

## **ABSTRACT**

**DISSERTATION:** Social and Emotional Learning: A Case Study in Secondary Urban School Band Programs

**STUDENT:** Kathryn D. Spangler

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Social and emotional growth is an important aspect of child development. Children spend their formative years engaging with parents, peers, teachers, religious leaders, and other community members—each one of these interactions plays a vital role in the social and emotional development of every human. The purpose of this study was to investigate through case study methodology the premise that public secondary urban school band programs inherently provide social and emotional learning (SEL) intervention solutions. Previous research suggests SEL intervention programs are successful when implemented into a school curriculum; however, little research has focused on SEL in urban school band programs. The selection of participants for this study was based on three factors: (1) location, (2) participation in the school band program, and (3) size of school. The two schools in the case study, and subsequently the students within the schools, were a convenience sample based on the school's geography. The study focused on the inherent social and emotional learning support within two secondary urban school band programs of differing size each located near the city center. Participants included active members of the school band and the two band directors and administrators from each school. I attended classes for observation and interviewed students, band directors, and administrators from each school. A research-developed questionnaire was also sent to active and

retired band directors across the United States via social media. The survey contained the same questions from the interviews posed to the band directors in the case study, requiring the respondents to answer based on their personal experience with SEL. Items from the band director and administrator interviews and questionnaire prompted respondents to indicate their level of support for SEL in a band program and what benefits they perceive from an SEL-embedded curriculum. Student interview questions focused on the perceived SEL benefits of participation in a school band program.

After data analysis and comparison, three salient themes emerged from all participant groups: safe space, strong relationships, and the importance of the teacher. Additional themes were identified via data analysis, including peer support, stress management, and increased self-confidence. Respondents from all groups agreed there is a need for SEL and that the school band does inherently promote social and emotional learning. With a humanistic approach, a structured and consistent student-centered environment, and a commitment to building strong teacher–student relationships, teachers can create a culture in their classroom that inherently promotes social and emotional learning.