

Music teachers share their unique perspective on music education in America

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Across the country music teachers believe that factors at the school level have the greatest impact on their programs. Matters beyond the school are not seen as having a significant influence on their programs, even though district, state and national educational policies have an effect on music education; according to a new study published in the *Journal of Research in Music Education*.

Although prior research has found that state and national policies have had a negative effect on art programs in schools, and may explain decreases in art course offerings, participation and instructional time; the current study shows that only about half of the teachers felt that national education policies had an impact on their programs or positions. Some (28%) believed that these policies had a positive impact on [music](#) programs. Others (24%), thought they had a negative impact. But a large number of music teachers (48%) felt that national policies had no impact at all.

"The findings imply that music teachers are not fully informed of the ways policy from the state and national level impacts their work," said Carlos Abril, director of Undergraduate Music Education at the University of Miami Frost School of Music and lead investigator of the study. "This knowledge is imperative in order for them to be proactive in advocating for music in the school curriculum."

Across the country, teachers see factors at the school level, such as scheduling and instructional contact time as having the greatest negative

impact on their programs.

"Many music teachers are being given extra duties, outside of their subject area, and less planning time than their non-arts counterparts," Abril said. "The impact of these factors has implications on music teachers' ability to plan meaningful lessons and to effectively teach children," he said. "The stakes are higher than ever for music teachers, whose evaluations are or may soon be linked to student performance on district or state music assessments."

In the study, a random sample of 374 elementary music teachers, from around the country, were asked to complete and return anonymously a survey that measured their perceptions of their music programs and their teaching positions.

In addition to scheduling and instructional contact time, music teachers reported school facilities, school administration and budgets as having a significant impact on their professional lives. When asked who or what was critical to maintaining or improving their programs and positions, the school principal was cited as the most prevalent factor.

In response, most of the teachers (90%) took actions aimed at influencing attitudes within the school community. For example, using performances to showcase the music program, communicating with school administrators and collaborating with teachers in their school. The teachers regarded these activities as the most effective in positively affecting their music programs.

Only two factors beyond the [school](#) level were seen as having a substantial and positive influence in their positions—coordinating and collaborating with other music teachers in the region and national or state music education standards.

"The music teachers in my district meet and discuss methods, resources, and assessments regularly," one teacher said.

Knowing which steps have been most effective in positively impacting music programs and teaching positions is necessary for the careful use of teacher resources in terms of time, energy and expertise, the study suggests.

Provided by University of Miami

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