes the demographic profile of US high school music ensemble students

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University of Miami Frost School of Music Professor Carlos R. Abril has recently published findings of a research study designed to construct a national demographic profile of high school band, choir, and orchestra students in the U.S. using evidence from the 2004 follow-up wave of the Education Longitudinal Study. The article, published with Kenneth Elpus (University of Maryland) in the Journal of Research in Music Education, is titled "High School Music Ensemble Students in the United States: A Demographic Profile."

Research findings indicate that 21% of seniors in the United States' class of 2004 participated in school music ensembles, which represents a decline of almost 10% from 1982. Authors suggest the decline can be explained by the increased focus on "tested" subjects and a reduction in the number of elective courses offered in high schools. Significant associations were found between music ensemble participation and variables including gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), native language, parents' education, [standardized test scores](#), and GPA. Certain groups of [students](#), including those who are male, English language learners, Hispanic, children of parents holding a [high school diploma](#) or less, and in the lowest SES quartile, were significantly underrepresented in music programs across the United States.

At the other end of the spectrum, white students were significantly overrepresented among music students, as were students from higher SES backgrounds, native English speakers, students in the highest standardized [test score](#) quartiles, children of parents holding advanced

postsecondary degrees, and students with GPAs ranging from 3.01 to 4.0. Students who participate in large ensembles in high school were found to be more socially and economically privileged than their peers, indicating music students are not a representative subset of the population of U.S. [high school students](#). While these findings cannot establish that music improves academic achievement, it does suggest that academically superior students may be drawn, encouraged, and supported to study music in school.

Provided by University of Miami

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