CLASSICAL EDUCATION:  
A CASE STUDY OF PHILOSOPHIES AND PRACTICES IN SECONDARY MUSIC EDUCATION AT AN AMERICAN CLASSICAL SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

What does music education look like at an American classical school? The purpose of this case study was to examine the philosophies, practices, and perceived outcomes of secondary music at a classical school in southern Colorado. Data was collected through four semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and several source documents from the school. Interview transcripts, observations and artifacts were analyzed through emerging category coding. Transcripts were member-checked and confirmation bias was limited by accurately stating data. Research questions that guided the study were 1) what does the music education program look like in a classical school, 2) what are the perceived benefits and deficits of a classical education in music from teachers and parents, and 3) according to current music teachers at a classical school, how does music education there reflect/not reflect the classical education model in this setting? Findings revealed that a compulsory music component was vital to the classical model, classical instruction in music is guided by the Trivium, parent involvement in music at this classical school is growing, and character education is a benefit foundational to the music program. Implications for music education include unique structural elements, an effective instructional model in music, and character education can be tied to music education.
DEDICATION

To my dad, Robert T. Jackson

Though you are not here anymore, you were the biggest support during my time here at Ball State and in teaching music. I wish you were here to see me graduate from the university you were so proud of attending. Thank you for helping make me the God-fearing man I am today. I look forward to seeing you again someday.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

If I were asked what a classical school was six years ago, I would have responded with sincere confusion. In life, I was at crossroads needing to close one chapter of part-time music teaching and move to full-time teaching. From my older brother, I heard about an opening at a classical school over a hundred miles away. Immediately, I applied and received notification of an impending phone interview. After twenty minutes of nervous self-banter the phone rang and on the other end was the principal with a panel of interviewers at the prospective classical school I had applied for. A fifty-minute interview took place that felt much longer and within the next few hours I received a second phone call and was hired for a full-time assistant band director position. My new assignment was The Classical Academy (TCA), located in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Little did I know the philosophical impact it would have on my approach to learning and teaching music. Up until this point, I had been teaching with a focus that was driven by the instrumental method book and performance repertoire, not necessarily the students. Before long, I found myself engaging students in tiered questioning, developing relationships for a constructivist approach to learning, finding intentional ways of parental inclusion in student learning, and instructing with a character education focus. Students that began instruments in seventh grade were soon performing at the state MEA conference in their second year and evidenced exponential growth through an undeniable love of learning in music.

The Classical Academy, an educational organization comprised of seven individual schools boasts being the largest K-12 charter school in Colorado. “The Classical Academy (TCA) alone is larger than 75% of the public school districts in Colorado” (Introducing TCA). Its founders were a group of parents that envisioned a high-quality education for their children in Colorado Springs, Colorado that didn’t have the cost of a private institution. They desired a
classically-oriented school that included philosophies, practices and values of a classical education observed in other private institutions. The Classical Academy’s website states that:

The dream included a vibrant school community where parents and faculty formed a strong partnership to develop virtuous character in the students. The hope was that TCA would nurture and develop exemplary citizens with a passion for life-long learning and solid analytical thinking skills. From the very first day, parents were challenged by the founders to understand that enrolling in TCA was to join a close-knit community expected to share their time, talent, and treasure to strengthen and sustain this unique values-based school. (TCA History)

The Classical Academy and the classical education approach boasts being a unique, yet antiquated approach to education. At its core, its curriculum is allowed a certain amount of autonomy that was more than I had experienced previously at another school. Exterior boundaries were set by classical education historical practices and national standards, but all curricula inside those boundaries were given autonomy. Teachers are given the freedom to choose materials they feel best suit educational needs; students help decide curricular direction. For music, this also allowed for flexible scheduling in such a way that beginning music students were grouped homogenously to meet specific vocal/instrumental needs. What was unique about TCA’s flexible scheduling was that the school placed an elevated level of importance on the arts, which displayed as a centering around the music department, especially at the middle level.

**Instructional Elements**

Tiered questioning was an integral part of my experience at The Classical Academy. In short, tiered questioning was to approach classroom instruction primarily by asking different
levels of questions based on a student’s developmental level. For example, in a beginning clarinet class, a lower-tiered question to ask a student was, “What is the fingering pattern for a concert Bb-scale?” As students progressed through the program, higher tiered questions emerged in instruction such as, “Why would the composer place this dynamic marking here in your music?” Answers to either of those questions provided insight into students’ comprehension at different stages of learning. Often in this way of tiered questioning, students felt comfortable to share their answers and move beyond the lesson quickly. This resulted in an quasi-constructive environment. Questions at The Classical Academy are what guided instruction, rather than a prescribed curriculum. A student-centered classroom experience followed.

Relationships served as the driving force that propelled motivation and a love for learning content at The Classical Academy. This was not a challenge due to the fact class sizes for beginning instrumental students were capped at 18-20 students in homogenous classes. Rarely was the band office not bustling with students asking questions about class, having casual conversation, or sharing of newly acquired instrumental skills. This was a sign of developing love of learning: a cornerstone in classical education. At The Classical Academy, all students are recognized to have potential at all things. Perhaps, though, the words of Karin Hendricks (2018) will sum up the power of relationships from a teacher’s perspective in music education that I experienced there:

They exude a sense of trust in the musical potential of their students—regardless of whether that potential is yet evident to anyone else. They empathetically consider each student’s needs, to determine the best approaches for bringing out that potential. Then they patiently keep the end goal in mind during the process of musical development, chipping away as each individualized step requires…they
make a musical place for everyone and delight in the opportunity to learn
themselves and to share in the process itself. (p.165)

Parental Inclusion

Parents have an obvious role in education with students, but at The Classical Academy, I learned early on that parent inclusion increased student motivation. Students learn not only during the school day with a teacher, but all day in every situation. The majority of a student’s time in a 24-hour day is actually spent outside of a school day with individuals other than the teacher. These individuals are coaches, instructors, and most importantly, parents, or guardians. It would make sense then for curriculum to have some connection to parents. These adult individuals in a child’s life have significant influence over reinforcement of ability. They can provide a source of motivation through affirmation or lack thereof. Value systems can often be originated from the adult influence in a child’s life at home. If a parent or guardian values something, it is likely that the child will too. So then, by educating parents in how to appreciate and encourage a student through music, that may pay dividends for the child. Values can be easily expressed by the simple act of participation or finding ways to get involved in the learning. At The Classical Academy, this aspect of parental inclusion was evident in the secondary instrumental classes.

My personal experience at TCA reflects the classical education philosophy. It includes an emphasis on parental involvement in the child’s learning. Teachers are encouraged, and expected, to have frequent parent communication and volunteer opportunities. I accomplished this by sending home weekly updates to parents. By doing so, it increased student motivation and achievement having parents reinforce what was being taught. Parents had a checklist of what to expect from their students at home for music. Periodically, they also had questions I had them
ask their student to reinforce instruction. Those are only a few aspects of my personal experience. Schools like The Classical Academy have come about for many reasons, but one of the primary reasons is educational reform’s effects on quality education.

**Exponential Progress**

Learning in music seemed exponential at this school as compared to previous experiences at other non-classical schools; it was hard to keep up with the pace at first. For example, students were playing half of their major scales and full range chromatic scales by the end of the first year at a march tempo. By the time they reached eighth grade, they were eager to play upper grade two music, pushing into the grade three realm. To give context, a freshmen ensemble at a high school (students who typically who have played for about three years) would likely be performing grade three repertoire. One result of this seemingly increased learning pace in music was an MEA conference performance during my time there. The MEA conference is a gathering of music educators for professional development. Clinicians and ensembles are brought in to highlight and teach all things about music. Performance at a state’s MEA conference is a prestigious honor. Achieving a successful audition to perform at an MEA conference reflects the merits of a music program and curriculum.

Students at TCA began on their instruments in seventh grade and the resulting performance at the MEA conference was a year and a half later! Most of the middle level ensembles performing at the MEA conference are students who had been learning their instruments anywhere from 3-5 years. Students attained many musical skills at an accelerated rate.
Education Today

The paradigm of education has evolved over the last several decades (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). A simple search on Google reveals the multitude of ideas and philosophies on educational practices that exist today. We live in a world of constant reform; classrooms are quickly becoming more student-centered environments (Aslan & Reigeluth, 2015, Levin, 2001). Some elements of today’s paradigm shift in education might be seen more frequently than others. It has been said that, “Reformers have endorsed a variety of schooling alternatives to combat the decline of American education” (Veith & Kern, 2015, p. 10). Abdicratic, or student-centered teaching styles have replaced autocratic, or teacher-centered notions of instruction. Modern education has experienced a strong influence of constructivist practices across many curricular subjects, including being attentive to varying stages of cognitive development (i.e. sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete operational and formal operational).

Some schools’ adoptive curricular models put emphasis on holistic education while others have magnet paths in place for student learning. Schools under the European based International Baccalaureate banner or with specialized courses in a particular set of disciplines are example of this. Some students still receive a full education through homeschooling while others may experience education at an institution. Who is to decide which educational direction is better than the other? Parents are faced with tough choices in the realm of education. It appears education may not be a matter of private versus public anymore; rather, it seems to be a matter of philosophy and practice.

Classical education (at its core) “is to teach children in the ways they naturally want to be taught, despite not always knowing it” (Perrin, p. 5). Classical education emphasizes the importance of having an awareness of the developmental needs of the student, allowing for a
modest amount of self-regulated learning. It boasts a desire to seek educational beginnings that were founded in Greece and how students were taught in the past; it values attentiveness to a proper line of intellectual development. According to Perrin, “Classical education is old, which is why it now appears so new” (p. 6). Perrin is positing that when compared to the autocratic philosophies of education over the last several decades, classical education is starkly different. However, can classical education really be considered old when its philosophy includes constructivist notions that are currently taking the forefront in education?

The concern here, however, is not education as a whole, it is the education received in music. My brief experience at The Classical Academy inspired curiosity in its curricular practices. I wondered why tiered questions were effective as they were, why the parents seemed to be so readily involved when asked, and why the students loved to learn. It would be easy to assume that those characteristics can be found at most schools, but they seemed elevated at TCA. In light of this, my question became, what place might music have in classical education with its constructivist notions?

To answer this, ancient culture can shed light on the question of music in education. Music education has existed since the dawn of education itself in Greece (Stamou 2002). It was believed in the 5th century BC that music had a profound effect on what was once called the ethos. Ethos translates simply to one’s character. Plato, the Greek philosopher, described the influence of music by saying, “education in music is most sovereign, because more than anything else rhythm and harmonia find their way to the inmost soul and take strongest hold upon it, bring with them an imparting grace, if one is rightly trained” (Hamilton & Cairn, 1984).

Music and its effects on the mind, body, and soul can be found in all cultures of the world, which is a primary reason it exists in educational curriculum and standards in most
countries. It should be noted that not all countries have formal or institutionalized music education. Today’s legislation in education now recognizes music as a core subject in the US (NAfME, 2015). This has not always been the case. Classical education also includes music as one of its core subjects of what is called the *Quadrivium*, a Medieval, Boethian delineation of subjects taught by the earliest Greek philosophers (Palisca & Grout p. 38-39).

After combing through texts specific to classical education, it is apparent that music exists in a classical education, but very little is detailed about the specific philosophies and practices of music. What does music education really look like in a classical school? The literature that is available on classical education speaks philosophically to Bennet Reimer’s aesthetic approach to music education. According to Reimer, musical listening activities help individuals focus on the conceptual understanding of music from an aesthetic approach. In other words, through active listening, self-reflection in music, and participation in music, external connections between referential/symbolical aspects of music and human emotions can be made (Reimer, 2019). Surprisingly, this aligns with one homeschooling text that emphasizes classical education (Wise & Bauer, 2004). This is in direct opposition to David Elliott’s praxial approach to music education which is closely aligned with the popular perception of music education: performance in an ensemble (Spychiger, 1997) According to Elliot, it is the act of doing music, what he calls *musicking*, to which provides an internal connection with music and emotion. Even with this in mind, almost all published classical education texts did not include more than a page or two on music or “the arts” (Bauer, 2016, Bluedorn, 2001, Bortins, 2010, Perrin, 2004, Sayers, 2017, Veith & Kern, 2015). It is unclear if this is a reflection that the authors of these texts are not particularly skilled in the realm of music education and the arts, but the brevity of the sections appear to suggest that notion.
The purpose of this case study was to examine the philosophies, practices and perceived outcomes of secondary music at an American classical school. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What does the music education program look like in a classical school?
2. What are the perceived benefits and deficits of a classical education in music from music teachers and parents?
3. According to current music teachers and administrators at a classical school, how does music education reflect/not reflect the classical education model in this setting?
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The following review of literature constitutes thematic elements of classical education. The few cited sources are the only published texts specific to classical education detailing its history, philosophy and practices. It should be noted that only *Teaching the Trivium* by Bluedorn (2001) and *The Well-Educated Mind* by Bauer (2016) contain specific curricular concern in music. All other sources make casual mention to the broad term of the arts in classical education.

A Brief History

The roots of classical education lie historically in what is commonly known as the classical period (c. 600 BC – AD 476), not to be confused with the classical period in music (c. AD 1715-1800). The term classical and classic will be used frequently in this thesis depending on the context, but they will never be synonymous with the classical period in musicology. The two contexts are as follows: classical will be used, unless otherwise stated, to refer to the educational philosophies and practices of pre-diversified education developed over time beginning with ancient and Roman education. The term classic will be used to describe any texts or primary sources that are living works that have stood the test of time and exist as materials to learn from in classical education curricula. “Classical education is the authoritative, traditional and enduring form of education, begun by the Greeks and Romans, developed through history and now being renewed and recovered in the twenty-first century” (Perrin, 2004, p. 6).

There was little organizational basis for education in history before Greek philosophers began to be intentional in its delivery and curriculum. These philosophers began logically describing observed worldly phenomena as well as utilizing creative arts such as mythology to explain what may not have been understood at the time. During the earliest part of the Middle
Ages (c. AD 500-1460), Boethius (ca. 480-523), the revered authority on music at the time, spoke and wrote on the relationships between numbers and music. These ideas were compiled primarily from his Greek philosophical predecessors and culminated with his book *De institutione musica* (The Fundamentals of Music). He surmised that music had influenced one’s development of character and thus held an important foundational element in education (Burkholder, Grout & Palisca, 2014, p. 38-39). Beothius took the thematic subjects that Greeks taught from and organized them into what is now a foundational element of classical education, the *Trivium* (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and the *Quadrivium* (arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and the arts) (Perrin, 2004, p. 7). This would be the driving force of curriculum in classical education for years to come. Over the course of the Middle Ages, however, education and the arts were fueled by political concerns with The Great Schism.

Classical education regained influence from this point through two significant periods in history: the Reformation (AD 1350-1600) and the Enlightenment (AD 1517-1700). By this point, classical education ideals had spread outside of Greece and Italy. It is important to note that much of classical education was located within Christian contexts and was an avenue of spiritual or religious teaching alongside regular educational curriculum. The Reformation brought with it a return to both spiritual and Greek roots led by Martin Luther in opposition of humanism. The Reformation was, in a sense, the essence of classical education, harkening to the authoritative texts and practices that existed centuries prior. The Enlightenment period (c. 1700-1789) brought a departure from religious teachings as a cornerstone of influence in classical education and curricula evolved to include explorations of technology and the natural world. Methods of delivery and content, however, did not stray too far from classical education roots with the Trivium and Quadrivium.
Classical education can be linked to the liberal arts movement in America. Before the liberal arts movement, education in America was largely vocational, filled with didactic lectures and electivism (Harlow, 2003). It is unclear when classical education crossed over from its European roots, but evidence of classically taught individuals can be seen in America’s founding fathers who were “classically taught in literature, classical languages, history, and rhetoric, and who believed in God according to Judeo-Christian principles” (De Gree, 2014, p.6). One of the first promoted accounts of classical education reform in America is from Dorothy Sayers in her essay, *The Lost Tools of Learning*, from 1947. From this point forward until the twenty-first century though, classical education saw a decline in popularity while progressive forms of education took center stage. A constructivist, student-centered, abdicratic approach to education gained momentum. It is recognized that elements of classical education exist in modern education, but it certainly does not embrace classical education methodology completely (Perrin, 2004, p. 8).

**The Quadrivium and The Trivium**

If one were to attend a classical school’s professional development meeting for teachers, you could expect to hear something mentioned either about the *Quadrivium* or the *Trivium*. At the dawn of formal, organized education, there were four *subjects* determined to precede a complete knowledge of the world. These subjects were astronomy, arithmetic, music, and geometry. The combined four make up, as coined by Boethius, the *Quadrivium*. Greek philosophers Socrates, Aristotle, Pythagoras, and Plato were some of the proprietors of this educational philosophy in Greece, but it wasn’t until Boethius that these liberal arts were defined. (Schrade, 1947). The *Quadrivium* subjects were rooted in number manipulation. Astronomy was a manipulation of numbers in space and time, while arithmetic was the general
exploration of numbers and patterns to describe nature and logic. Music was an exploration of how numbers function through time, affecting the soul. The Greek philosopher Plato was perhaps the strongest advocate for the power of music, especially in its effect on values and behavior:

> Education in music is most sovereign, because more than anything else rhythm and harmony find their way to the innermost soul and take strongest hold upon it, bring with them and imparting grace, if one is rightly trained, and otherwise the contrary (Hamilton & Cairns, 1984).

Geometry was exploring numbers through just space. Though it may be hard today to grasp exactly what Greek philosophers concerned themselves with, it can be easily summed up to this: their study was that the mind, body, and soul’s interaction with the world around them was influenced by numeric patterns and manipulation therein. Classical education (as it is today) harkens back to the notion such that school subjects should reach mind, body and soul.

“Classical education is the authoritative, traditional and enduring form of education, begun by Greeks and Romans, developed through history and now being renewed and recovered in the twenty-first century” (Perrin, 2004, p. 6). It is important to note that music is recognized as a foundational subject in the earliest records of education, not just in classical education. Typically, six years of training in music was required of young individuals in ancient times (Lynch, 1972, p. 37).

To begin teaching the Quadrivium subjects, an organized method of delivery and way for students to learn the subjects needed to be developed. This came in the form of what classical education terms *The Trivium*, which is Latin for “three roads”. To master any subject, three levels of comprehension were required: grammar, logic, and rhetoric. A grammar level of
comprehension was what 19th century English scholar Dorothy Sayers (1947) calls the “poll-parrot” stage (p. 21). Students identify aspects of a subject to commit elements and facts to memory, much in the way music is sometimes taught by rote. Students create mental constructs, procedural memories, and declarative knowledge of a subject to begin the art of metacognition. Metacognition is the process of thinking about one’s own thinking (Dunlosky & Metcalfe, 2009, p. vii). Responding to simple why questions constitutes the logic or reasoning level of understanding in a subject. Students explore what boundaries exist in a subject and begin to demonstrate an application of the grammar-level knowledge at this stage. The rhetoric level is the application stage of learning in classical education. Students take all previous learned knowledge and exploration to synthesize, evaluate, and create new ideas that define an understanding of a subject (Sayers, 1947).

A simple way to understand the Trivium is by thinking through the progression a young person learns a language. The grammar stage constitutes a young person learning the basic elements of a language such as phonics and general comprehension in the language. The logic or dialectic stage shows a young person mastering arguments, patterns, and fallacies emphasizing reason. At the rhetoric stage, students exhibit and practice persuasive speech (Bluedorn, 2001, p. 84). The important aspect to note in this example is that it reflects the natural way something may be learned without skills like reading or writing: exploration, experimentation, application, and reflection.

In terms of music, the three stages of the Trivium are evident in the process of developing music literacy. The grammar level in the Trivium is defined by all of the theoretical knowledge needed to begin reading the music (i.e. notes, rhythms, symbols). The grammar level also includes the fundamentals of each individual instrument with such items as embouchure,
fingerings, and tone production. Both music theory and performance skill on an instrument require mastery and young students often find themselves in the grammar stage of development for long durations. During the logic stage of study, basic music making happens by combining music theory and performance skill. Pattern recognition and musical relationships emerge through concepts like scales and chordal progressions, which enhances the study of music beyond the grammar stage. Written music becomes a puzzle to solve during this stage. During the rhetoric stage in the Trivium, students might exhibit an aesthetic experience with the written music being studied. A student takes knowledge gained from the previous two stages and is able to apply it to new forms of music. In terms of Bloom’s Taxonomy, which is a model of intellectual engagement, the rhetoric stage would encompass the top two or three levels (Krathwohl, 2002).

The three stages of the Trivium should not be confused with Piaget’s stages of cognitive development (Bates, 2016, p.48). His stages were derived through longitudinal observation and study. They operate on the observed transitions from sensorimotor development to formal operational in four stages, rather than three stages. The Trivium stages typically begin with a student from ages 5-11 (grammar), ages 11-14 (logic), and ages 14-18 (rhetoric) in relation to one particular subject’s mastery (Perrin, 2004). What this indicates in classical education is that students are guided for an extended period of time in the earlier stages of the Trivium. That is not to say that a student wouldn’t have opportunities to explore logic, reasoning or rhetoric experiences at a younger age, but it may look different than the older ages. The importance of the Trivium in this light by Perrin is that the emphasis on which level of the Trivium is related to the natural development of a child (Perrin, 2004). As a summary, Perrin provides an easily understood overview of the Trivium:
We can imagine such a student in college tackling a new subject. He has learning in the early “grammar” years to approach a subject by breaking it down to its fundamental parts and mastering them by memorizing them – using chants, songs and other mnemonic devices. He has learned during their “logic” years to study the ordered relationship among these parts, and to derive the principles that govern them. Finally, he has learned during his “rhetoric” years to discover how to take his acquired knowledge and communicate it effectively and creatively, applying it to new and varied situations and needs (p. 23).

Authors Veith and Kern (2015) take note that the seven subjects found in the Quadrivium and Trivium are not necessarily true subjects in and of themselves, but rather tools for learning; They metaphorically describe the Quadrivium and Trivium as “the trunk of the tree of learning, on which the various sciences are branches” (Veith & Kern, p. 17). This is important as it can be easy to convolute the meaning of what a subject is and what is actually being taught in a classical education. Practical guides and informational texts on classical education include general sciences as the “subjects” to be taught as educators would normally expect: math, reading, writing, geography, arts, physical education, history, and science. (Bortins 2010, Bauer, 2001, Bluedorn, 2001, Veith & Kern, 2015).

**In Loco Parentis**

Perrin (2004) sets aside a section of his introduction to define an essential element of a classical education: involvement of the parent. Classical educators believe that it is the parent’s responsibility to educate children, not the teacher’s. This is due largely to the fact that historically, parents taught their children at home in the classical style. Classical education schools advocate parental initiative by using the Latin term *in loco parentis*, meaning that
teachers are only continuing and enhancing children’s education by providing specific experiences and expertise. This term is often used in governmental law in guardianship issues where someone steps in as the parent for the natural parent who may be incapable for some reason (Conte, 2000). Teachers decide the content of the curriculum, but they seek a relationship with parents in the education process. In other words, a classical school exists to assist parents and not to be the sole influence over a child’s learning.

Classical education may very well have its strongest hold not in a traditional school building. Instead, homeschooling aligns strongly with the element of parent-involved education. Two publications about homeschool experiences with classical education were published in 2004 (Wise & Bauer, 2004) and 2016 (Bauer, S.), respectively. Both contain very similar content about practical ways for parents to utilize classical education practices to teach their children as well as overall summaries of the benefits to classical education. Though there is significant amount of detail given in the discourse, the authors’ writing on music was overshadowed by all other subjects.

In the earlier publication, the authors describe what the educational practices in music they recommend for a homeschooled child who is being taught through a classical education lens. The first requirement is having a child of age 1-4 “spend half an hour or so listening to classical music” (Wise & Bauer, 2004, p. 209). Pairing this with something like a coloring book gives a child an activity to associate with listening. According to the authors, the goal early on is for a child to be aware of what they hear, not necessarily what they are coloring. Coloring is a natural activity for most children while listening to classical music may not be. This skill of association eventually translates into more descriptive knowledge as the child grows older and becomes curious about music. This includes a biographical understanding of the composer and
other historical connections. As a student progresses in age and ability to comprehend and enjoy music through the previous years of music appreciation, the authors suggest an even more tactile approach to music, which would be to take instrumental lessons or find a book course of self-study so that both the child and parent can learn together. The key with both music appreciation and early instrumental lessons in classical education is the notion of repetition. This is similarly reflected in Japanese Suzuki Method, where parents learn music side-by-side with their child. This supervisory role that a parent fulfills in the Suzuki Method is similar to the classical approach. A short introduction to the Suzuki Method points out that “We simply have to train and educate our ability, that is to say, do the thing over and over again until it feels natural, simple and easy” (Suzuki, 1993, p. 41).

Authors Veith & Kern (2015) also include in their publication an introductory section that defines what they feel are the three big elements to classical education. The first is that classical education is language-focused. Students learn by wrestling with words, both written and spoken. There are very few educational materials that come in the form of pictures, videos or other electronic media. The argument made by the authors is that the brain works harder to translate symbols and abstract concepts into manageable understandings than it does to process and understand words. The second element is the aforementioned Trivium. Students learn in certain ways based on their developmental stages as well as the skills acquired at the various stages. Classical education provides the needed skills at critical stages of development. The third element, according to the author, is that “all knowledge is interrelated” (Bauer & Wise, 2004, p. 15). Depending on the context, this is commonly referred to as co-curricular or cross-curricular teaching. All subjects are not taught in isolation in true classical education curriculum. For
example, children might be reading The Great Gatsby in one class, studying the 1920’s in history, and learning about jazz culture in music class from that same era.

A 2016 text from Wise and Bauer does not include any indication of curricular direction in music; rather, it outlines a set of processes, resources and mindsets of tackling the concept of self-education through literacy in music. Self-education in music from this text can be interpreted in terms of the cognitive processes of self-regulation as discussed by Zimmerman and colleagues (1995, 1998, 2001, 2007, 2013). According to Zimmerman (2001), self-regulation is “the directive process through which learners transform their mental abilities into task related skills.” In this case, those skills are tied into declarative and procedural musical skills. There are no other implications for music from this text.

**Authentic Curriculum and Scrupulous Rectitude**

Out of several key elements in classical education, authentic curriculum is clearly the easiest to see from a distance. Many classrooms today ask for students to define the difference between a primary and secondary source of information. A primary source is the original documentation where factual information originated from. Secondary sources are summations, interpretations, or compilations of primary source information. Classical education promotes the use of primary sources in its teaching. Author Leigh Bortins (2010) writes about a classical student reading a 19th century Charles Dickens novel at the same time as a 19th century Elizabeth Gaskell novel who discovers a thematic thread that ties the two authors together: justice amidst oppression. In light of this discovery, Bortins writes, “The ideas may have been imparted to her by ‘dead authors’, but they have current applications” (Bortins, 2010, p. 55). Are the only appropriate pieces of literature in music at a classical school those that have moralistic significance, or those that were composed by someone who is already deceased?
By solely using primary sources for learning, classical education aims to provide knowledge through the moralistic values that our forefathers wrestled with. This leads to the notion of scrupulous rectitude, or the detailed attentiveness to the morally correct behavior found in classical schools. History shows that classical education’s practices and curricular methods such as the Trivium have been evident in the church.

As we shall see, parochial education even today retains elements of classical education. Many Catholic schools still model their curricula on the medieval education archetype, some more consciously and with greater rigor than others. A number of Lutheran parochial schools are also returning to their classical roots. Certainly, the catechetical model of religious education as practiced in Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed traditions is grounded in the classical method: children memorize creeds and prayers (grammar); they work through the catechism, which is written as a dialectical exchange of questions and answers (logic); then they make their own profession of faith at Confirmation (rhetoric) (Veith & Kern, 2015, p. 21)

Beyond the Trivium there is a superimposed fourth level of learning that is found in many classical schools: the Socratic method (Vlastos, 1995). In classical education, once a student reaches the rhetoric level of engagement with a subject or perhaps even smaller topic of study, it becomes a categorized experience to call upon in future learning, tying in with it all previous logic and grammar level understandings as well. Classical education has an element of truth-seeking in its foundations. In classical education, the aforementioned primary sources are an access to the truths. These sometimes appear in the form of universal truths or questions philosophers wrestle with such as, “Is man inherently good or bad?” Students participate in a round-table, philosophical discussion to come to an answer on a truth. Perhaps the best
explanation of the instructional purpose of the Socratic Method is from a philosophy journal in 1980, which states, “The Socratic Method, then, is the art of teaching not philosophy but philosophizing, the art of not teaching about philosophers, but of making philosophers of the students” (Nelson, 1980, p.34). Why should students seek truth in any given subject rather than a prescribed curriculum with empirical evidence to be tested for knowledge acquisition? The answer perhaps lies in the words of Dr. John Gregory, a founder of the University of Illinois in 1867 and influential educator of the 19th century, “Knowledge lies in nature in scattered facts, mixed and confused; connected it is true…and learned by mankind only through ages of observation. [The school] offers in its books and apparatus the labors of other learners, which may serve as charts of the territories to be explored…through the fields of knowledge. (Gregory, p. 102, 2004). From epistemological perspective, this is a positivist notion of truth; it exists independent of the human mind. This was a commonly held belief of this period.

The question now becomes how does a music teacher utilize authentic, primary sources and have Socratic discussions to seek truth in music? There are no texts or resources currently available that display answers to those questions. Hodges (2017) shares that “music can provide important insights by imitating ultimate truth, beauty, and harmonious balance” (p. 110). This is a Greek philosophy held strong by the likes of Plato and other philosophers which is where classical education is rooted. One can assume these instructional philosophies that seek ideals such as truth or beauty exist in music at a classical school but have yet to be recorded. Future explorative study will need to occur to answer that question.
Chapter 3

Method

The following chapter includes the methodology and approach I took to gain the needed data for this study. It includes information about the site of the research, participants, and the forms of analysis. The purpose of this case study was to examine the philosophies and practices of secondary music at an American classical school. Case study research is the empirical inquiry of a particular occurrence or phenomenon that reflects and retains holistic real-life events. (Creswell, 2013, Yin, 2009). A case study was the chosen method for this study because it provided opportunities for a personal account of those working inside this school. A personal account provides more unique forms of data through quotation and expressed experience that may not have been gained through quantitative or other qualitative means. The bounded system case present in this study was the music program at a classical school in southern Colorado, The Classical Academy.

Research Site

The Classical Academy is a K-12 charter school in southern Colorado consisting of approximately 3600 students across seven campuses in three buildings. The primary reason why this location was chosen was because of its familiarity to the researcher. This classical school has also demonstrated a history of excellence in the southern Colorado music community under the banner of classical education. In secondary instrumental and vocal music, The Classical Academy has received many accolades of recognition in musical and pedagogical achievement. These include three Colorado Music Educators Clinic/Conference appearances, consistent representation of students in extracurricular honor ensemble participation by audition, over a dozen state qualifying state competition performances in concert band, a high and consistent
retention rate in music from grade to grade in both choral and instrumental music, a 2A marching band finalist 4 times with two 1st place wins, and consistent participation in All-State ensembles across both choir and band (Jolly 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). Out of the approximately 1100-1200 students comprising the secondary student population, about 65% of students participate in music. There are no other secondary music programs of that size in southern Colorado who boast a classical education focus in instruction.

Participants

Among the seven secondary music teachers at The Classical Academy, one choral teacher and one instrumental music teacher was selected to be interviewed. These participants have demonstrated a lineage of excellence in music at The Classical Academy for a combined number of almost 30 years of experience in their respective content-specific area. These participants were recruited by email contact. Email addresses were acquired through the school website resource under the staff directory link.

The choral teacher will be referred to in this case study as Elizabeth to preserve anonymity. This teacher was selected because she has been a veteran teacher at this school for over twenty years and represents a perspective of grades 9-12 of music instruction. Elizabeth is the fine arts department lead at The Classical Academy and has led the 9-12 choral program the entire time of her tenure. Through this role, Elizabeth works closely with the director of educational philosophy at the school to align fine arts instruction with classical education initiatives.

The secondary instrumental teacher will be referred to as Kyle to preserve anonymity. Kyle was selected because they have significantly less experience at The Classical Academy.
Kyle, at the time of this study, has over 8 years of experience at this school with a focus in grades 7-8. His philosophies and practices have grown the junior high instrumental program beyond administrator expectations seeing a growing number of students pursuing post-secondary study in music.

An administrator, Bill, has worked at this school for over 10 years serving as both the high school principal and the junior high principal during their time. The principal actively supports the music program through extra-curricular attendance, frequent observations, educational coaching sessions for teachers and financial advocacy for program endeavors.

This case study also included a focus group with parents of current or former students from the secondary instrumental and choral music programs. Selection of these participants were random. A list of interested parents were given a number from 1-20. A random number generator was used to select five participants for the focus group interview. Selected participants were allowed to include a spouse as desired for the interview session.

Forms of Data

The forms of data that were collected in this case study were interviews, documents from the institution, and field observation notes. All semi-structured interviews were facilitated by a researcher-developed protocol. One interview was with a high school choral music teacher, one with a middle level instrumental music teacher, and the third with an administrator. Additional qualitative data was gathered by a semi-structured focus group interview of 5 parents of current and/or former students from the instrumental music program at this school. Upon completing the interviews, the recordings were downloaded to a personal computer for playback and transcribing. The recordings were transcribed verbatim using the Google Transcribe application
paired with an Infinity foot pedal. Each of the semi-structured interviews were recorded using a Zoom H1 sound recording device. A time limit of one hour was placed on each interview session. The interviews were timed and did not exceed the determined time limit. Upon completion of the interview, the recording was downloaded to a personal computer for playback and transcribing. The interview transcript was sent to each of the participants to ensure accuracy and member check the data. No statement omissions were requested by participants.

Finally, a non-participant observation of one high school choral class and one junior high instrumental class took place. The purpose of these observations was to correlate currently any observed practices with described philosophy by participants and researched text. I took field notes using a T-column note format. The left column was the list of actual observations occurring in each class and the right column reflected preliminary interpretations of the observation. The field notes were copied into Microsoft Word on a personal computer for future reference. These field notes were organized by content to uncover emerging patterns of instruction in music at this classical school and compared to the emergent coding found in the interview transcripts.

**Data Analysis**

Following the interview and transcript creation, I conducted an inductive analysis. A two-step verification process was initially followed at the completion of transcription. The first step was to compare the transcript accuracy with the audio recording. The second step was to member-check the transcripts. There were two rounds of analysis needed for the data. The first round consisted of an open coding process. Open coding is the process in which codes characteristic of the text are generated to help explain a phenomenon or classify an excerpt in an organizational manner through multiple readings of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Codes
used initially in this study were Phi (philosophy), Curr (curriculum), PI (parent involvement) and Cl-Or (classically oriented). Emergent themes included in no particular order: background, challenges, curriculum/practice, philosophy, parent involvement, structure, and unique statements. Coded themes and subsequent textual support were cross-referenced with initial research questions.

To triangulate data, I gathered artifacts such as scope and sequence curriculum documents, lesson plans, concert programs/recordings, philosophical documents from the music program that highlight potential answers to the research questions in this case study. Some artifacts were collected from the school’s website. A second round of analysis consisted of comparing codes from all data sources to discover emerging themes. The T-charted field notes were compared with emergent transcript themes. Supporting curricular documents were organized by function and then cross-referenced with emergent transcript themes.

**Credibility and Trustworthiness**

All discussion points came from a triangulation of data of various sources to help limit bias. Triangulation is the collection and analysis of additional forms of data (Flick, Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004). Triangulation is important to qualitative research to increase validity and credibility of the research results. Triangulation was maintained by analysis of interview transcripts, detailed field notes, and collection of primary source documents from the school. Interview transcripts were member-checked by sharing them with the participants and receiving a signed document or email confirmation stating agreement to the content of the transcripts. No statement omissions were requested by participants. Interview statements were then compared to source document statements to examine alignment or disagreement. Field observation notes were documented and logged by the researcher. The analysis of the field notes were compared to the
interview transcripts for similar themes. Field notes, logs and primary source documents were scanned and stored on a personal computer in a folder labeled *Classical Music Education Research*. All scanned document’s file names correlated with the title of the document itself or the content contained within. Transcript documents that were transcribed from the audio recordings were stored on a personal computer in the same folder labeled *Classical Music Education Research*.

**Researcher Bias**

Addressing potential bias in this case study consisted of interview protocol questions that were open-ended and ensured accuracy of the transcript with the sound recording. Open-ended protocol questions in this study specifically guided interview dialogue to center around the school and its practices itself, not my personal experience at this school. Observations accurately reported what was interpreted and observed in class sessions, being member-checked by the observed teacher. These observations were made from an objective perspective, ensuring that no implied interpretations took place. Field observations did not contain ambiguity or generalized statements. Although I have experience at this classical school, my experience was not included in the discussion to further address bias. Confirmation bias was limited by accurately stating how the data does or does not support the research questions in this study and member-checking the data. Any interpretive assumptions or hypotheses were challenged by the presented qualitative data.
Chapter 4

Kids First, Music Second

The following chapter includes quotations and summaries from each of the interviewees from this study. I chose a top-down approach here such that the principal’s perspective is presented first, then the secondary vocal teacher who has the most experience, followed by the secondary instrumental teacher, and finally the parent focus group. The Classical Academy began in 1996 with an idea of high-quality education in Colorado Springs from two local parents. The idea was to offer a classically-oriented school of high quality with affordable tuition. At the beginning, there was just a K-6 elementary school, but by 2009 there were seven individual schools under the TCA banner (TCA History). There are four roots that solidify the vision at The Classical Academy: all human beings deserve dignity and respect, self-evident truths found in The Declaration of Independence, student education is centered around exemplary citizenship, and parents are the ultimate responsible party in educating their children (TCA Core Values). This is the framework of education at The Classical Academy. The focus here is on the junior high and high school portions at the north campus. When TCA was established, the founding board members of the school decided that 600 students was the ideal number for high school enrollment and 400 students was the enrollment cap for junior high.

Upon arriving at The Classical Academy North building, I was greeted with an overwhelming welcome by the junior high school secretary. This building is one of three buildings but contains three out of the seven campuses that comprise all of The Classical Academy. After several minutes of greeting, the administrator welcomed me in to his office and our interview began. His demeanor throughout the interview was of extreme pride and graceful
support of the school he was apart of. He spoke fondly of the classical education focus of the school and even moreso of the music program throughout his interview.

Bill, Principal

Background

He began his teaching career, however, out in Los Angeles teaching mathematics for both traditional and private schools. At some point, he decided to leave teaching and entered administration as a principal for about ten years. A position opened in Colorado at Colorado Springs Christian School which he held for two years. Around the end of the second year, another opportunity opened at The Classical Academy at the high school campus which he took on for about five years.

After being asked about his background in classical education before becoming an administrator at TCA, Bill indicated that he indeed had good content knowledge of it. He knew several friends who used classical models in homeschooling. He took the time to edify himself in founding writers on classical education such as Dorothy Sayers. He fell in love with the age bracket of junior high and saw himself as someone who could care and nurture it through his deep care for students he upholds daily.

Philosophy

According to Bill, TCA is not a true classical school, but rather a blended classical model. It has taken many years for the school to reach the point it is at today with a more classical focus. TCA’s history involves a strong college preparatory model mixed in with classical avenues of instruction. This included a curriculum that held high rigor paired with a classical approach.
TCA has taken a lot of years to figure out kind of who we are classically. And that’s grown from, I believe, the twelve years I’ve been here. Over my twelve years, I think we’ve really grown and [to know] this is what is to be classical and be TCA. (Interview, January 2020)

TCA values the arts in a child’s education. As students begin a more focused approach to arts education in seventh grade, there is a compulsory model in place such that students choose either band or choir for their music component of study. It is believed at TCA that by requiring and participating in music, that an appreciation and desire for it will grow and students will traverse towards ownership of it in their lives. In other words, when music is valued by those instructing and supporting it, students will naturally find value in it. Further, Bill noted that the design and desire of the music program was not to be utilitarian and instead for it to be an equal partner in the education of a whole child.

The real component is the human being side of [music education], the whole child. If it was just because, man, you’ll benefit from being a choir singer, there isn’t actually any value in that. In other words, music doesn’t hold value, it only holds value if you perceive it holds value. And as a classical educational organization we [think] music holds value in and of itself, and you appreciate it. (Interview, January 2020)

Though there are normal concert cycles found in many school music programs, those performances are to hold only a secondary or tertiary focus at TCA. In terms of retention based on this philosophy, Bill’s responses and a source document on retention rate noted that approximately 85% of students in both band and choir transition from the junior high music program to the high school program consistently from year to year by choice. High school music
is an elective at TCA. Compulsory music only works at the junior high, according to him, because the right people are in the classrooms in front of students.

So what is the goal of the arts in a child’s life at TCA? It is that in a whole-child education, practices, content, and curricular decisions are meant to develop an identification and appreciation of truth, beauty, and goodness. The goal, according to Bill and referring to the band program is not to have the best concert band by the students’ 8th grade year for example, but rather that students will covet and crave music.

Um, well it’s interesting because a lot of the educational programs are progressive in nature right now. Very utilitarian. Do music if you like music. I’m sorry, in a classical model to us is part of the whole child. We believe every kid should have it. Music for us is a priority that we’ve actually emphasized. Therefore, we actually have put it to a level where it’s not an optional level. If we made it optional, they would actually not feel like we thought it was a priority for them or something that we wanted to invest into. If you’ve done it for two years, it really changes every piece of music you listen to later.

(Interview, January 2020)

Bill indicated that even amid the successes of state MEA performances and honor band representation, the pinnacle of a classical music program is not to have the best music program. Instead, at the junior high at least, it is to do right by kids by having a program that is of quality. The outcome of the junior high band program is that there is a strong concert band, but it is not the end game. The goal is more child-centered than that.

We have the greatest 7th grade band ever! And this is actually a really strong group of 7th graders. Next year, what if we don’t have kids with musicality in that way and we could be like, oh, we’re failing; not our best year ever. No. Right by kids to develop that
appreciation and understanding and really identify truth, beauty and goodness through the arts. That’s what we want to do. (Interview, January 2020)

Curricular Practices

At this school, students don’t begin a focused form of study, either vocal or instrumental, until their 7th grade year. Bill made note that use of the Trivium as instructional practice does exist in the music program. At the beginning levels of focused instruction, out of the three levels of the Trivium, a lot of time is spent on grammar level questions and conversations. Many students are not able to read music at the seventh-grade level. The learning process of how a student discovers something new, such as a musical instrument or their voice, is held by teachers to follow the natural progression. Conversations and discussion serve as the primary guides for musical instruction. As students progress in their development, so does conversation in music.

In the classroom, teachers do have meaningful conversations about the music around it, not just our goal is for you to play. Right? So, lots of good meaty conversations. And hopefully, as they’re learning that instrument, they’re learning how to read the music, lots of great conversations around the music. At the beginning, there’s no room for conversation. By the time you get after 3/4ths of the seventh-grade year, really, there’s a lot of room for it. (Interview, January 2020)

When speaking more specifically about blending Socratic methodology, he indicated that is an essential role to who TCA is. Socratic methodology increases student voice, students’ ideas, and opens the doors to exploration of those ideas through questioning. He indicated that these are important and probably seen in many classrooms. He described the difference in a classical school in that there is simply more structure, nomenclature, and efforts placed towards the Socratic methodology in classrooms at TCA.
Bill shared a recent classroom observation to illustrate how learning conversations work even at the beginning instrumental levels. The music teacher put the responsibility of learning on the students. The class he observed was a beginning percussion class of about eight or nine students. The teacher broke down the music to all parts and had students discuss their role in the context of their peers’ parts through open discussion. Bill indicated that conversations like those are where learning can be found in a classically-oriented classroom. It is the concern for a child’s development through the conversational process that will pay dividends, according to Bill.

We try not to teach them what to think always. But it naturally comes into play. So it’s not that we want to say here’s your seven things you should know…We would love to read a piece of literature and [discover] the seven things you should know. It takes a longer time to develop that in kids…so that isn’t going to reap as many dividends in the short term, but it will in the long term. (Interview, January 2020)

Progress and success in the music program at TCA are evidenced by great concerts, student support, parent support, and financial support administratively. Bill did indicate that there is not a portfolio type of evidential report of progress for music like visual arts has at the school, but concerts are a great celebration of progress that subsequently displays growth and quality in the music program.

**Challenges**

During the interview Bill made note of some challenges that exist within the current structure and system the arts program has at TCA. Due to the compulsory component, as students come into the junior high, they are offered only two options to choose from in their course load as every other course is predetermined. In addition to music and their regular courses, the predetermined supplemental courses that all students take are physical education,
latin/classics, art, and computers. Academic rigor found in these courses deters some students away from TCA and perhaps some students who would have benefitted from the compulsory nature of the performing arts. Additionally, there may be some fallout of students choosing not to continue on into high school levels of performing arts due to the increase in elective opportunities provided there.

Bill made note of the danger of a myopic viewpoint in a teacher’s content area amidst a whole child education. Junior high at TCA is only grades seven and eight; a typical junior high grouping. There is unspoken pressure to teach many things in that short amount of time before students move on to the high school. The goal of a whole-child education is meant to be such that interdisciplinary connections can be made and students grow through them. This takes time, communication, and planning. Bill describes the rapid ascent of learning that occurs in the junior high level for students as a challenge for teachers to maintain focus outside of their content area.

When you take someone from nothing, instrumentally or vocally, and you try to get them to a level where they can in a community exist as a member of a choir or band, it’s a pretty rapid ascent. The ascent makes it hard not to focus on your world and stop thinking whole child. And so there’s a hard part for our fine arts people. They do it well, not becoming myopically focused that their [content] is the whole person, it is a small part of it. The end is not the music only, it’s really the development of the child in that program.

(Interview, January 2020)

The current model and rapid ascent comes with a financial and time constraint. In terms of homework, administration and teachers have agreed that for band, an invest of 30 minutes three times a week into the development of a student’s skill on an instrument is adequate because an expectation to play adequately well is in place. This time commitment is equivalent to the time
expected of students doing math homework in a week. A financial cost is that the amount of staff it takes to run the current music model at TCA is substantially higher than area schools. There are currently seven full-time staff members in music, with four of those alone instructing the junior high music courses. A brief survey of area schools’ directories revealed that the average number of teachers instructing the music program, band and choir, was only two.

Structure

Throughout the interview, Bill made note of a couple unique structural elements of TCA and its music program. The first has already been noted in the philosophy: compulsory music. This compulsory element to music beginning in junior high keeps staffing and student numbers high. Currently, TCA’s music program at the secondary level has three full-time band teachers, four full-time choral teachers, one full-time theater teacher, one part-time accompanist, one part-time accompanist/administrative assistant, and one part-time sound tech/administrative assistant.

Good teachers create good schools. I really believe that we’ve had great people in our band and vocal music programs who are deeply committed to this understanding of children gaining appreciation, understanding depth that betters and benefits students in their development as a person. When people invest into really high levels, the natural response is, wow, this is really important. (Interview, January 2020)

Socratic methodology in classical education is best facilitated through smaller class sizes. Bill noted that the structure of smaller class sizes maxing out around at 24 students fosters an environment of student voice, where teachers can guide conversation rather than give information. Prior to the Socratic level of student engagement, however, the Trivium is to be followed in instruction and comprehension.
In music, significant time is spent on grammar level learning. Structurally, that is one reason why students don’t start on an instrument until seventh grade. Seventh grade band and choir students are separated by instrument or voice types to expedite learning. During a day of field observation, it was noted that some classes were as small as eight students, and others only as large as 20 students in most seventh grade classes. In the case of vocal music, numbers of students enrolled were noted to be larger than band, but a rotation schedule has been implemented to curve the teaching load and provide smaller class sizes.

Music is in smaller groups too. I think you have to do it in music. Even in the model we’re using where we start from scratch in 7th grade, you couldn’t do that with 35 kids. You have to really pay those costs up front for them to get that level of appreciation. If I look at seventh grade, we’ve structured classes to be kind of instrument grouping specific so that they can actually focus on developing this part of an understanding of the larger group and how they play. (Interview, January 2020)

**Parent Involvement**

Only a couple statements were made about parents and their involvement in the students’ learning in music at TCA during the Bill’s interview. Parents will generally support if their student has found excitement and joy in what they are learning regardless of the subject matter. He shared a story of a recent student who wanted to leave the band program and the parent told their child that transferring out was unacceptable; they valued the experience music had for their student.

I mean, out of 420 families or kids, it would be absurd to think that all 420 are like, this [music] is the greatest thing ever. Now, you do have some parents who are just there for the ride. I’m not sure societally, forget classical and non-classical, I’m not sure the level
of support of parents always rises to that level right now just culturally as a norm in the big picture. (Interview, January 2020)

The support from parents in the classical model can be the greatest challenge. Bill shared an example of seventh grade students working through a piece of classic literature in English class through the Trivium. Over the course of just a few weeks, students move from grammar to rhetoric level discussions. Parents see students struggling with complex ideas and the metacognition that follows with it. He contrasted that example to music stating that students struggle similarly in their seventh-grade year in figuring out their instrument or voice. But after a concert cycle, a support is set forth in both students and parents in most cases. Through both the winsome nature of music and the compulsory model, an appreciation of the arts grows in parents as well.

**Unique Statements**

There were several notable statements from Bill throughout the interview that stood out that had no other emergent theme upon coding and qualitative analysis to fit into. They are noted below for inclusion in this study:

A strong fine arts program breeds a passion for strong fine arts. (Interview, January 2020)

Right people, mandated curriculum; you have to show growth. You can’t be a stagnant program. (Interview, January 2020)

I think it’s interesting that when we’ve given away all these arts programs in schools, we’ve given away something that a kid needs. And if they really need it, it just happens that we’ve tied it to our classical identity. I’m not sure that other schools don’t know they
need it, they just functionally have had to remove it by cost or desire. (Interview, January 2020)

It’s always going to be hard for a high school band to not want to be a great high school band and compete as a great high school band. Always going to be hard. You lose sight of the development of the child in that process, you really lose the classical mindset, and you can’t lose that. (Interview, January 2020)

In high schools and junior highs, but mostly high schools, you can see where the competitive models and the progressive nature of athletic competition, extracurriculars, everything else have been dropped in the classical models. They believe that it is actually competitive against the development of the classical child. I don’t think any of them ever dropped the music side of it. They would give up football programs in the pursuit of classical. (Interview, January 2020)

Elizabeth, Secondary Vocal Teacher

After Bill’s interview, it was time to head to the music floor two flights of stairs down to the lowest level of the north building. Following a brief observation in the band area, the next interview took place with the secondary vocal teacher. We walked to the school’s recently built performing arts center auditorium to find a quiet place for her interview. During her interview, there was a sense of peaceful pride in the classical education approach and the overall culture in the music program.
Background

Before teaching at The Classical Academy and even before teaching altogether, Elizabeth was not even planning on being a music educator. She has a masters degree in counseling but became really interested in music therapy, and specifically the music therapy program at NYU. After spending some time in music therapy and additionally teaching private lessons, Elizabeth accepted a job at TCA 22 years ago and has been a choral director there ever since. What brought her to becoming a music teacher was seeing a musical at a neighboring school and feeling a calling to work with students in some type of music setting. She began as a regular 5th grade teacher for several years TCA and then was asked to begin the secondary music program at the time when no secondary music program existed at TCA. Elizabeth felt that it was a spiritual decision that helped confirm her motivation and desire to be at TCA. Teaching provided an opportunity of endless challenges like no other place.

What keeps me here is that I am never bored. There is always something. Teaching is vitality itself, if you let it be. You have no end of challenges. As soon as a new group of people comes in the room, you have to make adjustments. There’s something for you to figure out. I think I love that ongoing relationship building and the challenge of the changes that happen all at the same time. (Interview, January 2020)

Philosophy

Elizabeth stated that TCA is classically-oriented. Though there are content specific practices, teaching and learning is about ideas and a whole-child experience. This comes through an avenue of relationships that help develop mind, body, and spirit. Elizabeth’s educational philosophy is echoed in the mission statement of the school which states, “The Classical Academy exists to assist parents in their mission to develop exemplary citizens equipped with
analytical thinking skills, virtuous character, and a passion for learning, all built upon a solid foundation of knowledge (TCA Core Values, 2010). Elizabeth mentioned that in her 22 years since starting the secondary music program, that focus has never changed.

Speaking in terms of the vocal music aspect of TCA’s program, Elizabeth mentioned that a breadth of knowledge is essential to learning in a classical education. The focus is not always on the depth of one type of music. Over the course of several years in the vocal music program, students are introduced to a variety of music genres to learn.

Philosophically, this is one of the biggest differences. We will never have kids only learning one deep type of music. So we will never have a stage choir, a jazz choir, that only does that and the kid isn’t in anything else. If they are going to learn jazz, they are going to learn classical too. We don’t have any room for narrow learning. Kids need the breadth of knowledge of music to really get a classical foundation in music. (Interview, January 2020)

At the conclusion of the interview, Elizabeth shared with great enthusiasm a brief story that illustrated the whole-child classical philosophy mindset that other teachers in the school have.

An English teacher was in my room the other day and I have a Jane Austen mouse pad, and he’s got a whole lot of music background. He was just saying he loves this feeling of all of us together respecting one another’s disciplines and in classical education, we value that whole-learning that students are doing across the board and teachers wanting to participate in their learning across other disciplines as well (Interview, January 2020).
Curricular Practices

Elizabeth offered just one example to illustrate the Trivium in action within a music classroom. The example was that of learning a piece of music from beginning to end. She explained both challenges and successes of using the Trivium in learning the music. She also identified all three stages, grammar, logic, and rhetoric level learning. She indicated that in sheet music, she has her students learn the score of a piece of music at the grammar level within only a few days; the grammar level is very fast.

The students are at the grammar level when they are attempting to decode the music and identify the notation, the rhythm, and for us, solfege. Then they identify what it sounds like. Sometimes it can be quite challenging at the grammar level, similar to learning a new math problem. But then you move from that to deepening their understanding through logic of how maybe they would analyze who was doing what in this piece? What is the role of the tenors right now? They are applying what they hear and taking it to that logical understanding of the music. And then, you might discuss the piece from the standpoint of the composer’s intentions and what aspects of the music generate what kinds of emotion and for what purpose. In one piece of music, you will go through grammar, logic, and rhetoric stages almost always. It’s partially built in, except for the teacher who never gets to the rhetoric discussion, which falls short of the whole purpose of why we’re doing this. (Interview, January 2020)

Elizabeth followed up to identify what a classical classroom looks like in music. The classroom environment has an atmosphere where the teacher guides learning through student-centered discussion rather than by direct instruction.
The first thing is, who seems to be doing the work of learning? Do we see questions being asked that cause them to have to use their knowledge to get to the next answer? Or do we see questions being asked and then the teacher answers it three seconds later without actually giving the student opportunity? That’s the opposite extreme. It’s just sort of a scholarly atmosphere of allowing the students to really do the thinking, and to use what they know to get to the next thing. (Interview, January 2020)

These statements are echoed in a document that outlines the intended Socratic approach in the classroom at TCA. Two statements from the document define this approach saying “The teacher masterfully guides learning through questioning,” and “The students do the work of learning and perform the act of knowing” (TCA Core Values, 2010).

**Challenges**

Elizabeth provided a few statements about the challenges of teaching music in the classical model. One challenge is the parent involvement factor mentioned later in its own section. The other is understanding how to be a classical teacher fostering discussion-based learning in music classes that typically require the teacher to be patient in the learning process to instruct classically. Students are provided extended time to wrestle through various aspects of music in practice and the literature therein to have a more meaningful experience later in discussion.

Since a classically-oriented classroom centers around discussion, it is challenging to avoid feeding information to students directly, especially with a larger number of students in class that is typical of any music ensemble class. Elizabeth indicated that it is easy to offer students information instead of waiting for them to wrestle through a posed question. Challenge
comes in the waiting period. The preparation time to be intentional with questioning for students is also a challenging process in the classically modeled music classroom.

It’s challenging just spending that extra time finding the kinds of questions that will bring them to rhetoric level thinking in your music room. It’s all there, music lends itself beautifully to this, but we have to take what they teach us in our education in general for classical and then we have to translate what does that look like in the music room.

(Interview, January 2020)

Elizabeth is also the department lead (DL) for fine arts at TCA. The department lead model was created several years ago to facilitate the organization of department goals in implementing classical education. DL’s, as they are called, get together regularly with the head of educational philosophy at the school and other administration to report and align classical initiatives. DL’s receive an open period in their load to plan for and work through disseminating information to their teams. One goal of DL’s is to help in the training process of new teachers primarily in classical education instruction and environment. This has proven to be an additional challenge for Elizabeth.

I think every time a new teacher starts, and I don’t mean this unkindly at all, then you have to begin again in that teacher’s classroom. They may understand some pieces of it, but it’s a gradual growth process for them to really understand the grammar, logic, rhetoric sequence, and recognize it is one big loop. It’s not, ok, well in this grade level we teach grammar level and in this level we teach logic level, and in this level, we teach rhetoric. This is true only to an extent. (Interview, January 2020)

Structure

Nothing was noted about music program or school structure from the interview.
Parent Involvement

Elizabeth offered several statements regarding parents and classical education. Part of the school’s mission statement is that teachers come behind parents in the education of their child. The actual word in the mission statement is assist (TCA Core Values, 2010). The challenge with parents according to Elizabeth is that sometimes parents don’t really want to be the ones to raise their child. So there are students whose parents are seldom involved. On the opposite end of the spectrum, since being trained through the primary ages, some parents in the secondary levels are highly invested. The challenge with parents on that end is that a teacher can’t always make a parent happy. The calming compromise is understanding the place the teacher has in the long run with assisting parents.

Yeah, it’s a tricky little place to be. But, if you see yourself as being the assistant to that parent, you’re going to be a lot better off than if it irritates you. If it gets under your skin, then you are not going to really settle too well here at TCA (Interview, January 2020).

Unique Statements

A few unique statements that did not quite fit into a specific code or emergent theme are included below. Even though some are based in philosophy, they did not have significant ties into music, but rather the school or personal philosophy in general. They reflect aspects of the respondent’s interview that were pertinent to include.

Learning and growing is constant in this world such that one of the beauties of what we’re doing is unchanging here in its goal. There is no end point of growth that you can make as a teacher here. So, while we have this way that we see as our end goal that we hope will be the type of educator that we are, you never arrive. It’s always another challenge in front of you (Interview, January 2020).
You never stop, you never want to stop. Part of our goal is to have them pursue learning and to love learning and not you ever want to stop learning (Interview, January 2020).

Kids first, music second, but with the goal that if you really have a passion for your subject, you build relationships with the kids and only then will you inspire them to their deepest or highest point of growth for the very subject that you love yourself so much, which in my case is music (Interview, January 2020).

**Kyle, Secondary Instrumental Teacher**

Following Elizabeth’s interview, the next one took place with one of the junior high band teachers after the conclusion of the school day. Throughout his interview, there was indication of immense joy and love for being a teacher of not only students at the junior high level, but the type of students he had the privilege to teach at The Classical Academy. His interview came with a humble and honest demeanor.

**Background**

Before coming to TCA, Kyle shared that he was one of the few people who has experienced three arenas of instructional atmospheres in schools. He began teaching in a private Christian school in Colorado Springs for a year. From there he transferred to a public school in Kansas for two years and then finally ended back in Colorado Springs at TCA, a charter school. Kyle is currently completing his 9th year at The Classical Academy as a band teacher, primarily working with junior high students. During all appointments, he has been an assistant director in many capacities, so to him, he is just one of the cogs that makes the system work.
Philosophy

When asked about what makes TCA a unique place to teach, Kyle indicated that the main feeling he has felt in his time has been an overwhelming sense of intentionality within the school. Teachers, administration, and parents are interested in the process more than the product. Kyle brought up a common teacher professional development in many schools and described it at TCA: in-services.

TCA is more intentional about the type of people they’re producing. The intentionality of all our in-services being geared with big ideas and philosophies that is discussed is actually applicable. We talk about building character and building life-long learners. There’s always a struggle between the arts and core classes, but that sort of stuff is applicable to you no matter what you teach, which of course is part of the whole liberal arts idea in the first place. (Interview, January 2020)

Kyle mentioned that the idea of educating based upon values such as virtue makes TCA a unique place. One of the current focuses in the fine arts department is helping students develop an understanding and idea of civility. He provided an example from the marching band and performance attendance to illustrate this.

When we give feedback to kiddos in marching band, we explain and expect you to say thank you because all criticism is a gift. So things like that in teaching etiquette for performance situations and being a good audience member; thinking about how you can be supportive of your peers in this arena. We are focused on how to create an atmosphere where it’s ok to make a mistake and that’s not a debilitating thing. (Interview, January 2020)
Additionally, he indicated that another unique aspect of TCA is a classroom environment that centers around authenticity and relationship. The classroom becomes more effective because a connection can be made through authenticity. This was echoed by an observation of the teacher’s social interactions with students prior to the beginning of class. And during a later class, there were several instances where students were chummy with the teacher during a session of sight-reading. The atmosphere of learning was surrounded with laughter and enjoyment (Field Notes, January 2020). With enthusiasm, he stated that the kids will do anything for the teacher once they’ve got that authentic relationship set in their learning.

Relationships is without a doubt the single most important thing to maximize a kiddo’s education. And while it is hard sometimes, especially with larger class sizes once you get into 8th grade, it helps. There’s no single other piece of the puzzle so to speak that has as great an impact as relationship. And that’s something that’s emphasized here more than elsewhere to our great advantage. (Interview, January 2020)

A final unique aspect to TCA that Kyle noted is its pursuit of aesthetic excellence in junior high music courses.

In the junior high realm, people don’t give kids enough credit for what they’re capable of producing aesthetically because we get caught up in teaching all the right notes and fingerings. Do the articulation like this, blah blah blah, but a lot of times we forget to tell the why. We are trying to create an experience for the audience and for us as we perform. There is that connection between us as performers and the audience that can be special when you choose the right music and build up to an experience. (Interview, January 2020)
Curricular Practices

Kyle made it clear when speaking on specific practices in the classroom that what he was going to share were the things he desires to do, indicating that some intentional practices do get lost. He stated that one of things he tries to do is ask questions in general to lead learning instead of an autocratic approach where activity instructions are the only means of learning. He indicated that there is a progression to be aware of in all things students are doing, moving from grammar to rhetoric level.

Classical education includes a curricular goal for students to experience and wrestle through primary sources (terms classics) in respective content areas. For example, in history, students may study The Constitution while in an English course, students may read Brothers Kazmarov by Dostevsky. The interview led to Kyle speaking about primary sources in the curriculum for junior high band.

Kyle described that the challenge with classic literature in music at the junior high level is that the landscape of junior high level music has changed significantly in the last 50 years. Many classics of the junior high repertoire now exist as classics at the high school levels. A shift in understanding what is classic literature for junior high musicians is needed.

So when it comes to that idea of trying to think about a core repertoire for junior high band, nobody is going back to the early 20th century to do that. The more important thing with junior high is to make sure that it is stuff that is the correct level for them and is going to be interesting to them. They need to know what it is to play a march or a ballad. All these different styles are still fundamental to a classical education in music.

(Interview, January 2020)
Several lesson plans including a template from recent years were obtained from the instrumental music program that align with the Trivium’s use in the classroom. One plan in particular was written out on march style and form. The lesson plan included spots for each level of questioning as the center of the teaching process to guide learning. It was intended as a lesson plan for the entire learning of a particular piece of music (Lesson plan, January 2020).

**Challenges**

A minor challenge Kyle mentioned with the current setup is that scheduling becomes an issue when the high school and junior high have differing schedules. The building that Kyle teaches in contains K-12. This means that throughout the year there are three schools trying to manage the use of common spaces throughout the building, such as the gymnasium and the newly built performing arts center. The secondary music teachers see grades seven through twelve in the same space each day.

When the schools start doing whack schedules, you have to shuffle around this, that, and the other way to make it all work. It is definitely worth it in the end to deal with all of that headache. Junior high kids just being able to see the high school kids in here practicing, I mean, that has value. (Interview, January 2020)

On speaking about the compulsory aspect of the music program in junior high, a motivation challenge was mentioned.

The benefit when kids are coming into junior high, they are not really mature enough to know what is good for them. The benefit is that it opens up an experience they didn’t even really know existed. The deficit is of course that you get the handful of kids each year that are doing it either just because their parents are making them. A few of those can become a bit toxic because of their attitude. (Interview, January 2020)
Structure

Both the band and choir programs, according to the master schedule document at TCA, have both junior high and high school music classes in and out of the same rooms. The music teachers in some capacity work with junior high and high school grades throughout the year whether through casual interaction or co-directing at both levels.

The band is one of the few places left where there’s still a vestige of secondary-ness, since we share the same place. Students have contact with all the same teachers from 7th through 12ths grade. That’s a very secondary type of model. Junior high kids just being able to see the high school kids in here practicing, I mean, that has value. (Interview, January 2020)

Music students at TCA who are stronger high school students have begun to help younger students in their music study. They help other students without being prompted, forming friendships and maintaining a positive culture within the program. I observed that after school hours, students would spend time after school practicing alone and with others in the various music areas in the building. Further, in a vocal music class, it was observed that students broke into sectionals to have focused learning of music parts by teaching each other various sections of the music (Field notes, January 2020).

The experience we provide with band and choir is of quality. Having band every day, in a like-instrument classes is head and shoulders above any other experience that you could have. It is [unique] in Colorado. You go to Texas and that is the norm. If you were to provide more options, then it comes at the cost of the high quality of what we’ve got. (Interview, January 2020)

The following tables are a snapshot of one day of classes in the instrumental and vocal music
program at TCA.

**Table 4.1**

*7th → 12th Grade Band Class Schedule*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of the Day</th>
<th>Band Teacher A</th>
<th>Band Teacher B</th>
<th>Band Teacher C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Beginning Percussion</td>
<td>Beginning Clarinet</td>
<td>PLAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Beginning Low Brass</td>
<td>Beginning Trumpet</td>
<td>Beginning French Horn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Concert Band (8th)</td>
<td>Concert Band (8th)</td>
<td>PLAN/Assist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td>PLAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Beginning Flute/Ob/Bsn</td>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td>Symphonic Band (HS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wind Ensemble (HS)</td>
<td>Percussion (HS)</td>
<td>Wind Ensemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Concert Band (8th)</td>
<td>Concert Band (8th)</td>
<td>PLAN/Assist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.2**

*7th → 12th Grade Choir Class Schedule*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period of the Day</th>
<th>Choir Teacher A</th>
<th>Choir Teacher B</th>
<th>Choir Teacher C</th>
<th>Choir Teacher D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Beginning Sax</td>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td>Cantatus (11th)</td>
<td>Admin/PLAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>PLAN/Assist</td>
<td>7th Boys</td>
<td>Cantatus (10th)</td>
<td>Admin/PLAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td>Jubilate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7th Girls</td>
<td>PLAN</td>
<td>Blended (9-10th)</td>
<td>Corda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Concordia</td>
<td>7th Girls</td>
<td>Concordia</td>
<td>Concordia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>8th Girls</td>
<td>8th Boys</td>
<td>8th Boys</td>
<td>Admin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>8th Girls</td>
<td>Cantatus (9th)</td>
<td>Cantatus (9th)</td>
<td>Admin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Parent Involvement**

For Kyle, his involvement with parents has two aspects, one centered in music and the other in school values. The first and most common aspect is with at-home musical practice. He tries to periodically communicate with parents on what parents can expect in a student’s practice and the various ways to support that process. The challenge he explained with this aspect is found with the parents who struggle with even adhering to communication between school and home. The second aspect Kyle explained was in alignment with the mission statement of TCA. In assisting parents’ mission to raise an exemplary citizen, Kyle partners with parents through life circumstances.
I’ve been partnering with parents in the more life stuff, like teachable moments about how to manage schedules, how to approach conflicts and, other life skills. How to manage life is part of that way in which we help support parents in raising good kiddos. (Interview, January 2020)

Unique Statements

Only one statement that did not fit into a specific code or emergent theme was included below.

It’s great to provide more opportunities and I appreciated very much when I was coming through school that I could do band and choir. It really just comes down to the number of minutes in the day and the facilities to be able to do it all (Interview, January 2020).

Parents

Later into the evening, five parents arrived and entered the lowest level of the building and made their way to the band room. The focus group sat in a circle and it was not more than a minute into gathering these parents when laughter, joking and storytelling began. The interview began almost twenty minutes behind accordingly. The high school band director was still around as well and the parents found themselves having a humorous conversation prior to the interview. The interview questions for the parent focus group differed from the other three interviews as noted in Appendix D. As such, the emergent themes below differ accordingly. All parents were honest and very intentional with their comments about TCA and the music program. One parent has two daughters in the music program at the same grade level. Her daughters have been at TCA since they were very little. Another parent has had four children in the music programs at TCA. All four started in band, but one ended up doing a combination of band and choir while the another switched over to choir. Another parent has two children in the band program and is an
elementary teacher at TCA. And the final two parents were a married couple who have had both their children in the band program. One child explored the theater program in addition to the band program while the other paired athletics with the band program.

**Perspective on Classical Education**

The parents shared a few thoughts on what they appreciated about TCA and why they brought their children to the school. At the time of enrolling their oldest child, one parent noted that TCA was the closest thing to a private school; they valued the small student to teacher ratio, high rigor, a waiting list, and the fact that it was labeled as a top ten school in the state. Another parent noted that a friend of theirs had a student on the autism spectrum who felt welcomed in the band program immediately; there were accommodations and resources for many students. Another parent enrolled their children at the school because it had a conservative nature and approach to education.

Becoming more specific, parents detailed some curricular aspects of TCA that they understood as the backbone of classical education. High rigor, public speaking, writing, classic literature, discussion-based learning, and communication skills were all mentioned as some of the main aspects of classical education that parents appreciated. One parent passionately explained her concerns with communication skills specifically.

One of the big issues in kids nowadays is the lack of communication, but if you think about what we’ve talked about here is it’s better equipping them to communicate, which will make them more attractive when they go in for those job interviews and get into the real world. (Interview, January 2020)

Even though a parent summed up saying, “they are just more well-rounded,” an interesting comment was made by another parent about a challenge of the education received at TCA. Her
college-aged student who was a daughter at TCA has found college to be easy in many aspects comparatively.

My college student said college is a breeze compared to this school. I don’t know, I have my own thoughts about that, but I just feel like it should be a challenge, but I’m not sure it should be harder than college is. (Interview, January 2020)

In music, the only curricular practice that were noted by parents to be under the classical education model were discussion-based learning and the ideas of mind, body, and spirit mixed in with curricular instruction. The example provided was on music history and composers, marching band, and school spirit within the high school music program.

With regards to the mind, what I have seen with my kids is that there’s more in-depth conversation about the music rather than just notes on a page. So there’s the mind concept. The body, I’m going to say is that they’re exercising their little hearts out…because marching band should be a sport. But even breathing to play an instrument like they do. And the spirit I think is just part of being in a community. (Interview, January 2020)

**Compulsory Value**

A parent made note that in a classical education, the arts are funded. Since there is funding and a compulsory component to music in seventh grade, values, skills and an appreciation grow from it. The parents unanimously agreed that the band and choir programs make up about 70% of the school population.

I just think that what is unique to our school is that we have so much participation in the arts when they don’t have to choose it after a certain time, you know? They can drop it, but so many of them stay in it. (Interview, January 2020)
The compulsory nature instilled in the seventh-grade year was noted by parents as something that increased music participation in high school. Two parents spoke to the fact that many athletes, especially football players, were invested in the choir program in high school. Music at TCA is not looked down on.

**Excellent Teachers**

Throughout the course of the interview, parents all felt that a key component to the success of the music program at TCA was having great teachers in their children’s musical lives. The teachers were noted to be extroverted and welcoming; they created a healthy environment for both academic and social growth. One particular teacher was noted as someone who advocated for individuals consistently and held high rigor for students that was appreciated by parents.

**Involvement and Community**

Several parents mentioned that their main involvement with their child in secondary music was through the marching band. Parents expressed that some of their best adult friendships were created through the interactions they had through the marching band aspect of the band program in high school. Participating in music through their children was fun. It has nurtured a unique community within the parent body. A parent made an interesting comment though about their perspective of involvement.

If you took the marching band component away, there would actually be very little to do as parent involvement for band, right? It would be just to get them to lessons: 80% reduced. Just go chaperone on the bus to go to CMEA or regions or an honor band performance. But the fact that our classical approach to the arts and band includes that
you’re doing marching band, by default we’re all heavily involved. (Interview, January 2020)

Parents summed up their involvement saying that being physically present in any capacity with music shows their child that they support their learning in the arts. It demonstrates a priority for the arts as parents and a reinforcement for their children. For those parents not involved, they noted that they are missing out on that aspect of a relationship with their children.

**Unique Statements**

Only one statement that did not fit with the other themes but provided an interesting perspective on the interview topic at the time is included here:

If marching band wasn’t mandatory or wasn’t here at all, what would the program look like and what would fill its place? (Interview, January 2020)

Across all the interviews, several common ideas were noted. At The Classical Academy, the arts are a priority in whole-child education curriculum. This has been accomplished by a compulsory component of only allowing incoming junior high students to choose either band or choir. The daily schedule provides students with seven classes daily which allows for regular courses in conjunction with the performing arts courses. The teachers and principal did refer to aspects of the Trivium they are cognizant of in their classroom instruction and observation. Being mindful of too much teacher-directed instruction was apart of their discussion of curricular practices. It was also recognized by most of the interviewees that parents do have a role within the music program, but the exact role that takes is a work in progress. Each teacher and the principal understand there are some challenges within the music program. The compulsory aspect of it provides mixed motivation and some limiting factors to students, the 7-12 nature has scheduling
issues, and large ensembles can be a struggle when it comes to discussion-based learning that should be followed in a classical model. These will be explored further in the following chapter.

A unique monthly publication produced by The Classical Academy called the *Palmarium*, Latin for masterpiece, highlights many aspects within the school. This publication notes student and organization accomplishments, it provides positive stories from teachers within their classrooms, and includes general information about current social issues being considered at the school. These issues are typically addressed through professional development staff book studies. The publication is available to parents as one way the school connects home with parents. There are several publications that have highlighted accomplishments within the music program at TCA, expressing the importance the arts have at the school (Jolly, 2014, Jolly, 2015, Jolly, 2016, Jolly, 2017, Jolly 2018, Jolly, 2019).
Chapter 5
Discussion
Throughout the respondents’ interviews it became clear based on several points of philosophy and practice what focuses were valued in music education at The Classical Academy. These included but were not limited to teaching by delivery method of the Trivium, intentional relationship-oriented approaches, unique school structures in staffing for smaller class sizes, and the development of a love for learning music. The focus in this study was to examine the current philosophies and practices at The Classical Academy, an American classical school. For discussion, this chapter is separated by the three research questions that guided the study. Additionally, comparisons between extant literature and The Classical Academy are made.

The Music Education Program at The Classical Academy

At the onset of this study, a founding research question asked was simply, what does the music education program look like at an American classical school? The Classical Academy’s music education program is a blended model of classical education and traditional instruction. Several prevailing aspects of the music education program stood out through the interviews.

The Trivium and Quadrivium

Looking at extant literature, one of the characteristics of a classical education is inclusion of the Quadrivium and the functional use of the Trivium in instruction (Perrin, 2004). Perrin outlined that the Trivium is the delivery method for content. Each level of the Trivium requires a slightly different amount of teacher intervention in the learning process. In the music education program, how do the Quadrivium and Trivium fit in? Bill, Kyle, and Elizabeth all agreed upon the function of the Trivium at TCA. It is clear that the method of delivery of instruction in the
music program is, in part, the Trivium. When I observed both instrumental and vocal music classrooms, grammar and logic level questions were being used as a means of instruction. Of course, questioning is a common practice of instruction in many non-classical music classrooms.

Walking into a secondary classical music classroom at TCA may look very similar to any other public school music classroom. What may set TCA apart from other non-classical schools, however, is intentionality. There is intentionality and nomenclature behind the discussion-based instructional model of the Trivium as indicated by the principal. The levels of the Trivium provide a Vygotsky-like approach, encouraging teachers to be cognitively aware of student learning at all stages of development. Lev Vygotsky was the early 20th century educational psychologist who is noted for his contributions to learning theory. He believed the social interaction and relationship between teacher instruction and student ability fit in a Zone of Proximal Development. With scaffolded support from the teacher in that zone for a student, the potential for learning at higher levels increases (Bates, 2016, p. 46). In music, Elizabeth supported the Trivium in saying it is “partially built in… in one piece of music, you will go through grammar, logic, and rhetoric stages almost always…it’s just sort of a scholarly atmosphere of allowing the students to really do the thinking, and to use what they know to get to the next thing” (Interview, January 2020).

**Authentic Curriculum**

Bortins (2010) noted that in classical education programs, primary sources are a requirement in classical curriculum. These primary sources provide ideas, lessons, and truths that have modern applications. By examining concert programs and noting certain responses from the interviewees, it was clear to see that the mindset of the music teachers at The Classical Academy does reflect the idea of primary sources. A sample concert program reflected music in several
primary styles, including a march, a ternary ballad, a binary programmatic selection, and a piece in a foreign style (Latin). This was also supported by Kyle’s statement, “They need to know what it is to play a march or a ballad. All these different styles are still fundamental to a classical education in music” (Interview, January 2020). Elizabeth’s statement further defines this: “Kids need the breadth of knowledge of music to really get a classical foundation in music” (Interview, January 2020). Traditional ensembles at TCA incorporate a variety of styles to achieve the breadth of musical experiences expected in a classical model.

**Structural Elements**

Some extant classical education literature has its roots as a model for homeschool instruction (Bluedorn, 2001, Wise & Bauer, 2004, Bortins, 2010, Bauer, 2016). Classical education serves as a conservative educational model that helps develop moral character and citizenship in children. In a homeschool setting, even in a larger household, the child-parent ratio is usually very small. This increases the potential influence instruction can have from parent to child. At TCA, this aspect is reflected in its smaller music class sizes. They are an especially valued asset of the music education program for the beginning levels. The more one-on-one instruction time students have at the early stages of the Trivium, the greater the potential is for those students to achieve advanced learning at the upper levels of instruction in the Trivium. Beginning band classes are structured such that beginners are grouped homogenously by instrument. Beginning vocal music courses are broken down by gender and age as well.

Additionally, music courses meet every school day such that a music teacher sees the same students for almost four hours a week. Pairing that breakdown with adequate staffing of seven full-time instrumental and vocal music teachers, students have the chance to receive individualized instruction more often than in a heterogeneous structure with less staffing. Kyle
noted, “The experience we provide with band and choir is of quality. Having band [and choir] every day, in a like-instrument classes is head and shoulders above any other experience that you could have. It is [unique] in Colorado” (Interview, January 2020). The music program has more teachers specifically dedicated to it than any other discipline in the school. Smaller classes and more teachers is the current running model. Bill supported this model stating, “Music is in smaller groups too. I think you have to do it in music” (Interview, January 2020).

Including Parents

Another characteristic of classical education is parent involvement. According to extant literature, musical parent involvement in the homeschool setting is very minimal as long as children receive some form of semi-directed musical experience (Bluedorn 2001, Bauer & Wise 2004, Bortins 2010, Bauer 2016). Even though the arts are one-fourth of the Quadrivium, only a small amount of direction is given to parents for music instruction. One text encourages parents to have their child in church choir and attend a symphony concert (Bluedorn 2001) while another text instructs parents to pick up Classical Music from the “For Dummies” series as a starting point into music education (Bortins, 2010, p. 201). The entire school is run by a board of parents. Some decisions made regarding music are approved or disapproved by parents. Outside of larger events such as concerts, assemblies, or sporting events, parent involvement was reported to be limited to home discussions, tracking of practice sessions, financial support, and a few volunteer opportunities. Kyle expressed several times that there were areas of instruction in a classical model that he still desires to get better at. Parent involvement was one of those areas. Both Kyle and Elizabeth mentioned that parent involvement was more centered around assisting parents in handling concerns of character, civility, and conflict. Kyle said, “How to manage life is part of that way in which we help support parents in raising good kiddos” (Interview, January 2020).
One of the bands in the secondary instrumental music program that sees frequent parent and child interaction is the marching band. For three months out of the school year, invested parents spend a lot of their time learning right along with students and helping out with the activity. It was clear through the focus-group interviews that parents involved with marching band were passionate about it and desired more of it. It would be hard for them to imagine the secondary instrumental program without it, saying “If marching band wasn’t mandatory or wasn’t here at all, what would the program look like and what would fill its place” (Interview, January 2020).

**Benefits and Deficits**

One of the guiding focuses in this study of The Classical Academy was to examine perceived benefits and deficits of a classical education in music. There were three notable areas that stood out in analysis: music’s compulsory value in the school, quality instruction, and citizenship education.

**Compulsory Value**

It became clear that the compulsory component is a prevalent theme throughout the secondary music program at TCA. Requiring music for students as they enter into secondary education aligns with Perrin’s (2004) descriptions of the Quadrivium. As it was described by Bill and Kyle, if an aspect of classical education is required, therefore it will be valued. Specifically, the principal said, “Music for us is a priority that we’ve actually emphasized…if we made it optional, they would actually not feel like we thought it was a priority” (Interview, January 2020).

Does compulsory participation actually foster perceived value in music at TCA? Philosophically, Kyle claimed that as students are coming into the secondary music program,
“they are not really mature enough to know what is good for them” (Interview, January 2020). If the model in place forces the decision of a music course, would students have an increased opportunity to experience potential gain through music education rather than if they never chose it in the first place? According to the interview responses, if the arts were an elective choice rather than a compulsory component, only the families who see value in music at TCA would involve their students in it. Students may choose music as an elective course, but there would not be near as much participation in music that way. Compulsory arts gets students in the door, but great teachers keep them there. And this component’s effect is reflected in high retention rates from year to year in music programs across the entire 7-12 secondary music program.

What was also indicated by the teachers and principal was that great teachers at TCA are what make the compulsory music component work. As the parents describe this idea of a great teacher, the main indicator of a great teacher was there attention to individual students and rigor. At TCA, there are great teachers with demonstrated success in music as well as a compulsory component that brings music to students who may not have participated in music previously. Some parents expressed that there are many athletes in the music program at TCA, which they felt was uncommon at other schools. The requirements of music in the classical education of a student at TCA provide consistent participation and increased retention in music courses as students progress through the school.

A deficit to the compulsory aspect, however, is that investment from some students and parents is minimal. The principal mentioned, “Now, you do have some parents who are just there for the ride” (Interview, January 2020). When helping their student make choices about courses in junior high and high school, parents know that music is a requirement and therefore holds value. During the focus group interview, the utilitarian value of music rose to the surface. The
values they saw in music ranged from “confidence builder” and “communication skills” individually to academic values such as “it will help you with math” to social values like students being a part of “a community” (Interview, January 2020). These values may not always equate to what either the music teachers or students value in music education at TCA, thus potentially resulting in a negative experience.

The deficit is of course that you get the handful of kids each year that are doing it either just because their parents are making them. A few of those can become a bit toxic because of their attitude. (Interview January 2020)

Extending further, a potential deficit seen with a compulsory value model is a lack of variety in choices beyond what is required. Bill indicated that “based on what we've prioritized [band or choir], there aren't choices. But sometimes they would say, I'm not getting to do what I want to do” (Interview, January 2020). A brief survey of neighboring school websites shows that at the junior high level, other vocational options exist such as technology education, creative writing, consumer family studies, and robotics, to name a few.

**Quality Instruction**

Beyond music reading, music history, manipulation of basic music notation, performance attendance, and personal participation in performance ensembles, nothing else exists in available literature to describe a music education in classical terms. The Bortins (2010) contains the *Classical Music for Dummies* example while the Bluedorn (2001) and Bauer (2016) texts only note a few resources in music theory, composer studies and associative activities like coloring and listening to encompass music education. None of the texts address developmental concerns in music education. I assume this is simply because these texts on classical teaching are trying to provide some direction to musically uneducated parents on various music concepts in the
classical model at home with their own children. In other words, teaching a child about music from an uneducated perspective is challenging, so simple suggestions such as the aforementioned ones are what naturally exists. TCA, however, has provided musically educated teachers from formal music training programs and a curriculum of skills, repertoire, and classical experiences that strive for a more comprehensive involvement in musicking (Small, 1998) in the classical model. Parents who desire a classical education for their child can reap the benefit of having a formally trained teacher in music. This only enhances their student’s music education.

Quality instruction at The Classical Academy also rests on certain structural elements in place within the secondary music education program. Beginning music class sizes are small and beginners are grouped homogenously. Pairing adequate and qualified staffing with the smaller class sizes in music is of great benefit to students because teachers have more opportunities to develop an individualized approach to a child’s music education. Small class sizes are not an indicator of achievement, however. Having highly qualified teachers, superior equipment, and a relevant curriculum are better indicators for student achievement (Ballantine et al., 2018, p. 85).

There are larger music ensembles in the music program at The Classical Academy. By examining several concert programs from The Classical Academy, ensembles have had as few as nine students and as many as over 100 in one ensemble. These ensemble sizes put a significant strain on a single music teacher to effectively instruct all students. The deficit here is that rhetoric level discussions can be challenging to have in a music classroom with a large ensemble. However, each large ensemble that meets as a class daily has two music teachers working in a co-teaching format to effectively implement instruction.
Citizenship Education

Another common theme that has benefit is character education through teacher to student relationships in music. Perhaps no other characteristic unique to the music program at TCA was more evident than the intentionality of relationships with students. This ties into the aforementioned aspect of a classical education: scrupulous rectitude. What is the goal of a relationship-centered approach in music? A founding document of the school states, “We value an education that inspires and uplifts the individual through the pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness across the disciplines” (TCA Core Values, 2010). While this document is school-wide in its approach, it has implications on the instruction and mindset of the teachers of all subjects, including music. Music education becomes a medium to teach students to be better people in this light. Kyle stated, “There’s no single other piece of the puzzle so to speak that has as great an impact as relationship. And that’s something that’s emphasized here more than elsewhere to our great advantage” (Interview, January 2020). The music teachers at TCA make efforts to get to know each and every student individually. They create an environment where students can take risks, offer constructive feedback, and exhibit healthy dialogue. Relationships are not left to just a teacher and student relationship either. Musicking has the capacity to benefit a student aesthetically and through character by its social nature. There are very few disciplines in a school setting where students of all backgrounds come together for a single purpose and have an aesthetic experience. And in the case of classical education, students have a discussion-based approach to their aesthetic experiences in music.

Teachers at TCA are intentional with developing aspects of character and citizenship. Although TCA has experienced success in music performance aspects of the program, the success expressed by the principal and teachers seems to be the non-utilitarian aspects of
aesthetic growth that students naturally gain through guided music participation. Bill indicated
that successful performance is not the point of the music program, but rather a natural by-product
of fostering students’ love of learning music and what is gained aesthetically through music
education at TCA. “The end is not the music only, it’s really the development of the child in that
program” (Interview, January 2020). Students not only receive a music education at TCA, but a
child-centered character education as well.

The Classical Academy and the Classical Education Model

None of the interviewees indicated that TCA had reached its pinnacle as a classical
school. In terms of music education within the school, the simple fact that the school’s program
is within a chartered public school affords children an opportunity of music instruction that is far
greater than the homeschool models defined in extant literature. Including arts in the curriculum,
focusing on citizenship, instructing through the Trivium, and maintaining smaller class sizes are
the primary indicators of the classical model in music at this school. The culture and academic
atmosphere being strived for in the music program is the primary driving force philosophically.
The culture and academic atmosphere are one that emphasizes student-centered learning rather
than teacher-directed instruction. As a blended classical model that is still in the growing stages
of figuring out what it means to be classical, there is still more time needed to truly define a
classical music education at TCA. The music teachers don’t claim mastery on teaching
classically; rather, they teach with intentionality towards classical ideals. As the principal states,
“we are in an understanding pursuit and we are passionate about it” (Interview, January 2020).
Their approach may be best summed up by the creed upheld by the school:

Titans endeavor to recognize and pursue truth, beauty, and goodness. Titans celebrate
virtue in scholarship, relationship, and citizenship. Titans take ownership of and find joy
in learning. Titans value our responsibilities above our rights. Titans love, respect, and protect one another. Striving to be our best, do our best, and give our best to the world, in mind, body, and spirit. (TCA Creed)

**Implications**

The Classical Academy provides several implications for the field of music education that should be considered. Structurally, instruction is effective at the beginning levels by having small class sizes and heterogeneous groupings. There are less factors to consider with like-instrument groupings in terms of curricular preparation for the music teacher. Smaller class sizes provide more opportunities for individualized instruction at the critical beginning level of music learning. Large ensembles all have co-teachers to help implement curriculum and provide opportunities of diverse instruction. Not all music education programs have this type of structure, especially at the beginning levels. This model and investment in staffing could serve as consideration for struggling music programs.

At TCA, a firm foundation in an instructional model of the Trivium is ever-present in the music teacher’s considerations for instruction. Teachers are constantly aware of the current ability and needs of their students and have specific, prescribed levels of questioning and discussion to enhance student learning. This moves away from teacher-centered instruction that is commonly seen in music classrooms. Other schools may not have ability-appropriate curricular guidance such as the Trivium. The classical model in music education could be of benefit to the music education program that relies heavily on a teacher-centered instructional practices.
A classical model in all disciplines, including music, emphasizes a pursuit of character education. Many music education programs may see a natural outcome of basic music participation as a means to develop character or aesthetic appreciation. At The Classical Academy, however, there is value to the intentionality behind character education. By focusing curriculum on building relationships within the music classroom through discussion-based learning, character education has great benefit. Any school that is struggling with the concepts of character education may want to consider investing resources into the music program, including hiring highly qualified, passionate teachers in music.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Further study is needed to evidence the effects of the 7-12 secondary music education program at TCA. A longitudinal study following a group of students through the secondary music program at TCA might be the best direction for a subsequent study. This data could provide both quantitative and qualitative evidence. It was challenging not having another classical school to compare this school to during the study. If a prescribed model of classical education exists, is it the same at another classical school in its secondary music program? Further study could then include a comparative study between two classical schools. Additionally, an analysis of classroom observations and philosophical elements between a neighboring non-classical school and The Classical Academy could provide data on what similarities and differences there may be between the two programs. Additionally, during this study, the perspectives of several music teachers and vocal music parents were not obtained. These perspectives could shed more light on areas of the secondary music education program that were missed or overlooked in this study.
It would be interesting to revisit this school in several years to conduct a similar study and compare reports. Would the music education program look exactly the same? Would there be new classical initiatives being implemented or perhaps an expansion into other mediums such as orchestra? Are there any critical aspects like the compulsory component that might have changed over that amount of time? If there was a newly hired music teacher within the music education program there, what would their perspective be? Answering these questions in a future study would be of great benefit to understanding The Classical Academy even further.
Appendix A

**Study Title**  
*Classical Education: A Case Study of Philosophies and Practices in Secondary Music at a Classical School*

**IRBNet ID# 1504736-1**

**Study Purpose and Rationale**

The purpose of this case study is to discover the philosophies, practices and perceived outcomes of secondary music at a classical school in southern Colorado.

**Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**

Inclusion criteria of this study is limited to participants that are affiliated with The Classical Academy and its music program. Inclusionary participants are either music instructors, administrators or parents of students in the music program. All other potential participants will be excluded from selection for this study, including students within the program.

**Participation Procedures and Duration**

You will be interviewed individually or in a focus group format. Questions asked will center around philosophy and practice found within the music program at The Classical Academy. Outside of background information, questions will be open-ended to limit bias in any direction. The interviews will last no longer than one hour. The primary investigator will set a stopwatch to ensure compliance with the time limit set. Interviews will be recorded for transcription and data reporting.

**Audio/Video & Data Storage**

Interviews will be recorded to ensure transcription accuracy with a member-checking process to review transcripts. The storage of the transcript data will be on the primary investigator’s computer. The computer has a three-step security system in place which includes, fingerprint scanner, pin password and personal question password. Data will be stored until the time of completion of the study. The completion of the study will be no later than April 2020. At the time of completion, the recordings along with the transcripts will be deleted or erased.

**Data Confidentiality**

All data will be maintained as confidential and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data.

**Risks or Discomforts**

There are no known risks or discomforts in participation with this study.

**Benefits**

There are no perceived benefits for you to participate in this study other than the sharing of information about The Classical Academy to better inform the music education community about classical education and music.
**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice from the investigator. Please feel free to ask any questions of the investigator before signing this form and at any time during the study.

**IRB Contact Information**

For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5052 or at orihelp@bsu.edu.

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**Consent**

I, ________________, agree to participate in this research project entitled, *(Study Title)* I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the description of this project and give my consent to participate. I understand that I will receive a copy of this informed consent form to keep for future reference.

To the best of my knowledge, I meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria for participation (described on the previous page) in this study.

__________________________  ______________________
Participant’s Signature  Date

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Appendix B

Individual Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (Music Teacher)

Classical Education:

* A Case Study of Philosophies and Practices in Secondary Music at a Classical School *

Time of Interview:

Date:

Location:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Questions:

1. What is your background in music teaching?

2. What drew you to work at this classical school and not others?

3. What makes a classical education unique or different?

4. Describe your teaching philosophy. What aspects of classical philosophy have you adopted and intentionally embedded in your curriculum? What does it look like?

5. What are some challenges of teaching classically in music?

6. What do you feel are the benefits or deficits of a classical education in music?

7. Is there anything else you would like to add in relation to classical education and music?
Appendix C

Individual Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (Administrator)

Classical Education:

A Case Study of Philosophies and Practices in Secondary Music at a Classical School

Time of Interview:
Date:
Location:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
Position of interviewee:
Questions:

1. What is your current background in education?

2. Why did you want to become a principal at this classical school?

3. Where does music fit into the classical education philosophy and curriculum?

4. What do you perceive are the benefits or deficits of this classical school’s music program?

5. To what extent do you see this school’s music program aligning with the mission and philosophy of a classical education?

6. Is there anything else you would like to add?
Appendix D

Focus-Group Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (Parents)

Classical Education:

A Case Study of Philosophies and Practices in Secondary Music at a Classical School

Time of Interview:
Date:
Location:
Interviewer:
Interviewees:
Position of interviewees:
Questions:

1. What attracted you to enroll your child (or children) here at this classical school?

2. Why do you think your child chose to participate in music here?

3. How has this school’s music program impacted you and/or your child?

4. Classical education has an element of parental involvement in its philosophy. What do you see as your role as a parent in your child’s music education here at this classical school?

5. Is there anything you would like to add?
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