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Principals' Leadership Practices for Sustaining Music in K-3 Education

Ivone Fraiha Clark
Walden University

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Ivone Fraiha Clark

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Abstract

Principals' Leadership Practices for Sustaining Music in K-3 Education

by

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MA, Campbellsville University, 2009

BA, Universidade Estácio de Sá, 1992

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Public school principals who provide and sustain music in elementary programs are often confronted with budgetary cuts and reduced funding for music education. There is a dearth of research regarding music as an essential element in K-3 education in low-income rural schools. The purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry was to explore and describe leadership practices of principals, who despite fiscal challenges, include and sustain music in the K-3 curriculum in a low-income rural area of a small county in North Carolina. Elliott and Silverman's concept of praxial music education and Leithwood and Riehl's philosophy of instructional leadership practices were used for the conceptual framework. Through individual interviews with principals ($n = 4$) and 3 focus groups with parents ($n = 8$) from Parent Teacher Organizations of elementary public schools in a low-income rural district, data were collected from a total of 12 participants involved with music education. Participants described the importance of and the criteria for including music in the K-3 program regardless of economic challenges emphasizing the significance of school principals' leadership practices. Data were analyzed using open coding to find emergent themes. Results suggested that commitment to sustaining music education in the K-3 program comes from evidence of children's development of creative and critical thinking. Providing opportunities for an enhanced education may create perspectives that lead students to become engaged citizens for a more equitable society. The findings may also encourage educational leaders to find ways to sustain music in educational programs as a contribution to positive social change.

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Dedication

To my husband Tom, who served in four foreign wars, and being a veteran, extended me the VA scholarship privilege to attend this Ph.D. program.

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I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. John Flohr, musician, researcher, my mentor and chair, who with wisdom and determination encouraged me to proceed in this long journey. To Dr. Cheryl Keen, methodologist member, who nicely shined the light on my path. To Dr. Alice Eichholz, URR committee member, who since the first residency, kept my interest by insisting that piece by piece, the elephant would be eaten.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

For more than 30 years, working in different countries of the world as a musician and educator, I have often been asked about the importance of music for an accomplished education, and why in tougher economic circumstances is music education the first to be cut from the school program. It is a question that always intrigued me. Living in the southeast portion of the United States, I have the opportunity to practice music with children who attend low-income rural schools. I observed that whether music education is kept or cut from school programs depends on the administrative purpose. From my observations, I noticed that even in low-income rural areas, many public elementary school principals who are determined to maintain music in the curriculum beginning at the prekindergarten level. According to VanDeusen (2016), regardless of the challenges, some school administrators have demonstrated collaborative support for music education by understanding the mechanisms that sustain the continuance of music programs and the achievements from their success.

For this study, I explored and described the perceptions of parents and principals related to the leadership practices to include and sustain music in the K-3 curriculum in low-income schools in a small, rural county in North Carolina. I concentrated on understanding and describing the leadership practices used by those principals for managing reduced funding to sustain music in low-income rural schools. An outline of the challenges and realizations of applying music in the K-3 program was the means to broaden the insights of the nature of principals who seek to improve the academic level of the school. A close examination of the effects of principals' leadership practices and

their choices may encourage renewed educational practices for social changes. In search of educational improvements in regions surrounded by poverty may imply positive social change.

In Chapter 1, I present a general idea of the study, including problem, purpose, and questions. This chapter is outlined relating to the inquiry on educational leadership and fiscal policies, which provided the guiding research questions. I also make available definitions for terms related to the focus of the research. To conclude the first chapter, a view of nature, assumptions, scope, limitations, and significance of the study are followed by a summary transition to the literature review.

Background

Through a qualitative study, Clasquin-Johnson (2016) found that music education in preschool is a way to provide equal opportunities regardless of cultural and economic contexts. Clasquin-Johnson also found that, depending on the responses to the academic approaches, it is possible to shape policy. Clasquin-Johnson concluded that educational quality is intrinsic to instructional leaders who are actively involved in the school's programs, infrastructure, and mostly, the administration of funding.

According to Burrack, Payne, Bazan, and Hellman (2014), in the United States, reduced funding for education due to budgetary cuts, including funding for music education, have yet to be recovered. Investigating district funding for music education in three Midwestern states, Burrack et al. listed the restrictions to sustaining music in a school program and found that to support music education requires that fiscal realities and the school's needs being political priorities. Burrack et al. also found that while local

school districts weigh the decisions related to reductions in funding, there are music educators who make efforts to respond to these challenges.

Although music is recognized as a significant factor in educational quality, many students from low-income conditions do not have access to music education (Puryear & Kettler, 2017). Conducting a quantitative study to examine educational deficiencies in rural areas, Kettler, Puryear, and Mullet (2016) observed that the learning problems in a rural school are more due to a lack of access to educational resources rather than student performance. Kettler et al. found that the content of education and innovative academic and methodological approaches are not distributed equally, and these restrictions specifically happened in rural communities. Kettler et al. also examined the aspects of instruction, including enhanced education, in a rural setting where the school administration involved the school community and the community at large. Kettler et al. demonstrated that offering equal opportunities for improved education is a challenge that depends on supportive administration. According to Kettler et al., the influences on the decisions of a public-school principal in a low-income area sustain a curriculum for talented students have not been sufficiently researched.

Recent studies researchers have also shown that the hindrances to sustain improved education in low-income areas still require exploration for better solutions. Ihrig, Lane, Mahatmya, and Assouline (2018) demonstrated how school principals of low-income rural areas still struggle with ensuring high achievement for their students due to the lack of access to enhanced education. Focusing on student awareness and educator perception of better educational opportunities, Ihrig et al. used mixed methods

to explore the difficulties of planning school programs in small rural communities. The findings revealed that the deficient distribution of resources for rural schools is a challenge for educational leaders in sustaining extracurricular programs to achieve positive learning results.

Dodge, Bai, Ladd, and Muschkin (2017) conducted a quantitative study related to budget problems for early education programs in North Carolina. Dodge et al. discovered that in each county of the state, the investment initiatives were to support opportunities for quality education for students from low-income schools. Similar, but using mixed studies Ladd, Muschkin, and Dodge (2014) confirmed that the federal government of North Carolina is investing in education for disadvantaged children. According to Ladd et al., the board of education also is concerned with enhanced early education programs, but the problem is in barriers that require principals' political skills. In both studies using different methods, Dodge et al. and Ladd et al., evidenced that educational funding is still more political than educational and that financial allocations are related to the initiative of effective leadership.

The exposed context and the unfilled gap suggested an investigation of the practices of school principals committed to offering music education opportunities for K-3 students in a rural environment. Knowing the value of leadership practices related to sustaining music in K-3 programs might influence the professionalism of other scholars in my field. This study provides information on the principals' efforts for students and school achievement in low-income rural areas, which may lead to social change. Offering opportunities that make changes in the lives of the students is a way to create engaged

citizens in a more equitable society. The findings from my research may increase insight and knowledge in favor of music education and invite further inquiry into the value of adding music to a curriculum. Consequently, there is a need for further exploration of the factors that influence the sustainability of music education in the K-3 program of successful public schools in a low-income rural area of a small county in North Carolina.

Problem Statement

In North Carolina, music education is valued and highly encouraged by the State Board of Education, still only 26% of the principals include or sustain music in the programs of their schools (Department of Public Instruction, n.d.). According to Kettler et al. (2016), 20% of American students are attending rural schools. The United States has a policy mandating enhanced education for gifted students, but the inclusion of music in school programs is of interest to only a few principals (Puryear & Kettler, 2017).

North Carolina's educational system is an example of economic forces on music program inclusion. This educational problem has been illustrated in one small county where this study took place. The analysis center of the University of North Carolina (UNC Asheville's NEMAC, 2016) listed the selected small county as an area located in the Blue Ridge Mountains, where a quarter of the children in the region are living in poverty.

In the selected county, the records of Public School Review (2018) verified that about three fourths of the elementary public schools in the district are qualified for and receive Title I funds, and music education has been a part of these schools' programs for many consecutive years. Even so, a recent act of the general assembly in North Carolina

placed new limits on class sizes in grades K-3 and suggested that arts be cut from the curriculum to liberate funds (Mundhenk, 2017). Despite challenges, the records from this small county show that even with scarce resources, 96% of the principals encouraged the inclusion of music programs in their schools, as reported in the Public School Review (2018). According to Colombo and Antonietti (2017), there is a lack of knowledge regarding the significance of including music education as a part of a curriculum and minimal effort to monitor music's effectiveness.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry was to explore and describe leadership practices of principals who, despite fiscal challenges, include and sustain music in the K-3 curriculum in a low-income rural area of a small county in North Carolina. Elementary schools and Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) were sources for the inquiry. Interviewing four principals and conducting three focus groups with eight parents, members of PTOs (12 total participants) yielded the basic data for describing the leadership practices of those principals and how their practices were perceived to help in developing strategies for including music in a curriculum. It is essential to understand how school principals interacted with political and social challenges to manage improvements in teaching and learning in a low-income rural region. In considering music as an educational improvement and the barriers to sustaining music in a school curriculum, this study may provide a unique opportunity for demonstrating and disseminating the importance of principals' leadership practices in educational achievements.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do parents of students from low-income rural areas describe the principals' leadership practices in overcoming economic challenges to the addition and sustainability of music in a K-3 program?

Research Question 2: What criteria do the principals use for deciding to include music in a K-3 curriculum?

Conceptual Framework

In the context of principals' practices for adding music to the school's curriculum, I considered Elliott and Silverman's (2015) praxial music education concept and Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) instructional leadership philosophy. Both concepts lead to educational and administrative purposes. The implication of this framework is presented as follows.

Elliott and Silverman stated that the support for the practices of music as an educational endeavor is ground on the significance of music as part of individuals' everyday life. According to Elliott and Silverman, the praxial concept recognizes the participatory perception of the values of music education. Elliott and Silverman's concept ensures students' critical and reflective abilities in both their purpose of music-making and listening, as well as in their development as human beings. Elliott and Silverman also affirmed that the foundation for the continuity of music education depends on the principals' specific decisive decisions.

The instructional leadership philosophy includes values such as the ability to lead people, develop administrative functions, and nurture learning programs independent of

leadership traits and school contexts. In defining practices for a school leader, Leithwood and Riehl focused on effective leaders who use their influence to achieve the instructive objectives. Accordingly, Leithwood and Riehl provided a starting point for a discussion on leadership related to perspectives of educational changes.

Both praxial music education and successful school leadership concepts were supported by findings from the literature review in Chapter 2. According to West (2015), the praxial concept, music's value lies in the motivation from actions, but conditions for activities require management. Garza, Drysdale, Gurr, Jacobson, and Merchant (2014) demonstrated that practices from "setting direction, developing the people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program" (p. 799) are basics for instructional leadership and reinforcement for educational management.

The praxial music education concept of Elliott and Silverman (2015) and the instructional leadership philosophy of Leithwood and Riehl (2003) helped to direct the literature review regarding the practices of instructional leaders in maintaining music education in low-income rural school programs. I also intended to gain insights from the participants selected for the study by connecting the two concepts to the research questions. This framework was an anticipation of the data analysis and the potential for positive educational change.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this research was a generic qualitative inquiry to explore the leadership practices of school principals who, despite fiscal challenges, include and sustain music education in low-income rural areas. According to Patton (2015), generic

qualitative inquiry uses qualitative designs that allow in-depth interviews and field notes without enclosing the study in a specific tradition. When collecting data, the first approach for this generic qualitative inquiry and the primary unit of analysis was the selection of four principals representing approximately one third of the schools from a district in a low-income rural area in North Carolina.

I had permission to invite the selected school principals and parents members of PTOs to participate in this study. I collected data by conducting an open-end interview with each principal from four schools to accumulate a comprehensive description of the leadership methods used to manage their schools. I also conducted three focus group interviews involving eight parents from three PTOs, in a total of 12 participants. These planned interviews generated data for the research questions and provided significant material for data triangulation. In the data collection period, additional field notes and online school documents related to the addition of music education to the program were relevant to the description of the setting. The chosen design and means of sampling and collected data, also a plan for seeking codes and themes from interviews and focus groups analysis, are developed in detail in Chapter 3.

Definitions of Terms

Following is an explanation to make clear why some expressions were considered key terms for this study.

Economic challenges: According to Laurillard (2016), poverty levels and low socioeconomic status, as well as inadequate educational funding and lack of infrastructure are barriers to teaching and learning.

K-3: Early childhood instruction from kindergarten to 3rd grade (Department of Public Instruction, n.d.).

Leadership vision: Leadership includes broad vision and extensive knowledge that, according to Bolman and Deal (2003), are requirements for managing modern organizations.

Praxial music education: The knowing-in-action to achieve its cognitive potential (Elliott & Silverman, 2015).

Rural area: “Often associated with country life, small communities, and restricted access to resources” (Kettler et al., 2016, p. 247).

Rural education: An administrative challenge specifically in managing financial provisions of the law that have remained mostly untouched by waivers (Yettick, Baker, Wickersham, & Hupfeld, 2014).

School principal: An educationalist role that requires personal change, leadership, and growth (Helterbran, 2008).

Title I: Federal funding to support educational achievement of low-income students (Public School Review, 2018).

Assumptions

Being educated in Brazil, and living in other countries where I have been involved in teaching music, I assume that I may tend to transfer my experiences to this research due to the similarity of educational problems around the world. According to Yin (2014), when investigating, the researcher needs to make assumptions to approach the data collection process with an open and unbiased readiness to listen and receive new insights.

Consequently, I assumed that the participants would be comfortable in sharing their experiences without concern of researcher judgment. I also assumed that each participant would respond to the interview questions (Appendices A and B) in a trustworthy manner to provide an accurate understanding of the principals' leadership practices. These assumptions were essential for producing a credible report on the findings.

Scope and Delimitations

The investigation focus was on school leadership in the selected elementary public schools in low-income rural areas of a small county in North Carolina. Subsequently, this research included only descriptions related to leadership management of music education for K-3 instruction in this selected county. According to Patton (2015), "the quite concrete and practical questions of people working to make the world better ... can be addressed without allegiance to a particular epistemological or philosophical tradition" (p. 154). Patton's affirmation allows a generic study within the perceptions of each participant, in using open-ended questions and observing elements of interest toward changes in programs or policies. Accordingly, using a generic qualitative inquiry, I investigated the leadership practices of school principals who were sustaining music in a K-3 program.

In this generic qualitative inquiry, I described only leadership practices used in sustaining music education in the K-3 programs in low-income rural areas of a small county in North Carolina. I aimed for adjusted leadership representation among school principals and did not include staff or the student population. The focus of this study was delineated to the practices of successful principals. Recognizing that there also are

leaders in other schools, this study focused on one specific district. Consequently, the results of this generic qualitative inquiry may be transferable and suggest further questions and future implications.

Limitations

Patton (2015) stated that each design has limits coming from the human sample diversity and instrumentation challenges. My status can characterize a weakness in my study as a person from Brazil with a Portuguese accent. In my experience living in the United States, those who hear me have a compassionate tendency to agree with me to demonstrate friendliness. I was the primary instrument for the collection and analysis of the data, so I worked to make sure the participants could understand me. To avoid misinterpretation, I wrote each interview question (Appendices A and B) on a 5x7" card, and I handed it to the participant before asking the questions. The cards allowed flexibility in the order of the questions, which met the focus brought by the participants. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), transcript validation is also encouraged to eliminate threats to trustworthiness. Subsequently, after transcribing the recorded interviews and establishing the reliability and credibility of information acquired, I checked the transcript. I sent it to the participants and my instructors to assess and confirm. This research was conducted in only one district and depended on school principals and parents' consent to participate, which limited the data and the findings for generalization.

Significance of the Study

The topic of the study is leadership practices of school principals and their influence in promoting music education to provide opportunities for K-3 students in a low-income rural environment. This study not only enhanced my professionalism as a music educator, but it may also influence the professionalism of other scholars in the field. Affirmations from the literature pointed out the need to describe the importance of sustaining music in educational programs. Sušić's (2017) affirmed that making music education available to every child for the development of the whole personality is an educator's responsibility, and Kettler et al. (2016) confirmed the lack of research on leadership practices principals of public school in low-income rural areas.

Providing opportunities for changes in the students' lives is a way to create engaged citizens in a more equitable society, which will benefit the whole community (Sušić, 2017). The findings from this research may provide new perspectives and knowledge to support music education. The findings may also invite further inquiry by researchers as well as school boards, district leaders, and principals to consider music education in the curriculum of every school. The efforts to provide opportunities to students and school achievement in low-income rural areas may be a factor for social change.

Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the dissertation proposal as an introduction to the research. A background, from prior investigations, established the problem that led to the purpose of the search. The research questions focusing on the study topic helped to

determine the methodology and guided the inquiry, analysis, and reporting. A definition of terms described the particular language used, followed by the conceptual framework and the nature of the study. I defined the assumptions, relevance, scope, limitation, significance of the research, and concluded with a summary of the whole section. In Chapter 2, I present a comprehensive analysis of reviewed literature that may strengthen the current context.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

I conducted this research in a low-income rural area of a small county in North Carolina, where there are economic barriers to keeping music in school programs. The purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry was to explore and describe leadership practices of principals who, despite fiscal challenges, include and sustain music in the K-3 curriculum in a low-income rural area of a small county in North Carolina. The available research literature has shown that musical activities in schools contribute to the comprehensive development of students. Music educators have been researching to raise awareness and convey the effects that music has on the development of learning.

McFerran (2015) showed that music learning has an intrinsic effect on developing artistic skills, cultural awareness, and creativity, while it extrinsically increases cognitive and academic growth. Elpus (2007) affirmed that the significance of music education impelled American organizations to actions that ensure every child to have access to a stable and continued quality of education. Kratus (2007) discussed how music education has a continuous influence on the lives of individuals. Flohr (2005) reviewed research on the human brain, which pointed to the importance of early experiences with musical models that provide a decisive, lifelong influence on the development of young children. Bowman (2005) questioned the linkage between musical involvement and educational outcomes and called attention to the need for professionals to support such results. Puryear and Kettler (2017) stated that some administrators still choose to not include music in elementary education. According to statistical research by Kettler et al. (2016),

very little is known about how principals in low-income rural areas have sustained improvements in an educational program.

This chapter begins with a summary of the literature search strategy and continues with an analysis of the conceptual framework. The final section is a review of existing literature about music education that led to specific categories resulting in two major sections: music as part of K-3 education programs and practices of school principals' leadership. Analysis based on the literature review also explains the concepts of practical learning and educational leadership related to the expected findings from this study.

Literature Search Strategy

I performed an initial search for current research on music education at the K-3 level through Walden University's library website by accessing Google Scholar. The Find link on the library page led to reliable databases, such as Academic Search Complete, Education Source, SAGE Premier, and ProQuest. The alert in Google Scholar was a helpful tool in identifying new articles. Literature for this section was accessed from these databases along with keyword support from the Google Scholar search engine. An initial search, using the keywords *music*, *education*, and *leadership* brought diversified studies. The research questions for this study prompted the creation of a list of key search terms: *music education*, *music cognition*, *music programs*, *school principal*, *multicultural classrooms*, *low-income rural area students*, and *music education in North Carolina*. In related combinations, the listed terms expanded the exploratory scope for this study.

Conceptual Framework

This study was grounded in the praxial concept of music education, discussed as music matters by Elliott and Silverman (2015), and the successful school leadership principles summarized by Leithwood and Riehl (2003). Elliott and Silverman stated that the term praxial - derived from the word praxis - is the best designation for musical practices aiming for comprehensive knowledge. Leithwood and Riehl demonstrated the significance of the effects of leadership on student learning. Elliott and Silverman's considerations of a curriculum-as-practicum and Leithwood and Riehl's educational leadership principles helped to find search terms that supported the investigation.

Definition of the Concepts

The two concepts used in this study are explained in this section. These concepts are related to the purpose of exploring and describing principals' leadership practices to sustain music in the K-3 curriculum. Both, praxial music education and instructional leadership as a framework can synthesis the chosen literature to explain the study phenomenon.

Praxial philosophy in music education. A definition for praxial is in the musical understanding of meanings and values, which is evidenced by the engagement of individuals in sets of musical actions (Elliott & Silverman, 2015). In this context, praxial music education is a result of the benefits gained from practical efforts in teaching and learning music. The performance of music requires deliberate actions determined by a conscious purpose and all processes involved in building knowledge (Elliott &

Silverman). The proposal that analytical intelligence is the result of discernment allied to practices identifies the praxial concept in music.

The praxial philosophy links the intention of educational choices with music's logical benefits. Elliott and Silverman (2015) stated that "we can and must extend the concept of 'internal goods' and virtuous praxial conduct beyond school and into the world" (p. 149). When expanding the benefits of the praxial concept in students learning, one of the requirements is to be leaders who motivate music practices (Saarelainen & Juvonen, 2017).

Concepts of educational leadership practices. Examining the broader context of leadership and its effectiveness for improving school management showed a link between theory and practice.

At the core of most definitions of leadership are two functions: providing direction and exercising influence. Leaders mobilize and work with others to achieve shared goals ... a core set of leadership practices form the "basics" of successful leadership and are valuable in almost all educational contexts.

(Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, pp. 4-5)

According to Leithwood and Riehl, the ability to empower students with vision and goals, and to provide resources for quality of learning are requisites for competent leaders. Leithwood and Riehl affirmed that the practices of an educational leader influence the direction, organizational development, and the school community.

The effectiveness of educational leaders in a context of equality for all students is determined by the quality of support to promote learning (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). The

instructional leadership philosophy is based on the efficacy of principals to achieve educational objectives by strengthening diversity, including program innovations, providing opportunities, and sharing leadership. According to Leithwood and Riehl, principals who are knowledgeable about high-quality education are managers of successful schools.

Key Statements and Definitions Inherent in the Framework

The variety of data and the targeted goals of schools make it a puzzle to conceptualize both instruction and instructional leadership practices (Hallinger, 2003). When elucidating points on praxial notions of music education, Jorgensen (2003) highlighted that it is essential to consider leadership practices. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) confirmed that music education, based on learning by practicing, can help cultivate musicianship, a musical skill improvement, and develop aptitude. Abrahams (2005) emphasized that the praxial principle of music education is a bridge to new learning. Hetland's (2000) found that a practical approach to music education, based not only on learning about music, but also learning how to make music, requires more experiences than academic information.

Concerned with the organizational control in schools, Ball (2012) affirmed that considering instructional leadership and changes required for success may cause conflicts and threaten teachers' interests. According to Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, and May (2004), proficient leaders are recognized by behaviors that influence followers and by intervening variables, such as hope, trust, and optimism. The metanalytical study on theoretical and practical aspects of leadership by Avolio et al. yielded more than one

thousand citations and revealed that authentic leadership is essential, but not sufficient for complete success. Conducting a qualitative study, Neumerski (2013) stated that instructional leadership designates school principals responsible for the educational accomplishment of all school's children regardless of economic diversities.

Music practices building knowledge. Evidence from empirical literature reinforces the assumption that music education provides foundational abilities to learn. Helmrich (2010) searched for statistical evidence to demonstrate that math processes may be more accessible to music students. Helmerich found that theoretically, music practices strengthen the neural connections that may drive mathematical logic. In a review of music practices related to brain development Flohr (2010) stated that music does not produce smarter learners, but cited documents demonstrating possibilities that music can enhance some domains of learning. Summarizing attributes of critical theory for changes in music education, Regelski (2002), stated that teachers' efforts to develop critical thinking through a practical music education could be the path to building links for knowledge.

Linking theory and practice. Practice applied to intellectual propositions can inspire students to get a better grasp of the significance of the subject-matter being acquired (Elliott & Silverman, 2015). An example was found in the Deweyan concept that if laboratory practice works for understanding speculative principles, it should serve to enlighten and improve the learning of subject-matter and theory of education. Wrenn and Wrenn (2009) used specific literature to search for a link between theory and practice and found that often, students are unable with enough confidence to make such transition.

According to Wrenn and Wrenn, the lack of integrating theory and practice into the same course in the curriculum is the source of students' difficulties.

Curriculum-as-practicum. The praxial concept can be grounded in a distinctive and reflective curriculum for music teaching and learning (Regelski, 2002). In Brazil, conducting ethnography research on teaching practicum basis, El Kadri and Roth (2015) explored the praxial concept principles. El Kadri and Roth found that teaching in action can provide opportunities for a better learning involvement.

Principal leadership and student learning. The philosophy of Leithwood and Riehl (2003) implies basics for educational leadership in "setting directions, developing people and developing the organization" (p. 5). Through a case study, Lowenhaupt (2014) concluded that the principals' leadership approach to transforming school performance could describe, define, and shape ongoing effective practices of a principal to increase student learning. Adams, Olsen, and Ware (2017) used mixed methods and discovered that "principals, through the push and pull of leadership, can influence teachers and other school members to create learning conditions that activate the natural curiosity, interest, and motivation in students" (p. 562).

Innovating a program for educational quality. According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), school improvement depends on strategies for accountability purposes, and school leaders are responsible for developing concrete plans for such improvement. Valli, Stefanski, and Jacobson (2018) analyzed leadership school requirements and found that educational norms are created in such a way that the rules appear to be the common-sense approach for a particular problem. Eisner (2000) confirmed that conditions, practices, and

policies of music education are limited for equal opportunities, especially for minorities and low-income students.

Conceptual Framework and Beneficial Discussions to this Study

Elliott and Silverman's (2015) praxial music education concept and Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) instructional leadership philosophy, respectively, emphasized the developing music learner's knowledge and the school principals' function in planning for learning enhancement. Accordingly, the intended framework may set the direction for describing the actions of school principals to promote music education and instructive success. The problem is that there are many issues involved in supporting an enhanced education in low-income rural areas, which is complicated due to inequality among schools in these areas (Kettler et al., 2016). According to Puryear and Kettler's (2017), quantitative study, supporting enhanced education in low-income settings requires determination and administrative abilities to make improvements while dealing with a low budget.

A range of outcomes from searches may provide models for school principals who desire success. Burton and Greher (2007) found in their qualitative study that the concerns about student academic learning are linked to the relationship between the principals' leadership and the support of music through political means. Gumus, Bellibas, Esen, and Gumus (2018) examined thousands of documents and found that for hundreds of years, the philosophers of ancient Greece discussed effective leadership, and still, leadership is difficult to define. The quantitative study by Gurley, Anast-May, O'Neal, and Dozier (2016) was based on the current emphasis that is placed upon the principals'

roles. Gurley et al. highlighted the significance of behaviors of the school principal in the context of instructional leadership for achieving effective results in elementary schools. The conclusion of Gurley et al. was that educational success depends on the alignment of principals' supportive practices with the modeling of leadership.

I considered the concepts of both Elliott and Silverman (2015), and Leithwood and Riehl (2003) to be appropriate for this qualitative study on principals' leadership practices for sustaining music in K-3 education in a low-income rural context. Both concepts were the foundation for the two questions, purpose, and methodology of this study. The developed framework also directed the literature review choice. The exploration of the principals' practices to sustain music in K-3 education for school the school and students' success in a low-income rural area in North Carolina was a resource to reach the expected findings of my study.

Literature Review Related to Methodologies

In this section, studies from the reviewed literature were valuable to provide answers to the questions raised about different methodologies to be used in this research. The chosen studies were approached by qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. In all these procedures, an analysis from practices of music in supporting learning and the importance of educational leadership in maintaining music in the school curriculum was presented.

Qualitative Methodologies From the Literature

Considering descriptions on the preservation of music education in a school program, I examined four specific qualitative studies consistent with the scope of this

study. All researchers of the selected studies described implications for and the effectiveness of the inclusion of music in American schools. The results of the four studies demonstrated the educator's role in adding and sustaining music in school programs. These subjects were researched through qualitative methods as follows.

In a multiple case study, Johnson and Matthews (2017) affirmed that the support for implementing music education in a school's curriculum requires determined efforts. According to Johnson and Matthews, generalist teachers are often challenged to adjust to changes in policies, which may stress planning, instruction, and reflection while endeavoring to engage and improve students' learning. The sample in Johnson and Matthew's study included experienced American general music teachers. The selected teachers reported the need for favorable conditions to support classroom management. The objectives of those teachers were to encourage students' life-long interest in music, which would influence social responsibilities. Johnson and Matthews did not address obstacles to curriculum decisions, but clarified that the role of educators is to understand the political policies that sustain and support the success of music in school programs.

As a Croatian educator, Sušić (2017) was concerned with global education patterns and suggested a reflection about the significance of early music education. Sušić developed a grounded theory study related to the rights of North American children to have music lessons. According to Sušić, the positive effects of music include the focus on the learning process and the development of the child's whole personality. Based on the Croatian environment where music is mandatory in schools, and focusing on a successful Venezuelan program, Sušić emphasized the importance of making music education

available to every child. Sušić also reported The Child's Bill of Rights that for 2 decades assured the right to music lessons for every child in the United States, independently of social conditions. According to Sušić, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has focused math and reading test scores with little attention to the practice of music or the rising criticism and concerns from music educators and education's stakeholders.

Using an intrinsic single case study, Tobias (2015) conducted an experiment involving three students and three groups of students in a musical-technologic performance outside of school. Tobias investigated how students assimilate and practice music instructions from curricular content and confirmed the importance of music education in the way it affects learning. Even though Tobias is in the music industry, his research is toward schooling. The findings of Tobias's study were that practices of music are an opportunity to cultivate the learning habits of heightening awareness, curiosity, and logical thinking. Tobias validated the importance of music education and how it affects learning through interpersonal relationships: the interaction of philosophical and pedagogical aspects creates enjoyable and continuous learning within the school and at home. According to Tobias, music education is not limited only to the classroom goals, but also to encourage the educational interest and the intellectual development of the child. Tobias concluded that inclusion and sustainability of music in the educational curriculum offers opportunities to develop students' understanding in and outside of school.

In the United States, in a southwest region with 1500 school districts, Barry and Durham (2017) observed that in 71% of these districts, music class time in early

education had been reduced in favor of reading and math. The sample for the study was composed of 55 children divided into two separate classrooms by ages 3.5 - 5.5 and ages 5.5 - 8. The children were under the supervision of student teachers from 24 universities who were going through orientation. The children were equally assigned to one classroom that everyday experienced with music were observed, which yielded data to build a constructivist approach for early education. Barry and Durham noted that preschool children could easily incorporate rhythmical movements from music. The spontaneity of children with the rhythm suggested the importance of musical instruction for the support of physical development. The question was how to create a music curriculum designed adequately for early education, as well as how to overcome barriers to music instruction. The findings of Barry and Durham confirmed the idea of other theorists who have claimed that an educational program should result from children's interests.

When comparing the four qualitative studies, it was possible to have a picture of the implications for and the effectiveness of the inclusion of music in American schools. Johnson and Matthews' (2017) affirmation of promoting children's critical sense and creativity through enjoyable practical experiences may complement Sušić's (2017) concept of the availability of music education for every child. The varied ways and forms of engaging children in the practice of music, as stated by Tobias (2015), converge with Barry and Durham's (2017) perception that a music education program might emerge from the interests of children. Developing a critical sense through musical experiences and making music education available for the students may be a way to engage them in

the practices of an encouraging curriculum that may also emerge from their interests.

Next, the quantitative approaches from the reviewed literature can provide statistical models and measurements to generate knowledge about the inclusion and sustainability of music in school programs.

Quantitative Methodologies From the Literature

The following quantitative studies include searches for conclusions related to the variables from the questions on music in a school curriculum. To contradict the need for a curriculum of music education, Sala and Gobet (2017) conducted a meta-analysis study. Sala and Gobet selected two theoretical and two methodological, potential moderators to examine the available experimental evidence that music instruction for children could enhance cognitive and academic skills. The meta-regression showed that the experiments affected the effect parts of the moderators and found a negative size ($d = -0.25$), which led Sala and Gobet to conclude that music training does not substantiate cognitive skills. According to Sala and Gobet, the transfer of skills between music training and academic cognition is only loosely related to each other.

Doubts about the cognitive effects of music education related to learning retention and the development of memory skills also were confronted in two different studies based on statistical findings from neuroscience. From the Auditory Neuroscience Laboratory in Evanston, IL, through quantitative cross-phase analysis, Strait, O'Connell, Parbery-Clark, and Kraus (2014) measured the difference of the degree of subcortical reactions between musicians and non-musicians in articulating syllables. Strait et al. demonstrated that musicians exhibited enhanced neural differentiation related to aural

memory and attentiveness. Strait et al. evidenced that memory and attention are more noticeable in those who had practiced music early in life. Similar, but in Los Angeles and the educational arena, Slater et al. (2014) used a longitudinal design to assess the influence of music instruction on reading abilities. The sample of 6-9 years old children from a low-income area was composed of 42 Spanish-English bilingual students. Slater et al. confirmed that memory and attention are related to the temporal process, a function of the auditory mechanism, which increases music and language learning. The weaknesses of both studies by Strait et al. and Slater et al., were in the inflexibility of the research methods applied to a subject inherent to the social sciences. Even from different fields, the importance of both was in their findings that musical practices promote opportunities for creativity, which enable children to collaborate and to minimize their learning problems.

From the knowledge of the human brain through neuroscience, Flohr, Persellin, Miller, and Meeuwssen (2011) also conducted a quantitative study to investigate the relationship between electrophysiological (EEG) activations while children were listening to contrasting music and engaging in cognitive activity. With the parents' consent, the chosen sample was 57 children from three preschools. Through comparison of the data, Flohr et al. discovered that young children could distinguish between the essence of music and speech by their abilities to hear, to respond, and to choose music. Flohr et al. reported the flexibility of young children in accepting both music and cognitive tasks and also the music influence on electrical activity in different areas of the brain. The results

from measuring the positive effect of music listening on brain function were significant for my research.

Through a quantitative study, Holochwost et al. (2017) proposed to measure the relation of music education with lower and higher IQ test scores. Holochwost et al. demonstrated that scores are associated with musical achievement with a difference of 2.24% within 3 years of practice. The weakness in the Holochwost et al. study was in the frequency of errors for determining statistical significance that hampered the expected findings. The strengths were in the reliable procedure in dealing with a numerical dependence of portions in the sample. The results of Holochwost et al. demonstrated the need to offer music education in school programs to provide students opportunities to develop elementary cognitive and behavioral skills. According to Holochwost et al., the results from music education are revealed in students' success, not just in their test scores, but also in their life.

In Texas, Frey-Clark (2015) and Killian and Wayman (2015) respectively measured music education's influence on better grades. According to Frey-Clark, a large amount of American educational literature exists that links music education to higher Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) scores. Frey-Clark stated that even with a curriculum centered on test scores, there is an interest in the results from musical practices. "The majority of researchers tested a correlational rather than causal relationship between music participation and academic achievement" (Frey-Clark, 2015, p. 39). When measuring the influence of music education, Frey-Clark's findings demonstrated that there was a significant difference in scores favoring high performing schools at an alpha

level of .01 in 122 schools in East Texas. Likewise, searching for educational policies, Killian and Wayman reported that 93% of Americans agreed that music should be a part of a complete education for every child. Killian and Wayman affirmed that starting a progressive music program at a young age is a significant contribution to student development. The weaknesses from both studies were in the collection of data that may indicate bias. During the analyses, Killian and Wayman asked for authorization to modify the surveys, and Frey-Clark collected data online that contained typing and editing mistakes. The strengths of both studies were that the moderate samples from different districts ensured results that were representative of the population studied. The suggestion for the use of music as an influential element in learning development is significant for my study.

Conducting a quantitative study, Elpus (2014) measured federal regulations for music in the school programs. According to Elpus, although music education has been measured as an influential element in learning development, its significance as part of a curriculum is not widely recognized. Elpus reported that to stabilize the position that music holds within the NCLB, the National Association of Music Educators (NAfME) mobilized a movement to include arts in the school curriculum and to provide an equitable policy for local-level programs as well as for general curricular content. Similarly, Hernández-Bravo, Cardona-Moltó, and Hernández-Bravo (2016) evaluated music education as a curriculum discipline and affirmed that it requires an intentional and well-integrated program that first contributes to the integral development of primary school students and continues in middle and high schools. Hernández-Bravo et al. also

reported that music education had its origins in innovative educational methodologies that emerged in Europe in the early 20th century and that these practices extended to the United States to encourage children's development. Both Elpus and Hernández-Bravo et al. confirmed statistically the level of concerns related to the significance of music as part of a curriculum for the growth of children through education.

Aguilar and Richerme (2016) confirmed that dealing with vague details about the integration of arts into the curriculum increased teachers' reluctance to recognize the importance of incorporating music into educational politics. Aguilar and Richerme examined the educators' level of familiarity with music education advocacy and confirmed that teachers are more concerned with Race to the Top and STEMs (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) than with promoting the arts. Aguilar and Richerme also identified a lack of information in specialized writings discussing changes for the addition and sustainability of music education into a curriculum.

Abril and Bannerman (2015) suggested that the first step toward changes is to know the opinions of those involved in the education system. The research conducted by Abril and Bannerman was through a survey that measured music teachers' perceptions in elementary music programs. The instrument indicated that over 50% of the teachers in the United States agreed that the success of innovative curricula is concentrated on school administration leadership. To generalize findings, Abril and Bannerman randomly selected 1,000 participants from a population of around 30,000 elementary music teachers who were involved as members of NAFME. The importance of Abril and

Bannerman's study is the awareness that only 5% of the teachers in the United States considered it necessary to include music in the elementary school curriculum.

Mixed Methods From the Literature

The next study was a specific model of multimethod research, which gave a descriptive and numeric expression of some points of the problem of my research as follows. Seeking to avoid bias Ladd et al. (2014) used a mixed approach to offer a deeper understanding of educational issues in North Carolina. By observing children's activities in classrooms, surveying parents, and randomly sampling students, Ladd et al. reported the quality of classroom practices and the children's short-term results. Ladd et al. affirmed that in North Carolina, the positive effect of the federal government's investment in early childhood education for disadvantaged children moved communities to participate in the programs. The weakness of the Ladd et al. study was in the lack of orientation regarding the cause of endogenous variation and the mediating factors to inform the processes of how the program exerted change. The summit of the study is in the evidence that North Carolina's board of education had made efforts to offer a high academic skills preschool program for disadvantaged four-year-old children. According to Ladd et al., the problem was that the development of an idealized system within state policy sometimes remains lax.

The different scientific methods explained the significance of music in children's education. The analysis of these studies revealed that the debates about the beneficial effects of music education are not new, and even neuroscientific researchers can indicate benefits from music practices beginning at the K-3 level. The findings demonstrated that

economic circumstances had hindered initiatives for the inclusion of arts into a school curriculum. Dealing with the ambiguity about the music in a curriculum could also be a factor of reluctance to incorporating music into educational policies. The analyzed articles demonstrated that successful change and learning achievement from the practices of music depends on the knowledge of the instructional leadership. Both the praxial concept in music education and the practices of the instructional leadership philosophy were the support of the major components of the study, which was also discussed sequentially in the next two sections.

Literature Reviewed Related to the Key Concepts

The review of the literature indicated the values that encourage the sustainability of music from early education. The results from literature had also confirmed that the sustainability of music education is a political endeavor that requires managerial knowledge, and most of all, leadership skills. Supported by these bases, the two major sections, music as part of K-3 education programs and school principals' leadership practices, were described in detail.

Music as Part of K-3 Education Programs

In the early 20th century, Dewey supported the philosophy of including music in school programs. In 2015, Elliott and Silverman presented the praxial concept, which confirms the Deweyan idea of learning by doing. According to Boon (2009), the role of praxial music education is related to the Deweyan notions in integrating theoretical and practical domains. Boon affirmed that in the Aristotelian argument, praxis means the right activity, and consequently, a praxis model should be a significant avail for music

education in the school curriculum. The general idea of learning music is that it requires an understanding of a score, and the praxial concept is that the essential elements are related to musical aptitudes focused on musicianship skills (Elliott & Silverman, 2015).

The chosen literature provided valuable information on what is known about the concept of praxial music education, which encourages the sustainability of music in educational programs. The works reviewed for this study also generated controversial opinions on the praxial concept for music, as well as what remains to be studied. Among the reviewed literature that served to sustain and describe the praxial concept proposed for my search, both current and older studies were relevant. Analyzing the significance of music education helped to support this research on the maintenance of music in school programs in low-income rural areas of a small county in North Carolina. Music learning, music-making, and curriculum-as-practicum, which are intrinsic in the praxial concept and discussed in the literature review, were used in the development of this section.

Music education in a practical musical context. Portowitz, Pepler, and Downton (2014) supported the idea that within a practical musical context, children can adapt learning techniques to different subjects. Portowitz et al. conducted research in equivalent areas from Tel Aviv, Israel, and the United States, respectively. The mixed methods study had a qualitative evaluation that revealed children's cognitive flexibility and the ability to solve complexities, while a quantitative evaluation revealed the results of working memory. Portowitz et al. observed that the dynamic approaches used by musicians in their musical learning process were reflected in all other learning approaches and behaviors. The conclusion of Portowitz et al. was that both in and out of

school, the student's success depends on the functionality of the strategical focus on learning. The weakness of the study is in the limited diversity in the social status of the sample, but it is important for understanding the link between music learning and student's accomplishment.

Guhn, Emerson, and Gouzouasis (2019) discovered that music courses in North American public education systems are often underfunded in proportion to numeracy and literacy skills. According to Guhn et al., the knowledge of how music training is related to children's cognitive domains leads to the decision for music in the school program. Using an in-depth literature search of music learning, Guhn et al. conceived that music from childhood and early youth is related to decisive changes to neurological regions. In British Columbia (BC), Canada, Guhn et al. collected data examining through a quantitative method the school records of K-12 students from all districts in the region ($n = 60$). As a sample, Guhn et al. combined four groups of students in one set (total $n = 112,916$) from all these different public schools. The analysis of the sample revealed that music-making entails organizational and sociable processes, which were significant for other areas of learning. The findings confirmed a progressive connection between music participation in the classroom and school accomplishment. Although the sample was from secondary schools, the study of Guhn et al. was significant for recognizing that music education sustained from childhood can support academic achievement.

Walton (2014) used a quasi-experimental design to explore the influence of music lessons on achievement levels of kindergarten students. Walton stated that a kindergarten classroom already offers an intense learning program that could be enhanced by the

addition and sustainability of musical education. Walton presented three meta-analyses and a literature review on the links between music instruction and reading classes where the students with the most music education had better results on standardized reading tests. Walton affirmed that there is sufficient research to support the idea that making music could develop skills and reading ability in young children, but the literature is scarce on the subject. The weakness of the study was in the limited time for the experiment due to the class schedule. The study strength was in the large sample that increased the validity of the investigation. The significance of the Walton study was centered on music benefits in literacy and the advocacy for adding and sustaining music in an already strong kindergarten program.

When questioning the benefits of music in classrooms, Cabedo-Mas and Díaz-Gómez (2016) found that practices of music led to a multidimensional form of thinking and the meaning of music for children's education has been considered a subject of high importance in students' evolution. The qualitative research by Cabedo-Mas and Díaz-Gómez was conducted in Spain, but its significance lies in providing arguments to defend music education to integrate diversity and facilitate positive musical experiences. Cabedo-Mas and Díaz-Gómez findings revealed that experiences with different musical identities promote improved coexistence and encouraged students toward engaging in music-making that extends their musical lives beyond the classroom.

Music-making engagement. According to Nardo, Custodero, Persellin, and Fox (2006), music-making is a part of a child's life, where the first communications with parents are songs, which are enriched by contact with playmates, and later reinforced in

preschool activities. Surveying in the American territory, Nardo et al. found that for nearly a half-century, NafME has been promoting a movement to inform educators, policymakers, and stakeholders about the importance of music education from early childhood. Reporting their findings on music education preschools, Nardo et al. called attention to the enjoyable creativity experienced by youngsters when making playful music. Nardo et al. concluded that the creative dynamic of practical music suggests that children's natural musicality can shape music lessons.

Kratus (1989) conducted a quantitative study based on affirmations from many music educators who advocated for the use of creative activities to involve students in the exploration of musical dimensions. Kratus' perception was that creativity is the goal of many educators, but a creative environment is quite rare in music classes. According to Kratus, children are unable to perceive compositional resolutions because it depends on practices. During his quantitative experiments, Kratus encouraged the participant to produce a replicable song and found that while composing, the ability to replicate melodies requires less exploration and more repetition. The importance of Kratus' study is in the finding that creative problem-solving strategies have been taught successfully, which could answer pedagogical questions on children's ability to make music.

According to Barrett (2016), replicability of song-making is a form of learning where children apply musical structures in creative play during their daily lives. Barrett also affirmed that motivation for musical knowledge lies in the exploration of music-making forms, which flows from songs and nursery rhymes. Through a qualitative case study, Barrett examined the meaning and function of music-making in educating a child

exploring the uses of music by a 2-year-old girl who employed songs as a resource for self-identification, involvement, and making meaning of her world. The findings revealed that in making music, children borrow patterns from their enjoyment in singing for improvisations, which demonstrate musical aptitude related to forms of knowing.

Musical aptitude. When reflecting on children's musical activities, Gluschkof (2011) reported that almost 70 years ago, Moorhead and Pond were the first to publish research on observations of children singing in a group during free playtime as a natural way of music-making. Gluschkof stated that schoolyards had a rich field to study young children's musical approach to singing games characterized by some educative enhancement. Conducting a qualitative study, Gluschkof collected descriptions of behaviors of 97 young children in kindergarten music classes. The findings revealed that singing is the most spontaneous learning behavior by young students and that music-making beginning in early childhood may still be a natural practice for developing a child's musical aptitude.

Flohr (1981) had already demonstrated the concern with music learning and the aptitude of children for music. For a quantitative research, Flohr used a sample consisted of 5-year-old children, with one group randomly assigned to participate in a program related to child development in Texas. To measure how short-term music instruction influences on children's developmental musical aptitude, Flohr used The Primary Measures of Music Audiation tests (comprehension and internal realization of music). Comparing the groups measured on the pretest and the ANCOVA analysis, the difference between the groups was significant. The pretest difference requires an additional t-test to

assess the extent to which music learning influences on student actions. As a replication, Flohr's study is essential in assuring the validity and reliability of the findings that inspire new research. The results revealed that the children's scores had increased significantly with a short period of education, which was significant support for the idea that instruction may influence a young child's music aptitude.

The concern for musical aptitude is related to how schools might "open spaces for students to explore and invent new music" (Allsup, 2003, p. 24). Bucura and Weissberg (2017) also found that developing musical abilities is a part of the national standards of music education in the United States. According to Allsup, opportunities for students to make music in an unconstrained and familiar context reveal what they understand and explain who they are. Likewise, Bucura and Weissberg observed that autonomous decisions about grouping and leadership might benefit the students' processes. While Bucura and Weissberg investigated two compositional settings involving elementary education students, Allsup concentrated on music practices for students in a rural community. Both studies contain evidence that opportunities for practical music activities result in students being more productive with creative tasks, which was significant to my research.

Music education for educational growth. According to Baker and Friedman-Nimz (2004), an opportunity for gifted instruction is a goal of the contemporary education policy in the United States. Through a quantitative study, Baker and Friedman-Nimz evaluated enhanced programs for low-income students and found that existing efforts from the government to offer supplemental programs strive for balanced support

for all children and to supply their needs. Baker and Friedman-Nimz analyzed the relationship between policies and educational opportunities while considering the student's socioeconomic status. The findings showed that a lack of mandates is a critical obstacle in offering opportunities for children from low-income areas.

Aldeguer (2014), a Spanish researcher, affirmed that beyond economic needs, scientific development brought the countries of the world into closer contact resulting in a multicultural diversity in school classrooms. Aldeguer stated that in discussing the inclusion and integration of children into musical settings, researchers have also described the benefits of music in culturally inclusive conditions. Through a quantitative study, and based on the praxial concepts, Aldeguer measured the influence of music in developing a sense of equality and identity at the primary school level. The results suggested that multicultural music should be incorporated into the school program to improve students' aural skills, which has significance for my research. Aldeguer's claims also agreed with Elliott and Silverman's (2015) statement that multicultural music is one of the fundamental practices for providing equal opportunities for the development of musicianship.

Equal opportunities. According to Kose (2011), diversity within the classes and the use of multicultural music could become a teaching challenge. Conversely, Wong, Pan, and Shah (2016) affirmed that practices of multicultural music are an advantage for perceptive teachers, which according to Liao and Campbell (2016), can improve the effectiveness of a kindergarten teacher. Barrett and Bond (2015) also investigated the results of music practices for children's education from four socioeconomically

disadvantaged school settings. Barrett and Bond's research revealed that a music program contributed to fostering positive student development, which may be a motivating factor when advocating for music education. The findings of Barrett and Bond's study were that the program yielded positive results related to the interactive influences on language and mental flexibility in young children despite their disadvantaged conditions.

Conducting a quantitative study, Puryear and Kettler (2017) reported that low-income rural schools provide few resources and opportunities for improved education. Puryear and Kettler observed that unequal access to enhanced education in a low-income rural area is not only a fiscal problem. Puryear and Kettler's investigation revealed that rural school districts and their students have differences, which require special attention from both policymakers and educators.

According to Elliott and Silverman (2015), musical quality is acquired through practices that result in productive knowledge raised from a curriculum-as-practicum. Within the praxial concept, the principle of the term *practicum* refers to a holistic engagement. Consequently, the current school diversity calls for changes in the learning program adapted according to the school circumstances, which requires a curriculum to fill the gap from disadvantaged conditions.

Curriculum-as-practicum in music education. Making a curriculum is a process that implies constant changes, from general to specific decisive decisions, to ensure that all instructional practices are making the curriculum interactive and flexible for adapting teaching-learning situations (Elliott & Silverman, 2015). Burrack et al. (2014) evaluated three different school districts in the United States and concluded that

advocating for music education requires the prioritizing of political adaptations to changes in such a way as to meet the needs of schools. Including music in a curriculum to achieve a school's reality requires, most of all, allowing student participation while considering the different learning abilities of the students (Jellison & Draper, 2015). The understanding of Abrahams (2005) is that critical sense developed from music education comes from the flexibility of instructional activity, which benefits learning. Martignetti, Talbot, Clauhs, Hawkins, and Niknafs (2013) also highlighted the importance of a curriculum-as-practicum from the praxial conception that music in its nonverbal ways may cause social change.

Considering formalities for the transition to kindergarten, the question posed by Ritblatt, Longstreth, Hokoda, Cannon, and Weston (2013) was whether the practices of music could enhance students' emotional skills and readiness for school. According to Ritblatt et al., the Charlottesville Education Summit designated that all children in the United States would start school ready to learn. However, Ritblatt et al. pointed out that more than one third of the kindergarten children are not prepared for learning. The purpose of Ritblatt et al. was to explore the influence of musical practices on children's readiness for learning. Ritblatt et al. affirmed that the practice of music has the potential to enhance school readiness by increasing the child's willingness to learn new skills. Ritblatt et al. findings were that musicality developing from early childhood enhances social and emotional qualities that last for life. The study of low-income context revealed impediments to implementing music in school programs, which is important for my research.

According to Elliott and Silverman (2015), in the effort to achieve sufficient education, “there is much to do to free traditional schooling from its narrow agenda” (p. 462). Within the praxial concept, liberal education involves the understanding of several kinds of formal knowledge, including literature, languages, and history, but all these essential achievements are not sufficient for education. Instruction and individual growth also involve an emphasis on life values, which, according to Elliott and Silverman, is neglected by school administrators.

In this study, I explored why school principals include music education in the school curriculum despite social and economic problems. The reviewed literature offered a picture of the issues in the American educational system, which raised questions about the value of music education in diminishing educational challenges. Could music enhance a child’s school-readiness and socio-emotional skills? Could the influence of music education overcome differences stemming from multicultural diversity and the environment in low-income rural schools? How could an interactive and flexible curriculum be developed, and how can educational opportunities be equally distributed? These were questions that I concentrated on in the next segment, where an analysis of instructional leadership may give an understanding of principals’ leadership practices to sustain music in K-3 education.

Practices of School Principals’ Leadership

The review of the literature focusing on instructional leadership philosophy revealed indispensable leadership components necessary for managing a school.

According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), the literature also gave details of leadership in

successful schools, as well as numerous quantitative reviews that the effects that educational leadership practices have on student learning. The selection of current studies and older seminal articles were models to give insights into the problem I explored. The selected studies may have answers to my research questions because it was related to instructional leadership practices. Following Leithwood and Riehl's instructional leadership philosophy, it was possible to analyze research on successful instructional leadership in fostering music education and how to overcome challenges to sustaining music in the school curriculum.

The instructional leadership philosophy is founded on successful leaders, who are recognized by the results of directions given for changes and improvement to the development of individual and school achievement (Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Mulford, & Silins, 2011). Independent of their abilities, the principals need to be prepared for the managerial role and its difficulties. Hallinger and Chen (2015) affirmed that outcomes discussed in instructional leadership literature could be a model for a director who desires success. The comparative research, Hallinger and Chen reviewed topics and methods of educational leadership on the causes and consequences of principals' practices. Hallinger and Chen found significant growth concerning scholarly interest, where active leadership led to educational improvements. Hallinger and Chen's study was supported by Leithwood's instructional leadership views, which can substantiate the topic of my search.

The link between school principal leadership and children's academic results were assessed by Gurley et al. (2016), who affirmed that empirical literature has focused on

instructional leaders' behaviors. The quantitative study by Gurley et al. was conducted in a mid-sized school district in the southeast of the United States. Gurley et al. affirmed the importance of school principals who are devoted to the role of instructional leadership and confirmed that student achievement is linked to the practices of a school principal. Gurley et al. recognized the possibilities of misrepresentation of the findings, although the strength of the study was how the discussion on principals' leadership effect was reported in encouraging readers to question their choices.

Making decisions for school improvement. In ensuring learning quality and student achievement, the leadership approaches are only effective when they are put into practice (Goddard, Goddard, Sook Kim, & Miller, 2015; Orphanos, & Orr, 2014). Searching for evidence of the connection between principal leadership practices and student success, Sinnema, Ludlow, and Robinson (2016) confirmed the hypothesis that simplifying goal setting would make it easier to achieve goals. Using statements on successful school leadership philosophy, Sinnema et al. emphasized the current attention toward more student-centered approaches, which identify and evaluate the leadership practices that increase student outcomes. The sample of experienced principals did not provide information about the leadership practices of novice school principals, which was a weakness of the study. The strengths were in the data on the stability of the practices used to assess leadership efficacy. Sinnema et al.'s findings were significant in revealing that more objectivity over improvements in leadership practices meant more positive influence in both teaching and learning improvement.

Effective instructional methods may not be successful in all schools (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), but leadership can have a direct effect on the practices of a principal, resulting in an indirect effect on teaching outcomes (Orphanos & Orr, 2014). The concern of Orphanos and Orr (2014) was that schools had become complex organizations, demanding principals to manage problems and changes that go beyond their role as an educator. Conducting a quantitative study Orphanos and Orr assessed how innovative leadership preparation affects educational achievement. The weakness of the Orphanos and Orr study was that it was conducted in three educational settings in the United States during a time when schools were planned for a broader district reform. The strength was in the national sample of principals who held strong relationships between local districts and universities, ensuring knowledge and directive engagements of the participants. Orphanos and Orr's study is important to my research due to the finding that beyond teaching and learning development, leadership improvements influence educational reforms and school development.

According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), the quotidian management of a school requires feasible knowledge and guidance, and "leadership practices form the 'basics' of successful leadership" (p. 5). Effective leadership may be acquired from routine practice in making decisions for school improvement (Hognestad & Bøe, 2016). Conducting a case study, Halverson, Grigg, Prichett, and Thomas (2007) found that school leaders include student learning as a central point while persuading teachers of the value in creating new practices and cultures in their schools. Concerns in learning improvement led Halverson et al. to collect data related to the practices of successful schools and

discover resources that involve leaders making profitable arrangements. Managing communities of teachers and learners who need support is a difficult challenge for school leadership (Louis, Murphy, & Smylie, 2016; Mulford & Silins, 2011), and it requires leadership administration readiness for practical educational purposes (Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Heck & Hallinger, 2014). Professionally and instructively, leadership strategies fortify the abilities expected for educational quality to manage schools' organizational issues.

Supportive practices require alignment of the results from leadership with the structured objectives of the organization and the environmental factors. Heck and Hallinger (2014) stated that the interaction of theory and practice contributes to the continuation of school improvement. In one state in the United States, Heck and Hallinger selected 60 primary schools to collect longitudinal data using a multilevel model. Heck and Hallinger tested and created paths of connection between principals' leadership and student achievement. Based on the instructional leadership philosophy, Heck and Hallinger found three conditions for the quality of the educational background. First, the actions taken by sensible leadership that have subtle effects on the improvement of student knowledge will become visible over time. Second, the leadership's role in coordinating teachers' work is a factor that enables them to contribute more directly to a student's learning. Third, educational policies and activities to support teaching encourage collaborative efforts among teachers to enhance the curriculum. Heck and Hallinger's concluded that the practical leadership skills of principals enable a mutual effort for strategic actions that result in constant school improvement. The findings of

Heck and Hallinger's study offered insights into strategies that principal leaders can employ to improve teaching and learning effectiveness for school improvement.

Leadership supportive practices. In this research, I questioned why principals chose to sustain music in their school programs, despite fiscal and political barriers. Hallinger and Lu (2014) stated that within the instructional leadership philosophy, school principal/leader affects student learning indirectly through shaping organizational processes and the culture of the school to transform the 'visions of change' into practice. Through a quantitative study, Hallinger and Lu sought to assess shared vision within the school management and found that comprehensible reflections provide the commitment and support from the educational community. Although the study focused on leadership effects only in teaching, the identification of a mediator of shared vision in the form of school alignment and coherence was a strong point. The importance of Hallinger and Lu's study for my research was in the findings confirming that collaborative management and shared vision of an innovative leadership might be useful for realizations of new demands in school systems.

Leadership is inherent to principals who can visualize their responsibilities related to improving instructional practice by actively monitoring educational quality (Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Hallinger, Walker, Nguyen, Truong, & Nguyen, 2017). Consequently, the positive impact on teaching and learning comes from instructional, collaborative, distributed, and transformational leadership (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Li, Hallinger, & Ko, 2016; Liu, Hallinger, & Feng, 2016). The characteristics of principals who seek to create a school with a standardized environment are trust, effective communication, and

the use of structured collaborative processes (Heck & Hallinger; Li, Hallinger, & Ko; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012).

Park and Ham (2016) stated that pressures from the accountability in achievements and educational changes, is a crucial determinant in the development of the schools. Grounded in Leithwood's instructional leadership philosophy, Park and Ham conducted a quantitative study to measure principal-teacher disagreement across three countries with considerably different socio-cultural backgrounds. Park and Ham's results revealed that if the principals' leadership self-evaluation diverges from what their teachers are perceiving, it will reflect negatively in collaborative activities and interactions. Considering their findings, Park and Ham suggested possibilities for other researchers to inquire about the principal leadership and teacher collaboration relevance in other countries. Park and Ham also suggested taking into account the importance of the principals' ability to discern how teachers perceive the principals' leadership.

According to Goddard et al. (2015), the reviewed literature empirically demonstrated the indirect effect of school leaders' practices on student achievement through their support for teaching, which confirmed the hypothesis that leadership and collaborative management make a difference. The confirmed hypothesis was generated from opinions on the evidence of instructional leadership philosophy "that the relationship between school leadership and student achievement is indirect and mediated by the support leaders provide to teachers" (Goddard et al., 2015, p. 509). To measure the levels of a principal's leadership, faculty collaboration, and the efficiency of all, Goddard et al. employed self-administered surveys and found and found a positive effect from the

leadership and collaboration factors. Both the sample collected from 93 elementary schools in rural surrounded by poverty and the broad examination of instructional leadership were a substantial contribution to my study. The findings from Goddard et al.'s study suggested that instructional leadership is the foundation to create and strengthen organizational cultures to foster better teaching-learning.

The leadership conditions that best contribute to student development and school improvement are those distributed among people in different roles, acting indirectly in the learning process (Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012).

According to Louis, Murphy, and Smylie (2016), the support to help individuals grow in their own right is a challenge for school leadership. Vass and Deszpot (2017) affirmed that there is an increasing emphasis on using more creative approaches to initiate educational steps. In these steps, the leader can negotiate the values to build trust and political aptitude to achieve changes in school perspectives. One question was how to manage education considering the present view of the school as an organization in a challenging and competitive market.

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) stated that school principals could exert leadership by distributing responsibilities and roles among teachers, parents, and even students who could potentially be influential leaders. According to Taniguchi and Hirakawa (2016), the support of an open, participative management involves allowing others to take part in choices and decisions. Taniguchi and Hirakawa also stated that by encouraging the support of aware educational stakeholders, principals could detect and prevent further complications easily. In dealing with choices and decisions, Wao, Hein, Villamar,

Chanderbhan-Forde, and Lee (2017), affirmed that a communicative leader could provide opportunities for open participation in attaining student instructional interests through educational policy innovations. The relationship between the principal and the local community is critically important and may motivate environmental relationships (Oplatka, 2017; Orphanos & Orr, 2014). Accordingly, instructional success depends on the school leadership's ability to prepare the education community to adhere to the school's vision in implementing and sustaining desired changes (Gurley, Peters, Collins, & Fifolt, 2015).

Shared vision. Vision is at the center of constructing leadership theories, and it drives organizational learning processes. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) highlighted that vision is an essence of leadership in creating a sense of purpose that propels teachers to achieve ambitious goals. Likewise, Hallinger and Lu (2014) assessed how a shared vision within the school management team could be transformed into practice. Kurland, Peretz, and Hertz-Lazarowitz (2010) stated that there is a limited amount of empirical evidence showing a connection from leadership, educational vision, and managerial learning. This limit led Kurland et al. to conduct a quantitative investigation on principals' leadership influence to manage their school. Through a questionnaire, Kurland et al. collected data to examine the leadership style of the principals, their school vision, and their administrative skills toward learning so that primary education teachers could evaluate their schools and their principals. The findings of the inquiry demonstrated the importance of shared vision as a motivation for the organization's success. Kurland et al. concluded that educational processes driven by a vision are very promising for the

practices of a school leader in supporting and sustaining innovative educational improvements.

Leadership practices are articulated from the vision, which can influence positive changes and schools' improvement on different levels by promoting instructional equality amid diversity (Kose, 2011). A shared vision provides a prediction of the possible success of schools and students, which motivates educators to work together to achieve that vision (Gurley et al., 2015). According to Hallinger and Lu (2014), when a principal leader shares a vision and information about the local education policy, it results in a visible influence that strengthens the commitment from everyone who expects educative outcomes. Planned goals for student academic success are identified through a clear direction in the school (Hallinger, 2003), and the promotion of an open curriculum that offers the opportunity of musical activity depends on the educators' vision and leadership (McCarthy & Goble, 2002).

Sustaining music in school curriculums. Educational experts have suggested necessary pedagogic means for cultivating creative habits in the minds of students, which may be acquired from reflective experiences from music education (Vass & Deszpot, 2017). There is also a broader educational and cultural effect that works toward the inclusion of music in the school programs (Laes & Schmidt, 2016). Despite continuous demands for art education in schools, Scripp and Gilbert (2016) stated that many educators are still detached from the benefits of music education, mostly due to deficiencies in leadership when dealing with educational politics.

Music education is not a primary part of a curriculum and is often an unusual subject for typical management (Crooke & McFerran, 2015). According to Burrack et al. (2014), music tends to be equal with other content in the school program, but few school principals provide the resources necessary for integrating music into their education programs. Gurley et al. (2016) affirmed that the principal has the role of instructional intervention in the curriculum. The question was, how can school principals improve a curriculum with musical content?

When considering the effort of school administrators to improve the curriculum with music, Major (2013) conducted a single case study to examine how the procedure was used to keep or cut music education in public schools. According to Major, budgets, problems from a tough economy, and challenges from educational policies are factors that discourage the support for music in the school program. Major reported that one school in Michigan had had music in its program for over 10 years. To establish the reliability of such information, Major collected data from documents, observations, and interviews and found that despite these challenges, many Americans, including leading educators, have hopes for music in public education. Major concluded that supporting music in a school curriculum has many barriers to overcome, but it is possible when a school has effective leadership.

According to Li, Hallinger, and Ko (2016), only school leadership can affect, identify, and validate paths to curriculum improvement. Li et al. supported their statement on Leithwood's instructional philosophy affirmation that what students learn emanates from principals' leadership practices. Li et al. stated that educational leadership

is also evidenced in how the principals adapt the curriculum to the needs and opportunities for all students.

Leadership practices. Mulford and Silins (2011) searched for a new concept of principalship using reviewed literature and models of successful school leadership. Applying a mixed approach, Mulford and Silins observed that all principal variables had a significant effect on the outcome variables. Mulford and Silins concluded that successful school principalship is an interactive and evolving system that includes many participants. The results revealed that leadership effectiveness is a result of trust and empowerment created by a developed and articulated shared vision, which is supported by collaborative experimentation. The weakness of Mulford and Silins' research is in the lack of investigation on economic needs related to student academic achievement. However, the strength of the study is on the five-year research journey, which enabled a powerful multi-level statistical analysis.

Leadership effectiveness is a characteristic of and a priority for school leaders and policymakers in pursuit of better educational outcomes (Hallinger et al., 2017). Conducting a qualitative inquiry, Hallinger et al. started with a literature review and interviewed successful primary school principals to produce a case study. The retrospective study done by Hallinger et al. was grounded in the instructional leadership philosophy. Hallinger et al. examined early patterns of the paths and practices by which leaders' educators influenced learning proficiency in different schools. The findings from Hallinger et al.'s examination revealed that leadership practices varied across different socio-cultural contexts, with effects fluctuating according to social circumstances.

According to Walker (2015), elementary schools offer a critical opportunity for developing music skills and the advantages associated with the sustainability of music instruction. Walker conducted a quantitative study specific to the state of Utah, but her approach is very significant for my investigation. Through a survey, Walker examined how the current model of elementary music instruction is delivered at the elementary level. Walker found a disinterest in music education as well as obstacles of funding and mandatory priorities but also evidenced that deliberate decisions demonstrated that music could be sustained in the school's curriculum. Walker concluded that there is leadership potential for facilitating music in school programs, and positive change can be made even in difficult times.

Considering the effectiveness of the learning process, "school leadership influences student learning outcomes by enhancing the quality of the school's instructional environment" (Heck & Hallinger, 2014, p. 656). The challenges of promoting music education led to the thinking that any approach to music education must realistically consider the educator's abilities to create a receptive environment for the students and the school targets (Abril & Bannerman, 2015; Cabedo-Mas & Díaz-Gómez, 2016; Walker, 2015). Consequently, principals' leadership enables adaptations to contemporary teaching-learning practices (Harris, Jones, Cheah, Devadason, & Adams, 2017) by bringing together values of plurality, as well as musical preferences (Cabedo-Mas & Díaz-Gómez).

According to Liao and Campbell (2016), music practices with distinctive cultural differences can improve the effectiveness of a preschool teacher. The suggestion of Ng,

Chan, and Yuen (2017) is that effective school principals should employ methods necessary to motivate students from different socio-cultural levels to foster equal participation in an educational environment. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) also affirmed that educational achievement is the result of successful leaders exercising their influence in directing student-centered learning.

According to the reviewed literature, educational success depends on the ability of the instructional leadership to produce changes that direct student-centered learning. Such changes create conditions for consistent effectiveness across the learning process. Promoting changes in a curriculum is also an opportunity to develop the means to reach the advantages that music instruction has to offer for equality in multicultural classrooms. Reevaluating a curriculum to adapt to the contextual needs of creating opportunities for all is an implication of leadership practices for the effectiveness of education. A shared vision with open participation, encouraged by effective instructional leadership aiming toward curricular improvements, is the way to affect the lives of the students for the betterment of society.

Summary and Conclusion

The majority of the reviewed literature included a large amount of evidence of the benefits of music education from K-3 and the practices of successful school leaders in dealing with educational decisions. The literature also revealed researchers' doubts and contradictions regarding the advantages of learning music. Articles with different analytical approaches provided an in-depth examination to highlight gaps and answer questions about the influences of music education on student lives and instructional

leadership efforts to sustain music in school programs. These articles also emphasized that it is not enough to advocate for what music educators believe music has to offer. The suggestion was to attack barriers at the root to search for administrative solutions regarding public policy and a predictable budget. Nevertheless, these impediments reveal the school principals' leadership in creating conditions to meet educational interests toward success. It was evident in the literature that even amid politics and adversities, the shared vision of a school leader encourages followers to embrace the same cause.

The analysis of the literature demonstrated that in a multicultural environment, the interactive and flexible nature of curriculum-as-practicum has the potential for music to influence social change. In substantiating the school program with praxial concepts, it is possible to engage students at the center of the learning structures. Based on the benefits of a curriculum-in-action, the use of multicultural music could be a practice for promoting equal educational opportunity. Despite the reactions to change, this analysis showed that successful school principals are those who eliminate barriers to enable teaching and learning improvements. This analysis also confirmed that providing better opportunities for learning may encourage students' interest in other educational practices and lead them to dynamic and progressive ideals.

When knowing that changes in educational practices are not easy, the barriers that limit the evolution of school policies for music education are not impediments to realizations. The emphasis that music is a part of children's lives and their making of playful music suggest the creation of music lessons based on children's natural practices. Such practices may serve as a motivation for educational changes. Sustaining music in a

K-3 program offers challenges and costs that can only be overcome by the school principals' leadership practices. Independent of knowledge and leadership abilities, the principals need to be prepared for the demanding role of directing students' creativity and cognition.

The opportunity to re-examine the instructional leadership philosophy and the praxial concept of music education as an active engagement in music-making was significant in searching the sustainability of music in K-3 education. A review of the conceptions, accomplishments, and distinguished performances by management in low-income schools from rural areas revealed that principals' leadership practices have a positive effect on student achievement and school success. Emphases of the revised literature included that changes to curriculum enhancement are possible when school principals pursue their ideal vision. My proposed research was planned to fill the gap in the literature related to principals' leadership practices in low-income rural areas of a small county in North Carolina. The research method used in this study to investigate the problem is described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In Chapter 1, I presented that the purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry was to explore and describe leadership practices of principals who, despite fiscal challenges, include and sustain music in the K-3 curriculum in a low-income rural area of a small county in North Carolina. In Chapter 3, I describe the research design as an extension of the research presented in the literature review. Conducting a generic qualitative inquiry, I also explain how I conducted individual interviews with four principals to gain descriptions of the practices they used when interacting with political and social challenges to manage educational improvements in low-income rural areas. Focus group interviews with eight parents from PTOs added data from their perceptions of the school principals' leadership practices in dealing with educational visions and support for keeping music education in a program despite budgetary cuts. Accordingly, the topics in this section are the initial demonstration of the research design and rationale, where the research questions are also restated.

The role of the researcher is presented with a plan to manage a professional relationship with the participants to avoid bias. The methodology section includes the selection of participants, the choice of instrumentation, and the criteria used for recruitment, participation, and data collection, followed by the data analysis plan. The procedures for trustworthiness are also discussed, including the ethical processes to conduct this study. To conclude, I summarize the whole chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

From the literature analysis in Chapter 2, I confirmed that music education experiences for holistic development depend on the leadership practices of school principals. The presentation of an understanding of the phenomenon in the study requires a more in-depth field investigation. I accumulated, analyzed, and reported data that may help to fill the gap demonstrated in the collected works, and I addressed the research questions presented in Chapter 1. The research questions are:

Research Question 1: How do parents of students from low-income rural areas describe the principals' leadership practices in overcoming economic challenges to the addition and sustainability of music in a K-3 program?

Research Question 2: What criteria do the principals use for deciding to include music in a K-3 curriculum?

I also presented reflections on school principals' leadership practices that enabled an in-depth investigation and description of the concerns for the inclusion of music education in K-3 programs. The chosen design for conducting a sampling, data collection, and analysis steps were also addressed and described in detail, which may reveal causes of behavior.

Research Tradition

According to Kahlke (2014), when a study becomes complex within a traditional approach, the strengths of conventional methodologies can be applied with flexibility as generic qualitative inquiries. Consequently, the method for this research was a generic qualitative inquiry that explored the principals' leadership practices used to overcome

economic circumstances when adding and sustaining music as a core subject in the curriculum of public schools in low-income rural areas. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described a generic inquiry as a way to understand and interpret the meaning of the experiences of people. The problem of my research centered on the addition and sustainability of music in school curricula in low-income rural areas. A generic qualitative inquiry yielded data necessary to describe the perceptions by the principals and students' parents of the instructional leadership practices as well as the criteria used by the principals for deciding to include music in a curriculum in low-income rural areas.

Rationale for the Chosen Tradition

The problem and research questions for my study are focused on the leadership practices of principals who have maintained music in the curriculum of their school in low-income rural areas. In choosing a methodology for conducting my investigation, I considered the following approaches. The phenomenology and narrative approaches could provide a detailed description of interest for members of an educational organization. The two methods also would answer my research questions, but not deep enough to understand principals' leadership practices in adding and maintaining music in a K-3 program. The option of an ethnographic study required extended time in a specific setting that was beyond the scope of this research. The ground theory approach also was not applicable because of the framework that supports this research. The study framework based on Elliott and Silverman's (2015) praxial music education concepts and Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) instructional leadership philosophy are the bases for this study, and there was no need to generate theories from data.

My research questions were qualitative, but the study did not meet the requirements of a specific qualitative design. The rationale for the choice of generic qualitative inquiry was in the practices of the school principals in overcoming barriers to provide music education in rural areas, which may offer practical answers that according to Patton (2015), direct a concrete problem. The generic qualitative inquiry refers to studies with qualitative research characteristics while seeking to understand the perception of the people involved in the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), generic qualitative inquiry draws from educational concepts, which are analyzed from interviews to interpret meanings of “how people make sense of their lives and their world” (p. 25). Different perspectives gathered by the same set of research questions allowed for triangulation of the results from this study. Triangulation is an extensive way to examine the problems of the research and can strengthen the findings, as well as the validity and credibility of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).

Role of the Researcher

In this research, I was the main instrument for the collection and analysis of the data. To collect data, I followed Stake (1995) affirmation that “interview is the main road to multiple realities” (p. 64). While reflecting on the choice of interviewing as the primary method to collect data, I came across Janesick’s (2011) statement that the challenge for interviewers is to stay tied to a designed protocol. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), the choice of forms of in-depth interviews varies within the similarities from qualitative inquiry as “focus group, online Internet interviews, casual conversation

and impasse clarifications, and semi-structured and unstructured interviews” (p. 29).

Rubin and Rubin clarified that the difference within these categories depends on the role of the interviewer.

My role in this study was limited to that of an interviewer and facilitator of conversation. Because I had no relationship with the schools or participants, I did not have any influence over them. I was also aware that there might be some cause for bias in my research. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), there is a need for an explanation of the bias dispositions of the investigator regarding the intended research, and a prior clarification can transmit more accuracy to the data interpretation. As a foreigner with a Portuguese accent, there could be a tendency for the participants to be sympathetic and thus agree with me only for the sake of being agreeable. To enhance the communication at the time of the interviews, I provided the participants with 5x7” cards showing the questions, which helped to avoid misunderstanding and ensure a reliable result in my study.

In the initial contact with the participants, to ensure confidentiality, I explained that my study was limited to my academic endeavors. All participants were aware that there was no payment for their participation. Even so, as a token of appreciation, I offered each interviewee a Barnes & Noble \$12.00 gift card. Knowing that the study had only academic purposes without risks of professional judgment could prevent conflicts of interest. I planned to conduct this study with transparency and objectivity.

Methodology

For this study, I collected data through individual and focus group interviews from a total of 12 participants with principals ($n = 4$) and three focus groups with parents ($n = 8$) from public schools' PTOs in a low-income rural area. I also made field notes from my observations during interviews. To describe settings and demographics related to the research, I collected data from accessible documents online, but the data collection was primarily from interviews.

Interviews helped to explore and describe issues from educational purposes that were phenomena suitable for the qualitative methodology. The choice of a generic qualitative inquiry offered a plain approach to investigate principals' leadership practices in sustaining music education in low-income rural areas. This section is a presentation of the chosen methodology and the means of leading to emergent codes and thematic analysis of the interviews.

Participant Selection

The goal of my research was to explore and describe the perceptions of parents and principals concerning to the leadership practices to include and sustain music in the K-3 curriculum in low-income rural schools. I invited to participate in the study, principals from a district located in a rural area of a small North Carolina county. I also asked parents who were members of the PTO from each of the selected schools to join in focus group interviews. The sample depended on the interest of those invited to participate and permission from district authorities. Although future factors from the

problem under investigation could influence the design of my research, the methods to select participants for my study were described as follows.

The topic under investigation required participation from those involved in the sustainability of music in K-3 school programs. According to Patton (2015), the relationship and the choice of the participants are components that guide qualitative researchers to select a sample to align data and analysis with the research question. The school principals were the best to describe the practices for enhancing the level of schools in low-income rural areas. Parents from the PTOs would also be the ones who could most describe the principal's practices. Describing, interpreting, and evaluating direct quotations from people about experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge makes it possible to develop a description of the themes to provide an in-depth understanding (Yin, 2014).

I followed Patton's (2015) statement that the richness of a qualitative investigation is related more to the amount of detail and contextualization than the sample size. I collected data questioning a total of 12 participants with four principals and eight parents from PTOs of public schools in a low-income rural area. Patton (2015) also stated that for qualitative inquiry, there is no protocol for the sample size. The participants' selection was through a criterion of inclusion and exclusion. In the mailed invitation, it was established that the first three respondents would be contacted to participate as volunteers. If there were more than the expected, those would also be recruited in case of any change. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), during the

interview process, the researcher should remain open to the possibility of changes, including the number of interviews, to achieve data saturation.

Instrumentation

For this study, I collected data through individual and focus group interviews. To allow an in-depth inquiry, the questions for discussion concentrated on the school principals' leadership practices in adding and maintaining music in the educational program. The protocol with questions for principals' interview is in Appendix A, and for the focus group with parents is in Appendix B.

My research questions also prompted the accumulation of data through both individual interviews with four principals and three focus groups with eight parents from PTOs. According to Yin (2014), focus group allows the participants to expose the ideas and the interests of a community in a short time. Both individual and group interviews required suitable arrangements between the researcher and the participants. When I obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I scheduled a convenient time for both the chosen schools and parents from PTOs.

Recruitment of Participants

Upon receiving approval for my proposal from Walden, I sequentially sent an invitation to participate in the study to each school principal in the district, and each of the 52 parents listed as active members of three school PTOs. Once I had the responses from principals and parents, I sent the consent form with the necessary explanation to be signed in the meeting occasion. The consent form clearly stated that participation was

voluntary. Creswell (2013) recommends that in terms of validity and timing, formal procedures can be a beneficial approach.

Data Collection

For this study, I followed Patton's (2015) steps of data gathering on interviewing individual and focus group. Patton stated that research questions guide the interpretation of the data collected in categories until triangulation. According to Patton, when overcoming the methodology limits, triangulation allows an examination of the questions from different perspectives. My plan for the data collection was within Patton's advice in defining the purpose, building the research questions, anticipated the data sources, and the intended reporting. I also planned to create ways to display the progress of the study, keeping the data organized in specific files.

Interviews. The individual interviews took place according to each principal's choice of time and location. Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated that interviews require a solid plan and arrangements "from the very beginning to the last step" (p. xvi), including the choice of location, which can help to place the participant at ease and build. According to Rubin and Rubin, the well-prepared protocol for an interview with the same questions for all participants can generate plentiful data from answers from different views. Rubin and Rubin affirmed that interviewing is a complicated process and suggested an in-depth study of guiding a high-quality interview. Reflecting on Rubin and Rubin's explanations, I designed interview questions (Appendices A and B) that led to descriptions, linkages, and reports of episodes. When interviewing, I listened and stayed in control of the data

gathering, keeping the central questions in mind without losing opportunities for probing questions.

I asked each of the principals to participate in a 45-60 minutes interview session. I recorded each session on a digital device, and on a secondary device as a backup measure. Being responsible for a comfortable environment for the respondents, I agreed to schedule a face-to-face interview at their schools. I chose the open-ended procedure rather than other techniques for collecting plentiful data. In the discussion that follows, I used a pseudonym for each of them and the school to ensure their privacy

Focus groups. For additional information about the principals' practices in choosing music education for the school curriculum, focus group interviews with the parents from PTOs were indispensable. I conducted three focus groups in the environment chose by each selected group for a guided 45-60-minute conversation. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), the discussion among focus group participants can create new questions, which may agree or disagree with the original. I monitored the talking time limit for each participant, acting as a conversation facilitator, encouraging the involvement of all, and a conclusion within the planned time.

The interview protocols (Appendices A and B) for both individual and focus group interviews were based on both the conceptual framework and the finds from the reviewed literature , which is grounded in instructional leadership practices and praxial music education. The alignment of the interview inquiries with elements of the research questions was supported by experiences found in the literature that confirmed the

problem for this study, which is related to sustaining music in K-3 in low-income rural areas.

To ensure voluntary participation, I clarified that the informed consent form signed by the principal and parent participants was not an obligation. I also explained that the participants were free to exit the study at any time. To revise and confirm, I provided a summary of my reports from the transcripts for all participants.

Data Analysis Plan

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), it is essential to have a plan to begin collecting and analyzing data simultaneously. The purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry was to explore and describe leadership practices of principals who, despite fiscal challenges, include and sustain music in the K-3 curriculum in a low-income rural area of a small county in North Carolina. When answering how principals overcome circumstances and what criteria they use to sustain music education in low-income rural areas, a plan for a qualitative analysis was used.

Plan for the chosen approach. In my contacts with IRB, I filled a request for permission to hire an authorized professional to help with the interviews' transcription. I planned to choose a qualitative data analysis software to enable to organize the data promptly and efficiently. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that rich and meaningful analysis needs to be made during the data collection. I followed a plan for the analysis of the data in a logical sequence, and soon after the data collection, the interviews were transcribed. Each person or groups' interview text was sent to the appropriate

respondents to validate the transcription and check for accuracy to ensure the confident management of data.

To establish content validity and credibility, I also followed Patton's (2015) statement that combining effort to avoid distractions and interruptions during interviews, ensure an accurate data collection. I created pseudonyms to assign the participants that also confirmed confidentiality. Coding helped to apprehend subunits from the transcripts to organize and find patterns and themes. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that for qualitative research, "the basic strategy is still inductive and comparative" (p. 227). I conducted the analysis using Merriam and Tisdell's logic of data analysis outlined as discovery, verification, and confirmation.

Development of codes and categories. To code the transcribed data, I followed Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) statement that coding by paragraph is possible for capturing the answers from different respondents to a particular question. Merriam and Tisdell also recommended a constant comparative method for the collected data. I explored all source data to determine themes, categories, and relationships. I repeated the process until the themes related to the research were identified. I used open coding as an analytical process and summative technique to provide a consensus.

Connecting perceptions and concepts was a useful strategy for data analysis, as I listened and made corrections to the transcript and sent the transcript file to the interviewee for review. Coding and memoing were the method for summarizing the interview and breaking the text down into topics and subtopics to look for themes, concepts, events, and topical markers. Taking each tangible piece related to each other by

identifying codes, building categories, and finalizing themes enabled the creation of a summary statement.

When developing the analysis plan, qualitative software was an indispensable helper to ensure better and more accurate details required for the analysis of all the collected data. The NVivo qualitative data analysis software benefits were in smoothing and providing precise and detailed work. The different views collected from the individual interviews and focus groups were compared and contrasted by highlighting the differences and similarities, which helped to generate inconsistencies. Yin (2014) stated that clarifying discrepancies from the different views is necessary to get further clarification or search for rival explanations within the data. Subsequently, I discussed discrepancies with my committee and noted them in the reporting of results.

Trustworthiness

According to Creswell (2013), a qualitative study requires anticipation and planning regarding ethical issues. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that qualitative research is trustworthy when the perspective of the researcher coincides with the logical expectations that support the paradigm. Merriam and Tisdell also highlighted the importance of ethical procedures in dealing with internal validity, reliability, and external validity.

In this study, I collected insights from the perceptions of parents and principals to describe leadership practices in including and sustaining music in the K-3 curriculum in low-income schools in a small, rural county in North Carolina. The research questions were based on the inquiry of how the leadership practices of these

principals have influenced their students and schools from low-income rural areas. This study emerged from the finding of gaps in the reviewed literature, supported by the concepts of praxial music education and instructional leadership practices. I also observed the issues of ethical concerns, and the saturation of data within the context of a generic qualitative inquiry suggested by Patton (2015). According to Creswell (2013), demonstrating trustworthiness is an effort to guarantee evidence will justify the findings, so the opinion of others needs to be sought to ensure the accuracy of both description and interpretation.

Credibility

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that credibility is related to internal validity and the accuracy of the findings in describing the phenomena researched. For this study, the instrumentation choice and data analysis were carefully conducted to give a clear interpretation of the participants' meaning. To enhance the credibility of this research, after the interviews, my instructors reviewed the descriptions as an impartial opinion that helped to eliminate my unintentional bias. To ensure credibility, I followed Patton (2015) in conducting these processes carefully using a triangulation of methods for both individuals and focus group interviews.

Transferability

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), a careful analysis, and interpretation through the exhaustive description of data, ensures transferability. Describing participants' perceptions of their practices in managing music in a school program was a strategy for external validity. I tried to write the description in such a way that the reader

can determine the transferability. Following Patton (2015), a declaration of further examination may ensure that other researchers can transfer the findings to another context.

Dependability

It was my first experience with a qualitative inquiry, and to know whether or not I had conducted my research with reasonable care, I depended on the guidance of my chair and methodology faculty. I used transcript verification techniques to provide a summary of my interpretation and sent it to each participant to check the authenticity of my writings. According to Creswell (2013), the second pair of eyes during the investigation ensures dependability and confirmability. The dependability of a study lies in consistency and replicability from various perspectives applied and the triangulation of these sources (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Confirmability

Yin (2014) affirmed that confirmability is ensured through a detailed explanation of the study organization. Providing a detailed outline of how the data was collected and the process used for analysis was a way to consolidate confirmability to my research. I also strived to use a comprehensive outline in creating the conceptual framework, research design, collecting the data, and analyzing the data aiming my conclusions for Chapter 5. I was careful throughout the research process by describing my methodology so that it could be replicated or audited if necessary.

Ethical Procedures

According to Patton (2015), principles of autonomy, benevolence, and justice are proper guides for researchers to address tensions between the goals of the research and the rights of the participants. In this section, I articulated the ethical concerns to this investigation and the participants' privacy and dignity as a consideration of human rights. Patton also stated that interviews are an invasion of the privacy of the respondents. Following the IRB ethical procedures, I developed a plan to collect data and to establish measures to address the participants adequately.

I had Walden's IRB approval (#03-08-19-0491063). I also had permission from the public schools' district superintendent, who agreed, but with the caveat that the name of the principal, school, and district must not be identified in the final writings for publication. Even with non-vulnerable populations, privacy is always a priority (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); Patton, 2015). Consequently, I ensured the participants that their information would remain confidential to protect them from psychological or social harm.

A prior explanation of the privacy and confidentiality concept and the research objective was given to the interviewees. The use of pseudonyms for proper names ensured confidentiality. The participants knew that they could withdraw from the study at any point, freely and without harm. They also knew that their information would be protected from any person or any methods of access, and this helped to generate the trust necessary for participation. I ensured the participants that the interviews would be analyzed through codes and that the data would be carefully stored and protected in

locked files on my computer, where only I have the password-protected. Password-protected backup drives were also used to avoid inconveniences. I conducted the data analysis in the security of my private home office, and after transcribed, only my chair members and I worked with the analysis of the collected data. I used a dated algorithm that will destroy all individual data coinciding with the conclusion and acceptance of my research.

Authorities in qualitative research such as Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Patton (2015) explained ethical issues of a study are challenges that will appear in all stages of the investigation. I was aware that I needed to adhere to the IRB requirements or recommendations for the data collection. All participants in this study were school principals and parents, over the age of 18 with the legal capacity to provide their consent. Besides, I had limits with my second language. I can write well in English, but my oral communication is not reliable. Consequently, I needed to obtain approval from the IRB to formally hire a third-party transcriber who adequately assisted me with the transcripts and interpretation during the data collection process. I expected that with these practices, the findings of my study would be enriched and strengthened.

Summary

At the beginning of this chapter, I presented a phenomenon of interest that offered coherent distinctions to organize the ideas and to defend the generic qualitative inquiry and the decisions for the research process. I also presented problems that raised questions that motivated a purpose. In this chapter, I explained the chosen methodology to conduct the study, and a rationale justifying the approach. I also repeated the research questions

and the reasons for the choice of methods of data collection using individuals and focus group interviews, and how I planned the analysis of the data. I explained the research design, and how I conducted the research taking into account the integration of different sources of data to ensure triangulation. Further, I reflected on the population and the sampling selection, and ethical considerations to the participants involved to reinforce the validity and reliability of the research presented in this section. The themes resulting from the analysis and interpretation of the data collected are reported in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry was to explore and describe leadership practices of principals who, despite fiscal challenges, include and sustain music in the K-3 curriculum in a low-income rural area of a small county in North Carolina. In describing these practices and how they are perceived to help in developing strategies to include music in a curriculum, a qualitative inquiry may answer the research questions for this study.

Research Question 1: How do parents of students from low-income rural areas describe the principals' leadership practices in overcoming economic challenges to the addition and sustainability of music in a K-3 program?

Research Question 2: What criteria do the principals use for deciding to include music in a K-3 curriculum?

This chapter begins with an introduction that reiterates the study purpose and the two research questions, this is followed by the research process outlined as setting, demographics, data collection, data interpretation, evidence of trustworthiness, and results. The analysis of the data collected through interviews lead to themes related to the principal's leadership practices to maintain music on the K-3 curriculum in low-income rural areas. A summary of the findings and a conclusion complete the chapter.

Setting

The setting for this study included four elementary schools, which represent approximately one third of the schools that offer music in the K-3 curriculum, from a district in a low-income rural county in North Carolina. These elementary schools are

managed by principals who embrace the viewpoint that learning quality is fundamental: students need opportunities to stimulate and develop their interests and talents with joy for life-long learning. The elementary schools of the selected district of this county are Title I funding, which allows disadvantaged students to receive an enhanced education. As described above, all of the principals from those elementary schools met the established criteria for participation in the study. With the district permission, I initially invited the principals of all schools, anticipating that at least three would accept, and I received four positive responses.

After obtaining agreement from the four principals, I invited parents who were involved in the PTOs of their respective schools to participate in a focus group. Some parents in the focus group interviews had few experiences to report as their children had just started school in the last couple of years. I expected a total of nine parents, members of PTOs from the four schools, with at least one representative from each of the four schools, and I collected the perceptions of eight of them from three of the four schools.

Demographics

The participants selected for this study were associated with four elementary public schools from a district of a rural county in North Carolina. The volunteers for interviewees were four principals and nine parents from three PTOs of the four schools (Table 1). Pseudonyms are used for all 13 of the potential participants.

Table 1

Potential Participants' Characteristics and Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Relationship With the School
Bart	Male	Principal
Dotty	Female	Principal
Mac	Male	Principal
Olly	Male	Principal
Fern	Male	Student's father
Josh	Male	Student's father
Teddy	Male	Student's father
Zack	Male	Student's father
Janet	Female	Student's mother
Linda	Female	Student's mother
Nya	Female	Student's mother
Suzie	Female	Student's mother
Vanny	Female	Student's mother

Following is the background of each of the potential participants at the time of the data collection:

- Bart, a principal, has a Master of Arts in School Administration and is proud of being the principal of his school, where he has noticed a significant transformation in 3 years of his administration and enthusiastically talked about his love and his plans for the students.
- Dotty, a principal, has a Masters of School Administration and a Doctorate in School Leadership. She has been involved in teaching and administration for more than two decades.
- Mac, a principal, holds a Master of School Administration degree. He has been a teacher and administrator in North Carolina public schools for more than a

decade. He has been the administrator of his school for 5 years and maintains the tradition of high student achievement and growth.

- Olly, a principal, holds a Master in Educational Leadership and Policy studies. He is a musician and has been involved in education for more than 10 years.
- Fern, a father of children in the K-3 program, is a member of a PTO who advocates for music in the school program because he has seen the effect it has had on his children.
- Josh, a parent, is an active member of the PTO in the school where two of his three children are enrolled in kindergarten classes.
- Teddy, the father of a student in the K-3 program, is a member of the PTO who advocates and works for the maintenance of music education.
- Zack, a father and active member of the PTO, thinks that music is a complement to the life of his children.
- Janet is a mother and PTO member. She had music education in elementary school and chose the same for her children.
- Linda, a mother, and member of the PTO is involved with the maintenance of music education for her children in the K-3 program.
- Nya is a teacher and also a parent member of the PTO. She reports positive benefits from music education in the school where her children attend.
- Suzie, a mother and music teacher, is a member of the PTO in one of the schools included in this study, and she demonstrates passion for music education.

- Vanny, a mother, is a member of a PTO. She chose her child's school based on the music education program that the school offered.

Those potential participants reported the above demographics and characteristics while we negotiated the time and meeting places before the initial interviews. Except for Bart, who did not know how many years his school had offered music, all of the principals affirmed that their schools had provided music for more than 5 years. Other participant characteristics were obtained during the data collection process. In the next section, I will describe the strategies and procedures for the data collection.

Data Collection

To collect data, I followed the procedures outlined in Chapter 3. A minor change was that I expected at least three of the principals invited for the interviews, but four principals accepted the invitation. I also planned to interview the nine parents from the PTOs in three focus groups sections, but only eight of them were able to participate. Steps for data collection included recruitment, consent, initial and final individual interviews, and focus groups were kept as planned in Chapter 3. The criterion to select participants for this study was their involvement in sustaining music in K-3 school programs in the selected district.

The principals' participants in individual interviews described perceptions, which were confirmed by the parents participating in the focus groups. The discussion in focus groups yielded an explanation of the value of the leadership practices of a school principal. A detailed analysis allowed the identifications of recurring patterns to generate

the findings from phenomenon interpretation from both the researcher and the participants.

Recruitment

With the approval from the IRB, I asked for permission to access and recruit the participation from the elementary school principals. The district assistant superintendent permitted to access and invite the schools through the district website. I sent letters of invitation and asked for a response within a week. Subsequently, I asked the first three responding principals for permission to e-mail invitations to interview members of the PTO from their school. I sent letters to 52 of the active PTO members who were parents of students in K-3 who had been in their respective school for three years, and I received nine answers within the specified time.

I conducted two kinds of interviews: an individual with each of the four principals and the three focus groups with eight of the nine volunteer parents. Following the same protocol planned in Chapter 3, and discussed the best time and place for conducting the interviews, the data collection proceeded. By being school principals and parents from PTOs, all of the interviewees met the sample criteria, and the 13 participants signed a consent form. The consent forms, created according to the recommendations from the IRB, included an explanation about the participation of parents in the study.

Individual and Focus Group Interviews

The individual interviews took place during April of 2019 with a 2-day interval between each interview to allow time for transcription. Before each interview began, I reviewed the consent forms, the information regarding confidentiality, the recording

procedures, and the withdrawal options with the participants. Two of the principals, Mac and Bart, wanted to be interviewed in their school office, whereas Dotty chose the meeting room in her school, and Olly invited me to his home office.

I also conducted the three focus groups with either two or three parents from each PTO from the three different schools, also in April, with a 3-day interval between interviews. The first group interview was conducted around a round table in the dining room at Linda's house. Josh came, and Janet called to explain her absence, and we did not have an opportunity for a later interview. The second interview was done around the rectangular table in Vanny's dining room with Fern and Nya also present. The third focus group chose a reserved space in a café, where Suzie, Teddy, Zack, and I seated in the booths across from each other. In a total of eight participants, each group of two/three interviewees, on different days, was situated in a way that each person could hear one another and respond at the appropriate time. During all of the interviews and focus groups, I tried to speak slowly so that my Portuguese accent could be more easily understood. All of the participants reported that they were comfortable with my English, but I also distributed copies of the questions on 4x6 cards so they could read and better understand the questions. All of the interviews and focus groups were concluded and transcribed within the planned period.

In both the individual and focus group interviews, the consent letter was read and discussed to ensure that the participants understood the voluntary nature of the study. I began each interview following the order of questions revised and approved by the IRB.

The protocols were outlined respectively for each kind of interview: for individuals (Appendix A) and focus groups (Appendix B).

I recorded each individual interview session and the focus group using the same recorder app on my iPhone and iPad. Both devices had previously been charged and tested. Immediately after each interview or focus group, I e-mailed the recorded file, through the recording application, to be transcribed by a professional authorized to participate by the IRB under a letter of confidentiality. I sent a copy of the respective transcription to each participant for revision and confirmation. The principals suggested that, due to their busy schedules, if a follow-up interview was necessary, it should be conducted by e-mail.

The interview process gave me a opportunity not only to collect the data, but also to start the interpretation of the data using the interviewees' description of the phenomenon, which created chances for condensing, interpreting, and generating probing questions, using processes suggested by Janesick (2011) Merriam and Tisdell (2016), and Patton (2015). The transcription of each interview yielded approximately 50 pages of data. When the information from answers to emergent questions started to be repeated, I considered that I had reached data saturation. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), when researchers realize that they hear the same responses heard earlier, the data has reached saturation.

At the same time that I was interviewing, I was also interpreting the data through my experience and my prior knowledge to guide the use of probing or follow-up questions. The review of the transcripts by each participant contributed to clarity for my

interpretation. Walden University IRB approved a third-party transcriber for individual interviews and focus groups, and the transcripts were done directly after each interview. The interviews were transcribed verbatim using brackets to indicate pauses, inaudible remarks, and extraneous sounds. The transcriber noted that due to the variety of foreign accents, there are syntactic omissions in the spoken language in the transcribed records, which differ from omissions commonly made by native speakers of English. Grammar mistakes were indicated with the [sic] annotation. The transcripts, saved as password protected word documents, were sent to me through an exclusive e-mail account created by both the transcriber and the researcher for our communication.

After receiving the transcripts, I e-mailed them to the appropriate participant for corrections and additional thoughts, which could ensure the reliability and validity of the data. Before starting the analysis, I also e-mailed two of the initial transcripts to my committee chair, who gave me the needed direction to proceed. All these procedures led to revised interview questions (Appendices A and B) in the following sessions to allow further inquiry for both the individual and focus group interviews.

Departures From the Data Collection Plan and Resolutions

The strategies, methods, and protocols presented in Chapter 3 were my guided data collection for this study. One of the participants could not be present for the group interview due to a last-minute conflict, which left no time for finding a substitute. Consequently, the sample size was reduced to 12 participants. Also, due to my oral communication accent, I struggled to create probing questions, but even with the friendly attitude of the interviewees, I maintained my professionalism while presenting myself as

a sympathetic listener. To show my gratitude for their participation in the study, I offered a \$12 gift card from Barnes and Noble. The gift was granted, including the one non-participant who had to withdraw and called to thank me for the card. Interpretation of the principals' leadership practices and the criteria for maintaining music in the K-3 education curriculum began with the participants' description of those experiences. The codes present in the data collected led to the development of four major themes. The process for this coding is described in the next step.

Data Analysis

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), a meaningful analysis needs to be made during the collection of data. Through the coding process, I organized and found patterns and themes from the transcripts. I used Merriam and Tisdell's logic of data analysis outlined as discovery, verification, and confirmation. I presented the categories and the themes that evolved from the codes by using quotations from the participants. Ending this section, a description of discrepancies and transitions will lead to the trustworthiness section of the study.

Coding Method

Exploring and describing leadership practices of public-school principals to sustain music education in low-income rural areas is a circumstance suitable for a qualitative study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that the basic strategy for analysis in qualitative research is still inductive and comparative through questions and reflections from the collected information. The process used to move inductively from coded units to categories and themes is described as follows.

Immediately after each interview, I began the analysis of the shared experiences, and I also asked the participants to read and revise anything that needed revision for meaning or clarity. Using NVivo software, I coded the initial interview transcripts capturing everything that referred to the research question. Quotes that directly addressed the research question were taken and arranged in categories according to the two concepts that support the study: the praxial music education and leadership practices. The development of codes and categories lead to new questions that created a possibility for more than one interview targeting triangulation.

The revision of the transcripts from both the individual and focus group interviews yielded over 100 code words and phrases. As a result, the coded expressions revealed significant insights from the participants. I used inductive process to reach the categories guided by my experience and what I have learned during the literature review in Chapter 2 and aligned them with the research question.

Codifying the transcripts, the words and expressions like *fun, joy, learning, brain stimulus*, and *problem-solving* suggested the first theme, which was the addition and sustainability of music in the K-3 curriculum. The second theme, overcoming economic challenges in education, emerged from the codes: *low-income, rural areas, budget, funding*, and *fundraising*. Likewise, from the codes, *creativity, vision, disagreements, opportunities, policies, mission*, and *aptitudes* arose the third theme: criteria for including music in the program. The fourth and last theme: principals' leadership was developed from *decisions, supportive practices, communication skills, shared vision, leadership, communities, involvement*, and *advocacy for music*.

Discrepancies

Some discrepancies occurred in the collected data concerning the analysis of economic challenges in rural area schools. The first discrepancy was that about the town, Bart's school is considered to be urban. While all of the principals admitted to having difficulties with the budget, Bart said that questions about financial problems did not apply to his school reality. Lastly, some of the questions about the organization led Bart to say, "I am an educator, not an administrator."

Conversely, these discrepancies were not impediments to his participation in the study. First, related to the region in North Carolina, his school is in a town located in a low-income rural county. Second, like all the other elementary schools in the same district, Principal Bart's school receives Title I funding for disadvantaged schools. Third, during my visit with Bart, I noticed that his school organization revealed an appropriate administration.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In Chapter 3, I described the planned strategies for providing evidence of trustworthiness and considered following Patton (2015) assertion that the core request for a generic study being "what are the practical consequences and useful applications of what we can learn about this issue or problem?" (p. 99). Patton argued that the advantage of a generic qualitative inquiry is the freedom of an epistemological perspective in applying qualitative approaches and communicating how and why it ensures the feasibility of this inquiry. Data analysis included triangulation of the response to the research questions from the individual interviews with each of the four school principals

and three focus groups with eight parents from PTOs. Following Merriam and Tisdell (2016) statements on sample size, I considered that 12 participants with differing viewpoints might be a way to heighten the reliability and validity of the data for a generic qualitative inquiry.

Credibility

To ascertain credibility, I followed the strategies proposed for this study in Chapter 3. First, the choice of method for interviews and data analysis were carefully conducted to give a clear interpretation of the participants' meaning. Second, after the interviews, a critic from my chair committee was significant as an impartial opinion that helped to eliminate my unintentional bias. Participants received a copy of the transcribed interview for review and verification of the accuracy of my interpretations, thus validating and establishing secure connections in data. I maintained e-mail contact with the participants, which provided more detailed descriptions of their experiences. Finally, the last steps to provide evidence of credibility were reflecting, revising the analysis, and reaching saturation with the data.

Transferability

To address transferability, a broad description of the procedure in conducting this research was provided. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that transferability is ensured by a detailed description and meticulous analysis of the data. Despite some discrepancies, the participants in this study reported similar experiences and thoughts related to the practices of principals in sustaining music education in the K-3 program. Two themes, addition and sustainability of music in the K-3 curriculum and principals' leadership, are

congruent with the findings and concepts noted in the conceptual framework. The interviewees' perception of the criteria for including music and overcoming economic challenges illustrates the transferability of this study. All of the participants described experiencing struggles such as managing or helping with the budget at some point. These descriptions confirmed my assumption that describing participants' perceptions of their practices in managing music in a school program is a strategy for external validity. Consequently, following Patton (2015), the findings allow for further examination of the established evidence that may apply to another research context, which determines transferability.

Dependability

As my first experience with a qualitative inquiry, when starting the analysis of the transcripts, I was guided by my chair and methodology faculty. I also provided a copy of my interpretation to each participant for confirmation and validation. I took Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) advice that dependability is characterized by conducting the study consistent with the methodology and using multiple sources for triangulation.

Confirmability

In Chapter 3, I created a detailed outline of collecting and analyzing data to reinforce confirmability for my study. Throughout the research, I followed a conceptual framework and a research design. I collected and analyzed the data carefully, avoiding bias from my experiences, and by describing my methodology, I targeted results that may be replicated or reanalyzed by others. Within the Walden University IRB policy, the data

for this study will be available for 5 years, at the end of which they are programmed to be deleted from my computer.

Results of Analysis

Aligned with the two research questions for this study, the data collected from interviews with four principals and three focus groups with eight parents, with a total of 12 participants, resulted in themes confirmed during the analysis. In creating categories, the terms related to the research questions that appeared repeatedly were used as codes that generated four themes and two subthemes (Table 2). The first research question regarding how parents of students from low-income rural areas describe principals' leadership practices in overcoming economic challenges to the addition and sustainability of music in a K-3 program, produced two themes.

Theme 1: The addition and sustainability of music in the K-3 curriculum.

Theme 2: Overcoming economic challenges in education.

The second research question regarding the criteria that school principals used for deciding to include music in a K-3 curriculum produced the third theme with two subthemes, and the fourth theme.

Theme 3: Criteria for including music in the program.

Subtheme 1: Enhanced education.

Subtheme 2: Equal opportunities.

Theme 4: Principals' leadership.

The four themes and two subthemes are presented in the next segment with a detailed description of the participants' perceptions.

Table 2

Frequency Count of the Codes and Themes and Subthemes

Key Codes	Principals	Parents	Total	Themes	Subthemes
Learning	34	26	66	The addition and sustainability of music in the K-3 curriculum	
Brain stimulus	24	6	30		
Joy	25	5	30		
Problem-solving	5	2	7		
Fun	4	3	6	Overcoming economic challenges in education	
Budgeting	21	15	36		
Funding	20	12	32		
Fundraising	3	5	8		
Low-income	6	1	7		
Rural areas	4	1	4		
Opportunities	39	4	43	Criteria for including music in the program	Enhanced education
Music education	35	12	37		
Vision	22	5	27		
Disagreement	17	4	21		
Aptitude	16	1	17		
Policies	10	1	11		
Mission	4	1	5		
Creativity	2	2	4		
Supportive practices	43	10	53	Principals' leadership	
Leadership	30	13	43		
Involvement	25	12	39		
Community	25	5	30		
Decision	11	1	12		
Advocacy for music	5	2	7		
Shared vision	4	3	7		
Communication	4	2	6		

Theme 1 – The Addition and Sustainability of Music in the K-3 Curriculum

This theme is based on the experience of the four principals interviewed and the discussions with the eight parents in three focus groups about the effort for keeping music education in a K-3 program. The principals stated that their commitment to the sustainability of music in the program is due to visible results from students' motivation to creativity and thinking critically. Olly said about his son, "I have my son in pre-K, where ... they're learning their numbers just going to music classes." Answering how music affects the students' achievement, all the interviewees brought up the benefits of the students' satisfaction in music class. Dotty said, "I think the most important part is enjoyment ... and it's one area in which the students have fun."

All participants, the four principals and the eight parents from PTOs, shared the same assumption that the children's joy from participating in music class stimulates the student's mind. The principals also described the effect music has on the brain and learning from the habit of listening and practicing from an early age. Suzie, a mother and music teacher, affirmed that "music is a stimulus for parts of the brains that are not usually ... turned on by just science or math." Dotty also reported, "I taught music songs to help them remember math things because it does impact a different part of your brain, and it helps you remember things that you normally wouldn't remember." The viewpoint of Josh, a father, was that "music opens the mind and your heart to receive other learning."

The discussion among parents in each of the three focus groups revealed the criteria the school principals' use for maintaining music education in K-3 programs, as

well as the challenges they present. The four principals considered that adding and sustaining music in a curriculum for learning improvement is a demanding challenge, especially in early education. Mac stated that although it's hard to establish a direct link between music education and general learning, "if you look at testing data from across the nation, and you look at schools that have music programs and ones that don't. I think these researchers have shown that there definitely is a connection." During the focus group interviews, the value of adding music in K-3 education was mentioned. Vanny said, "I think it's really important for the kids' development to fall in love with music."

The three focus groups with eight parents from different PTOs conveyed their concerns about the sustainability of music in early education and expressed how music helps to inspire creativity and encourage critical thinking and problem-solving. Linda stated, "I have experienced that music would change the student grades because my son improved his grades after he joined music class." Josh concurred, saying, "I think music opens the mind and your heart to receive other learning. It's a learning that promotes learning in other areas, and if you learn in one area, it always relates to other areas." Through his experience, Josh sees music as a disinhibiting agent. In one of the focus group discussions, Teddy affirmed,

I see music as a very rich instrument of cognitive and social development practices that promote joy and acceptance of the other by the knowledge of the musical culture of others. Music has always been part of changes in the world, and each generation has its own melodies that touch their hearts and minds.

Zack, a father in the same group, commented: “When young students are exposed to music education, it helps to stimulate their mind and helps them to understand the appreciation of the arts and encourages them to learn more and to improve their knowledge base.” Besides, Teddy’s opinion is that “music helps children’s learning in every area of their education because music stimulates the mind and the spirit no matter their culture or monetary level.”

The parents also discussed positive examples in choosing a school where music has its power within the curriculum. Nya, a mother and teacher said,

I have noticed in my son, he can learn a lot better when I have the melody, and we have rhythm, and you have patterns with music, and I’ve seen his teachers use that to teach him the ABCs and to teach him how to add and how to do patterns in math. So, I think they’re really connected, and it’s really important for the child to have the music, and the other areas too.

Fern, a father, also had a practical example,

My brother, he’s about 18, and he’s not very good at math, he’s not very good at socializing, very shy person. And he’s a smart kid, but he’s just looking like he did not get developed. He’s an extremely good musician, and I was discussing that with my sister a couple of days ago, and it comes up. If somehow the system helped him develop through the music, other areas, other areas of his life, he’d probably be a more, a brighter, a more open, a more developed person.

Vanny, a mother of two kindergarten students, commented in the focus group,

Actually, the example of your brother, what I have to say, it has a lot to do with all of that. My son is actually in early education, and I always had some concerns about his social skills and all-around that, because I thought he was a little late in the talking. And lately, since he has started school, I have thought he has developed so much through music, singing. He shows a lot of himself. He has socialized and communicated much better. He certainly can communicate much better. And I think maybe your brother would have started with the music from the very beginning...

Nya interjected and said, "Music is a kind of learning that promotes learning in other areas, and this relation to other areas is always training your brain."

Each of the school principals reported their experience with a music teacher in their building who is passionate about teaching and how it raises children's interest in better learning. The four principals also reported their interest in continuing to keep their students in the choir at school so the children can start learning to sing easy pieces.

According to Mac,

It is pleasant to watch them as they develop grade by grade, singing more difficult pieces of music. I've been in there where the children are all playing xylophones together, and the first day it sounds like a wreck, and by the end of the month most of the kids have got it, they're playing their music.

Mac stated that it is exciting to see the students' motivation in participating and how music affects their attitudes. Looking at the percentage of students that participate in the school's music program, such as chorus, strings, and band, Mac feels that this is a good

indicator that the children are really enjoying and learning music continuously until they get older. Bart also reported that in his school, “Music is offered twice a week for all students, and all the students enjoy doing music, the families enjoy the concerts, and what stands out the most is that we have a passionate teacher and our kids enjoy [it].”

Olly stated that his school had offered a music program for all elementary students for approximately 12 years. Olly ensures that 100% of the students enjoyed it. They begin with an understanding of noise, sound, and the instruments, and they may learn a little bit about reading music. Dotty said, “That’s a class that most of them enjoy going to whether it’s to beat on the drums, or learn to play the recorder or sing, or whatever they’re doing in there.” Suzie also said, “Most parents agree that if their students, their children stay in music, they like school better. School is more fun with music.”

According to Dotty’s experience, the joy of having music in school is that not only do the students enjoy it, but teachers in her school also enjoy it and include music in their teaching. Dotty said,

Seeing students learn how to play instruments, learn how to sing in harmony with each other, it is one of the favorite classes, and I also think it is enjoyable. While the students are having a good time with music, the teacher can incorporate other subjects, and they’re teaching them numbers, they’re teaching them how to read, and then that love for learning, love for music, comes together, and it helps them to remember things better.

Dotty shared that for 6 years in a row, her school's music teacher has taught all of the students, which provides a remarkable opportunity to establish a relationship with many students. According to Dotty,

Learning to play an instrument or sing is an enjoyable process to stretch the brain, so music can grow the students' brains in a different type of growing in that it's not like you're struggling with a math problem. It's something that you can enjoy doing or realize you're good at something other than what you may think you're good at. So, I think it just provides another layer of development in the brain and as a person for our students that academics alone could not do.

Likewise, Bart thinks that maintaining music in the K-3 program is stimulating for the brain, whether by learning to play an instrument, singing in a group, or learning about the history of different musicians and composers. These are motivators to include or keep music in the K-3 program, Bart contends.

Theme 2 - Overcoming Economic Challenges in Education

This theme arose from both principals and parents' insights. The principals' explanation of their difficulties in running schools in rural areas to maintain music in K-3 programs contributed to a better understanding of the parents' perceptions of principals' leadership. Olly affirmed, "Being a principal is kind of reinventing the wheel and finding the way." Mac also said:

I'm the instructional leader at this school; however, there are a lot of management problems that come along with people. I think that's the most important thing is just be willing to grow, and I manage this with a purpose in mind.

The four principals agreed on the value of the involving effort to add and sustain music in early education, and three of them specified that the problem is the budget, which is a complicated matter. According to the principals, the common problem was that over the years, funding and support for music have decreased. The parents' participants in the three focus groups recognized the effects of music on the children's education, and they discussed their willingness to help with the principal's efforts in this challenging mission.

Despite inadequate funding and lack of mandates for music in a school program, the principals' interview responses revealed that the district leaders support their school. Dotty said, "I think I'm very lucky to be in a district that is committed to arts education, but as principals, we are committed to the resources and support needed for our students." Bart also said, "We have music education, and it's a priority in our district. So, we're lucky. We do not have an economic crisis, but if it ever happens, I'll find a way to still have music here." From his long career in teaching and now managing schools, Olly reported that over the years, he saw funding and support for music decreasing. Olly also said, "I know how economic crisis directly affects our music education program, but if it happens again, I will not give up for lack of funds." Mac added, "There are still schools in this county that don't have art or music in their elementary school because of the economic crisis. But our district has a steadier rate in which music and art are taught."

In answering how they manage a limited budget for resources and opportunities for enhanced education, the principals reported that their schools receive Title I funding, which supports disadvantaged students. Bart said,

We're a Title I school, and I've been here three years, and we've been able to get pretty much whatever the students need. I mean, I manage our budget, and try to make sure that I'm a good steward of the money that we've been allocated.

Olly also stated, "We know how we can get some resources. But if I need more money, I will try to find out some way or another. So, as an administrator, I have opportunity to enhance the program for more opportunities."

In questioning how a reduction in funding might affect the principals' decisions regardless of the cost with music education, Mac answered, "Funding is an issue if happened a budget cut, as a principal I need to find ways to fundraising." Dotty also feels responsible for providing the best for her students independent of the amount of money. She said, "If a teacher is passionate enough about something to come to me and ask for resources to make it happen, then I will find a way to make it happen." Mac also stated, "If you really want something in your school and your staff gets on board with it, it might involve you getting out of your comfort zone."

According to the principals interviewed, to supplement the school budget, they maintain close involvement with their community. The principals shared their different experiences related to sustaining music education in public school programs. To balance financial resources, Olly said,

I used to make contact with people and explain how these issues affect our school program. Building that kind of relationship is a way to sustain a program if there's no money. So, if everyone is involved with music education looking for resources, I think that we can help the continuity of the program.

Bart stated, "I cannot tell this kind of experience because we have no crisis, but if I see problems come up, then I ask for help from the district office." For those who struggle with a small budget, Bart suggested: "Partner with your community. There's a lot of people that would support that in a community." According to Mac, "Budgets are always limited for everyone. I have a strong community that if I asked for something, they're willing to help." Dotty stated,

We have a very supportive parent group that does extra stuff for us. They do fundraise for us to provide resources for our students. But my role as the principal is that if someone comes to me with a proposal about an art project or a, a class project then, and they need some money to make that happen. Then I find a way to do it within my budget or within by asking outside resources or community members.

Emphasizing the involvement of supportive communities as an essential help in reaching the principals' goals was also discussed in the focus group. Josh shared,

I hate school fundraisers, but if faced with a budgetary cut that was gonna take out music and art, that's one thing we could all pitch in and raise funds, like selling baked goods or ... lots of types of fundraisers, but if the school needs the money to do it, we could raise the money.

Linda concurred and said, "I've been baking stuff to sell for school visitors and parents. We also ask for support in the neighborhood business, and this helped a little." As a teacher, Suzie stated,

To do more to keep music education in the program, it is important that parents visit the school, visit school board meetings, and tell the people the power of music education. If the parents show the school board members and those others in control that music is important to them and their children, it will help.

As a mother and teacher, Nya highlighted that it is all about the principals' direction since the schools in the same district have the same budget and opportunities. "Then you see one school thriving, having these amazing projects, and helping the kids develop, and then you see another one that is not really doing all he can. I think that depends on principals' leadership criteria," said Nya.

Theme 3 - Criteria for Including Music in the Program

Concerning the inclusion of music in the school program, Olly said, "Despite the political influences, the budget for music, and certain mandates we have to do, I have an educator vision first." According to the principals interviewed, the visions of an educational leader sometimes bring disagreements, but if leaders want to improve their school, they need to figure out a way to do it. The four principals agreed that communication was the way to handle disagreements and that disagreements enrich visions and allow every individual of the educational community to feel like they have a voice in decisions. Mac said,

At the beginning of each year, I sat down with the teachers to make a list up of things extra that we want to do in the year, and then with our local parent-teacher organization, we try to do it whatever that might be for the success for our kids.

Bart also stated, “As educators, our job is to look for what’s best for the students.”

Justifying his support for music in the K-3 program, Mac said, “Look at the importance of music and the effect that it has on kids - the opportunities that it opens to your students as they get older.” Likewise, Olly affirmed,

When politics and everything happens beyond our capabilities of decisions, what we have left is to advocate, reach out, and tell what is important, why it is important for us, why we need that, what is our mission right now, what are our goals.

In individual interviews, all the principals were united in the opinion that if school principals truly want music education to continue in their schools, they can figure out a way to support it.

The results of this study revealed that principals implemented different criteria in maintaining music education in the school program with a focus on student improvement. The school principals and the parents confirmed that student achievement is the cornerstone of the practices of teaching and learning in the classrooms. According to Elliott and Silverman (2015), music matters because of its power of persuasion that can prepare people for a resilient life. Reports from the interviews revealed two main criteria the principals used for including music in the K-3 programs: providing enhanced education and equal opportunities, each of which will be developed in this section as subthemes.

Enhanced education. The first criterion mentioned when interviewing the principals about maintaining music in a K-3 program was a concern for enhanced

education. The school principals described the role music plays to improve knowledge is indispensable because of the helpful pleasure of learning. Bart affirmed, “I think that it’s very significant for a student to get a well-rounded education, and music is a big part of that.” According to Bart, music is so essential in the students’ development that, as a school leader, he will naturally keep it in the school program.

Each of the school principals interviewed offers music in the programs for their students. Dotty called them cultural arts classes, where the students are involved year-round with a music and art teacher for 50 minutes every 4 days, and they usually give a couple of performances every year. Linda said, “I have a positive experience. I have my kids in a school that the principal and teachers are working together, and they are all musical. Music is a plus there.” Teddy, with his experience as a father, said, “The success of our school is not measured based on how many kids will be able to become musicians, but by the opportunity of how parents of a small community can choose in educating their own children.”

As a mother and teacher, Nya provided information about the practices of music, saying, “You know math, reading, all those things seem more important. But if you think about what our kids are struggling with today.” Nya worries about a lack of social connection among the children and feels that music may bring emotional learning back into the schools. Nya associated the lack of emotional education to the increase in violence, bullying, and suicides at a very young age. According to Nya, experiencing music is a way for children to express their emotions, and explained,

If it is happy, or angry, or sad, or mad, it's expressing. It's like they get in touch with their own feelings and are able to express, and when they don't know how to express it, they gonna find a way, and sometimes it's through violence, and it's through joining things that are just going to be harmful to them.

For Nya, the solution is to teach children, from an early age, ways to express themselves positively through the practices of music.

The opinion of the principals was that practices of music in K-3 classes are related to understanding. Bart described a game using the recorder, a rudimentary instrument that has varying levels of difficulty, which the music teacher uses to stimulate a students' desire for learning while increasing their aptitude for music. Olly spoke about a teacher who uses rhythm sticks to teach the ABCs, and once the students assimilate it, they will be ready to develop their reading skills. Olly said,

When students start making connections to something that they know, they have seen on the TV, or in a movie, or learning from somewhere, and those students try to imitate or use their creativity to make something musical, I can see the educational improvement and readiness for reading.

Olly also affirmed that practicing or making music together is a way to store knowledge and "make students feel comfortable with learning like they had experienced it before ... it's easy for them to read music. Once they're able to read, it is no different than the other subjects." According to Olly's experience, the important thing is to find out how they like to learn and how they can learn, and music has the power to lead all students for equal paths independent of diversities.

Equal opportunities. The results of this research indicated that the principals agreed that equal opportunity was another criterion for maintaining music in a program. The principals expressed that they knew that some of the children and their families would like to have a better education, but about 52-60% of the students are from low-income families. Mac said, “We do try to offer our kids, despite social and economic levels, you know, the same opportunities the kids that come from wealthier families have here while they’re in school.” Dot also said, “We want it to be a happy place and a place where everyone feels success and is, is given opportunities to help them become successful in ways they didn’t think they could become.” Likewise, Olly stated, “As a parent, I love to see my child in music class, so that I will fight for, for those opportunities.” Bart’s experience is that his school has as much access to music education and the things they need as any other school that might not be on the same socio and economic level. Bart conceded that there are concerns with the interaction of social and economic factors, but “we really don’t have an issue there,” he said to confirm the sense of equality in his school.

Additional problems related to the need for equal opportunities were also mentioned by the principals interviewed. Mac said,

At times we have parents who do not really support their kids being educated, and as crazy as that sounds, they don’t really help us. They don’t make sure that their kids get up and come to school, or if they do, they don’t get here on time, and they don’t help them with their homework.

Olly, who has experienced difficulties, said, “We know these differences, and once we recognize their struggles and their needs, so we provide them with the same opportunities, using the power gained from making-music together.”

The school principals provided examples of opportunities offered to improve their students’ academic deficit. Dotty stated,

I think it’s again one of the things that we are committed to here is giving for every student an opportunity to be successful, and as we find things that they’re interested in, music, dance, art, robotics, whatever it might be. So, if they want to participate in something, we provide them with whatever they need so they can participate.

Mac said, “You can see the opportunities that music education opens to your students as they get older, and the love of music that they develop, and the passion that some of the students have.” Mac also shared this observation:

Typically, a child that comes from a higher socio-economic background is going to be much better-rounded in what they know about the world in general. They will have more words that are spoken to them, and their brains will be more developed. So, it’s tough, but I feel like music is one of the areas that help some of our lower socio-economic kids be exposed to things that they normally wouldn’t, and it really helps kind of catch them up to our culture.

All of the principals were concerned about how to build a school environment devoted to the success of every student and affirmed that it is very important to be competitive in providing a better education to support social, emotional, and academic

needs without pressures. Dotty said, “Everything in education comes in cycles, and we are in the cycle where music and arts education is becoming more important as the emphasis on testing becomes less important, and music is an enjoyable way to develop the pleasure of learning.”

In offering music education to aim toward equal opportunities, each principal intended to build an adequate place for their students, hoping that they are attracted to the school, and want to come. According to Mac, a culturally aware environment helps students feel like they belong to the school by being a part of a community, accepting others, and being accepted themselves. Olly said, “We are leaders in a melting pot of cultures, and music is a gateway to cultural awareness, which can provide equality independent of challenges.”

Theme 4 – Principals’ Leadership

According to the parents, school principals’ leadership is a characteristic that encompasses the most significant criteria ensuring the sustainability of music education in the K-3 program. In the three focus groups, the parents praised the principals who strive to offer music for all students, irrespective of musical aptitude. Josh said,

Students who don’t demonstrate aptitude to music because they’ve never been exposed to this kind of education, or because they’re shy. A leader knows and provides such opportunities for those students that maybe do not do well in other areas of the school to shine.

The interviewees also valued the principals’ practices of involving students, teachers, parents, and the community. Olly said,

As a leader, it is important to have windows of chance based on building relationships and involve communities. It seems you're steering the ship. You're taking it where you want it to go. You are using everyone's effort, everyone's work, and everyone's input, and everyone's perspective, to direct the boat.

Linda was enthusiastic about being a PTO member and able to participate in the meetings with the opportunity to speak and work with the teachers toward the children's educational success.

The four principals stated that the first practice of a leader needs to be setting the direction with a clear vision and bringing the community together to create shared meanings. Including the staff about her school's objective, Dotty stated, "We all have the same vision – achieve success at CCS [focus on academic readiness], and every decision is based on success for our kids." In setting directions for his school, Mac also stated,

We keep our focus on our vision. Then we solve problems listening to what staff and parents have to say and acknowledge that their concerns are true and, and use it to refine the vision, which makes a good opportunity to combine everyone into, integrate everyone into building that.

Olly said, "A big part of that community is the parents, and they're gonna support the school's vision, and they're the ones that are going to support you more than anything else, just by bringing their kids to school."

Regarding communicating her vision with her staff, Dotty explained that she has a planned meeting three times a year, but she used to have impromptu conversations in the hallway to check how everything was going. Dotty also said,

We do a lot of staff bonding events here so that we are going for coffee together or we're doing a secret pal certain times during the year, that we get together and play cards at someone's house. We just do different events here to get to know each other outside of school, which strengthens our school relationships as well, and we have leadership teams that really are a part of the leadership.

Likewise, Olly shared that his school has a monthly committee meeting that includes parents, teachers, business partners, administration, and supervisory administration.

Bart's opinion was that a respectful dialogue brings an understanding of both sides, which leads to an agreement. Mac said, "With the majority of parents, being informed about my school visions results in better cooperation, and it has been very, very positive."

Josh believed that communication is the strength of a leader, he described his experience with his children's principal saying,

She made us feel that we were part of the school, and we were important as the parents of the children, the family. So, I think her leadership style was being there for the families, and that was one of her leadership practices that were very important. I feel like we could have talked with her or worked through any problems.

Fern also believed that honest communication is a characteristic of a leader, and said, "If we know the school needs and why we need to work for, we just roll our sleeves and participate, doing for our kids, with interest in the same ideas the same goals."

Discussing communication, Dotty explained that in her school, she and her staff used a variety of social media sites because they wanted to communicate with the parents as much as possible about visions and goals for the school. Dotty said,

So, parents know why we do things, know our vision, and they know why we make decisions, so they're not confused about why we do things, and that helps broaden that support as well. They feel like they have a voice in decisions.

All of the principals considered participation in school decisions to be not only support by the parents but also a way to promote development for everyone in the community.

Bart affirmed, "Most of the feedback I've had from teachers and parents, I think they like the culture that's been established here in the last three years, and how we treat kids fair, and how we always listen to them."

Olly explained that creating leaders among parents and teachers is a way to build relationships, and collaborate for their development. Mac said, "I try to treat people the way I want to be treated, and especially with our parents. I think they come to an agreement with me. I think there are some that probably wouldn't, but I think that would come with any leadership position." Both Dotty and Bart remarked that they are principals with an open-door policy where the students come first. Dotty said,

I strive to make this a family atmosphere. That our faculty is a family, and that we're here for each other, and our students and we want to enable everyone here to be successful – teachers, teacher assistants, staff members, students, and parents. We want it to be a happy place and a place where everyone feels success

and is given opportunities to help them become successful in ways they didn't think they could become.

According to the four principals, the involvement of the stakeholders is the start of a strong relationship that can make decisions possible for the organization.

The principals also demonstrated that they are prepared for the current view of schools as organizations in a challenging and competitive market. According to Mac, schools are not the same as when he was in elementary school when there were not as many private or charter schools competing with public elementary schools. Mac said, "I don't always look upon that as a negative thing. I think that it makes us better. It really makes us think about our customer service towards parents and children and how we're approaching educating kids." Olly shared that managing an instructional organization is not only driven by test scores, state funding, or how the school is doing from the neighborhood's perspective regarding their views of the mission and goals. According to Olly, it is about advocating for an improved curriculum that ensures that parents will want to choose that school. Dotty said,

We want this school to be the school of choice in our community, so we make every effort to ensure that our parents and students feel that it's a good place to be and that, that they are going to learn here and be supported here. So, it's very important to us being competitive and providing good education, also being supportive to social and emotional needs, supportive of academic needs, and building just a good place for the kids want to come.

In answering how to encourage parents' choice of school for their children, Bart said, "I've never really thought of what criterion I do as managing education, but as much as providing a place for kids to flourish."

Summary

This chapter focused on the study results and included a description of the data analysis process done through coding, from which four themes emerged.

Theme 1: The addition and sustainability of music in the K-3 curriculum.

Theme 2: Overcoming economic challenges in education.

Theme 3: Criteria for including music in the program.

Theme 4: Principals' leadership.

These themes highlighted the significance of adding and sustaining of music in a K-3 curriculum, which pointed out the principals' criteria for including music in the program: to offer equal opportunities for enhanced education in low-income rural areas. The themes also revealed economic and educational challenges, emphasizing the value of the principals' criteria in overcoming it. The principals' leadership practices were confirmed by the perceptions of parents who recognized the importance of clear communication and involving the community in a shared vision. From the description of these perceptions, it was possible to answer the two research questions that guided the study.

The analysis and description of the interrelated perceptions of principals and parents could allow for a better understanding of practices by instructional leaders to overcome economic circumstances to include and sustain music in the K-3 curriculum in low-income rural areas. I also provided discrepant cases and evidence of trustworthiness.

An in-depth discussion of the implications, contributions to social change, and recommendations for practices will be described as a conclusion of Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

For over 30 years, I heard questions about the benefits of music and why cutting music from school programs as an economic measure. As a volunteer practicing music with children from rural schools in North Carolina, I noticed a consistent quality of music instruction in many students from public elementary schools. The purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry was to explore and describe leadership practices of principals who, despite fiscal challenges, include and sustain music in the K-3 curriculum in a low-income rural area of a small county in North Carolina. Perceptions of leadership practices used by the principals in managing reduced funding while sustaining music in the K-3 programs in low-income rural areas generated data for this research.

Key findings of the study were that maintaining music to enhance knowledge in a K-3 program in low-income rural areas is intrinsically related to the practices of instructional leaders. The findings that emerged from the data analysis resulted in a total of four themes.

Theme 1: The addition and sustainability of music in the K-3 curriculum.

Theme 2: Overcoming economic challenges in education.

Theme 3: Criteria for including music in the program.

Theme 4: Principals' leadership.

In this last chapter, I discuss how they are related to the literature and the conceptual framework in answering the research questions for the study. I also present discussions of limitations, recommendations, and social implications. The conclusion is a reconsideration of the whole research.

Interpretation of the Findings

Analysis and discussion of the findings of this study is a way to confirm, refute, or extend the results of previous research and knowledge in the discipline. The data collected offers appropriate descriptions about the principals' practices in maintaining music in the K-3 program. Participants acknowledged the school principals' leadership influence in overcoming challenges to improve student achievement. Interpretation of the data is within the parameters of findings and the scope of the study. Crosschecking the literature review and the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2 with the perceptions shared by the interviewees confirmed that the themes that emerged did answer the research questions for this study.

Findings Related to Reviewed Literature

The first group of results from this study centered on the addition and sustainability of music in the K-3 curriculum theme. Participants described the value of providing music in early education, praising the principals' commitment to sustaining music in the program. Participants also recognized visible results of music education demonstrated by the students' enjoyment of learning and their motivation toward thinking creatively and critically. This group of findings confirmed similar results of prior researchers examined in the literature review. From the idea that music has a positive effect on brain function, Flohr et al. (2011) considered the differences in cognition among children. Boon (2009) concluded that the meaning of music education is a Deweyan idea of integrating theory and practice in learning. The enjoyable practical experiences of playing music as a way to enhance critical sense and creativity (Johnson &

Matthews, 2017) justify the idea of making music education available for every child (Bucura & Weissberg, 2017; Sušić, 2017) so that music education programs might emerge from the interests of children (see Barrett, 2016; Barry & Durham, 2017; Nardo et al., 2006).

When supporting the first group of findings of this study, the reviewed literature demonstrated that the inclusion and sustainability of music in the school curriculum ensures student success both in and out of school (see Killian & Wayman, 2015; Portowitz et al., 2014; Ritblatt et al., 2013; Walton, 2014) as an opportunity to develop students' understandings for life (see Tobias, 2015). The literature also revealed disagreements about connections between music education and academic cognition (see Sala & Gobet, 2017). Conversely, Pitts (2014) affirmed that those who want to confirm their doubts about the benefits of music education are compelled by the influence of music instruction on themselves.

Scholars, both classical and contemporary, investigated and confirmed that students' musical perception and its positive effects increase from constant practices (see Flohr, 1981; Gluschkof, 2011; Guhn et al., 2019; Kratus, 1989; Slater et al., 2014; Strait et al., 2014). According to Flohr (2010), music does not necessarily produce smarter learners, but it can enhance some domains of learning. Testing and observing the children's joyful affinity for music, Flohr (2005) affirmed that as nurtured, music has a significant influence on students' developmental and emotional lives.

The second theme, overcoming economic challenges in education, presented another group of findings on managing schools in rural areas to maintain music in K-3

programs. The district leaders had given equal support to the schools in the region selected for this study, but the management of funds is the principals' responsibility. The findings are confirmed in the results from previous researchers, who affirmed that the state government of North Carolina invests in programs for the education of disadvantaged children, but positive effects only happen from principals' political endeavors (see Dodge et al., 2017; Ladd et al., 2014). When working in low-income rural areas, school principals must deal with an inadequate budget while offering opportunities for enhanced education (Allsup, 2003; Barrett & Bond, 2015; Ihrig et al., 2018; Puryear & Kettler, 2017). The reviewed literature also confirmed that reduced funding due to educational budgetary cuts constrains the ability to support music in educational programs, but there are leader educators who make efforts to overcome such challenges (see Burrack et al., 2014; Dodge et al., 2017; Johnson & Matthews, 2017; Major, 2013).

From the third theme, regarding criteria for including music in the program, the findings focused on school principals' efforts in offering equal opportunities for enhanced education. Participants also identified the influence of shared visions that empower the educational community to have a voice in decisions. This group of findings confirms and extends the results from reviewed literature suggesting the ability to involve the community to adhere to the school's vision, which could ensure implementation and sustainability of desired changes (see Aldeguer, 2014; Gurley et al., 2015; Hallinger & Lu, 2014; Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016). Supporting changes to influence students from different social and cultural levels has been found to promote opportunities for equal participation in learning (Clasquin-Johnson, 2016; Puryear & Kettler, 2017). Besides,

Frey-Clark (2015) and Holochwost et al. (2017) posited that music practices in school could provide equal opportunities for academic achievement. Music is part of an enhanced education by developing creativity and the critical sense of a child through enjoyable, practical experiences from their daily lives (Hernández-Bravo et al., 2016; Johnson & Matthews, 2017). According to Elpus (2014), details about the music in the curriculum are still vague as an instructional complement.

From the theme of principals' leadership emerged the fourth and last significant group of findings. The emphasis of this theme is on the leadership practices in promoting the development of the educational community, while determining the direction and sharing the vision through the power of clear communication. Such emphasis represents the practices of principals' leadership to ensure the sustainability of music education in the K-3 program. These findings also confirm the conclusions from the reviewed literature that music education has a broad educational and cultural effect that encourages working toward the inclusion of music in the school programs (see Major, 2013). The problem is that deficiencies from leadership in dealing with educational politics are still a restriction on the benefits of music education (Aguilar & Richerme, 2016).

Leadership practices for educational community development were also found by several researchers who found that learning outcomes and the enhancement of the quality of the school resulted from the priorities of both school leaders and policymakers (see Goddard et al., 2015; Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Hallinger et al., 2017; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Sinnema et al., 2016). Setting the direction with a clear vision to create shared meanings depends on the school leadership's ability to prepare the education community

to implement and sustain the desired changes for improvements (Gurley et al., 2015; Kurland et al., 2010; Li et al., 2016; Mulford & Silins, 2011). Several researchers found that communication from the leaders could be a way to provide opportunities for open participation and to motivate environmental relationships (see Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Li, et al., 2016; Oplatka, 2017; Orphanos & Orr, 2014; Park & Ham, 2016; Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016). The findings of this study are comparable with those of other researchers, which suggests that ensuring the sustainability of music education in the K-3 program depends on the leader's ability to adjust practices of musical learning within a diverse culture (see Abril & Bannerman, 2015; Cabedo-Mas & Díaz-Gómez, 2016; Walker, 2015).

Findings Interpreted in Light of the Conceptual Framework

In this study, the praxial music education concept by Elliott and Silverman (2015) and the instructional leadership philosophy by Leithwood and Riehl (2003) were used as a conceptual framework. Results of the research connected to major sections present in the framework section of Chapter 2: music as part of K-3 education programs and leadership practices of school principals. The insights corresponding to these two sections appeared in the study results in several ways.

Insights related to music as part of K-3 education programs focused on understanding the practices of music for better education. Findings from the study demonstrated that practicing or making music together is a way to store knowledge and bring evident results of motivation to creativity and critical thinking. This discovery is confirmed by the praxial music education concept that extends the Deweyan awareness of

learning by doing (see Elliott & Silverman, 2015). Teaching through curriculum-as-practicum results in reflective learning encourages productive learning involvement (El Kadri & Roth, 2015). According to Elliott and Silverman (2015), “there is no easy way to close gaps between the ideals of education and the realities of many public schools” (p. 460). Understanding the coherence of praxial music education is very helpful for teaching and learning, but it requires consideration of the influence of the practices of educational leaders (Jorgensen, 2003). Regardless of the conditions, proficient leaders influence followers by demonstrating their sense of responsibility and interest in the success of education (Avolio et al., 2004; Neumerski, 2013).

The principals’ leadership was also focused on ways to maintain music education in the K-3 program. The findings suggested that the instructional leaders had managed a variety of problems, and a willingness to grow with a purpose in mind is essential. Instructional leadership practices include the ability to lead people, develop administrative functions, and develop learning programs through the leader’s influence to achieve the educational objectives (Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). The instructional leadership philosophy synthesizes organizational processes and the school culture to indirectly transform and help individuals grow (Hallinger & Lu, 2014; Heck & Hallinger; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Consequently, through functional practices, an instructional leader can initiate educational steps to negotiate the values and build the trust and political ability needed to effect changes (Burrack et al., 2014; Gurley et al., 2015; Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Heck & Hallinger; Mulford, & Silins, 2011; Oplatka, 2017; Orphanos & Orr, 2014).

Findings Related to the Research Questions

The results of this study were also related to the two research questions. The first research question considered the perceptions of the parents of students from low-income rural areas regarding principals' leadership practices in overcoming economic challenges to the addition and sustainability of music in a K-3 program. The second research question concerned the criteria that the principals use for deciding to include music in a K-3 curriculum.

The findings from the first and second themes were based on principals' reasons for supporting music in the programs brought positive results from the perceptions of the parents on principals' leadership in overcoming problems in favor of these reasons. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) stated that for quality of education, leaders are considered responsible for the management of unpredictable requirements in the schools, and they must adapt the curriculum so that it can be taught and learned well. According to the findings from these two themes, parents described school principals' leadership practices as a characteristic that ensures the sustainability of music education in the K-3 program. The findings also demonstrated how parents valued the commitment of the principals in sustaining music in the K-3 program, which attributes to evident results in the students' creativeness and critical thinking. According to the findings in these themes, music education in preschool is a way to provide educational quality regardless of economic contexts, which depends on academic approaches to shape policy. Educational quality also depends on the instructional leaders and their involvement in the school's programs, the community, and the administration.

The findings from themes three and four provided evidence regarding how school principals' leadership practices link to maintain an improved curriculum for the kindergarten program. These discoveries indicated that school leaders used the core leadership practice in maintaining music in the K-3 program in offering enhanced education and equal opportunities for the children's development despite the low-income environment. Beyond opportunities for student development, those principals are encouraged to overcome economic circumstances to keep music in the K-3 program to inspire enjoyment of learning. Creative and enjoyable music experiences from children's natural musicality can cultivate creative habits in the minds of students, promoting a critical sense in the children, which justifies the inclusion of music in the school programs (Johnson & Matthews, 2017; Nardo et al., 2006); Tobias, 2015; Vass & Deszpot, 2017). Providing educational opportunities, educators should have the skills to support the diverse needs of the students (Holochwost et al., 2017). The inclusion of music in the program with a goal toward student development requires principals' involvement and understanding of the mechanisms that sustain the continuance of music programs to achieve the desired success (Baker & Friedman-Nimz, 2004; Bucura & Weissberg, 2017; Burrack et al., 2014; Burton & Greher, 2007; Dodge et al., 2017; Elpus, 2014; Goddard et al., 2015; Gumus et al., 2018; Heck & Hallinger; Kettler et al., 2016; Mulford & Silins, 2011; Puryear & Kettler, 2017; Taniguchi & Hirakawa, 2016).

The findings revealed the parents' willingness to contribute to school improvement as an appreciation of the principal's leadership practices. Parents described these practices as clear communication, strategies to involve the educational community

as a family, and approaches to improve students learning, which according to the principals, were criteria used to maintain music in their school program. The findings of this study also pointed to the positive support from the district in the selected low-income rural county, but there are challenges to planning school programs for better educational opportunities in rural communities. Ihrig et al. (2018) and Kettler et al. (2016) pointed out issues involved in promoting enhanced education in low-income rural areas, which according to Puryear and Kettler (2017), is a demand for determination and administrative abilities. Bowman's (2005) concern was about the need for professionals to support music in the program by targeting educational outcomes. The quality of support for teaching and learning demonstrates the efficacy of educational leaders (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), and those who deal with challenges by offering opportunities for musical activities are examples of the effectiveness of principals' leadership practices (VanDeusen, 2016).

Limitations of the Study

According to Patton (2015), each research approach has strengths and limitations because "the diversity of possibilities reflects the complexity of human phenomena and the challenges involved in conducting research" (p. 165). An anticipated limitation for this study, proposed in Chapter 1, was a language barrier. I am from Brazil, and I have a strong Portuguese accent, which leads those who hear me to a tendency to be polite and agree with me to demonstrate friendship. To avoid miscommunication during the interviews, I wrote the questions on 5x7" cards and handed them to each participant. I also asked the participants to check their portion of the transcript, and the assessment by

my instructors was an additional tool for confirming and validating the data for analysis. This study focused on just one school district and depended on the availability of school principals and the willing of the parents from the schools' PTOs to be interviewed, which restricted the data for explaining complex issues. Consequently, the findings have a limited generalization for a broader population.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this generic qualitative inquiry was to explore and describe leadership practices of principals who, despite fiscal challenges, include and sustain music in the K-3 curriculum in a low-income rural area of a small county in North Carolina. The literature review revealed that there is little information about the influences of music education in the lives of students (see Aguilar & Richerme, 2016; Colombo & Antonietti, 2017) and instructional leadership efforts for the sustainability of music in school programs in low-income rural areas (see Kettler et al., 2016). The literature also pointed out that school leaders used leadership practices in maintaining music in the K-3 program, providing opportunities for children's development despite the economic challenges.

This generic qualitative inquiry expanding on previous research may provide new perspectives and knowledge in favor of music in every school curriculum. The findings can allow for further examination of the evidence from this study that may apply to another research context. Future researchers may employ different approaches to explore perceptions of the effectiveness of principals' practices and practical applications to develop an understanding of teaching music in low-income rural areas. Researching

through a quantitative methodology, the relationship between principals' leadership practices and students' achievement may generalize results to a larger population, which would benefit school leaders in enhancing their K-3 programs.

Implications for Positive Social Change

The findings from this research may provide new perspectives in favor of music education and may invite further inquiry by researchers as well as by educational leaders. The investigation of the leadership practices of principals may also encourage instructional leaders to seek educational improvements in regions affected by poverty. The results of raising student and school achievement levels in low-income rural areas may contribute to positive social change. Providing opportunities for an enhanced education may also create students with perspectives that may lead them to become engaged citizens for a more equitable society.

Conclusion

A generic qualitative inquiry was the instrument to examine, interpret, and describe insights into school leadership practices to maintain music in the K-3 program in providing opportunities for child development despite economic challenges. Using my prior experiences and knowledge of the subject, I framed the study with concepts of praxial music education and practices of instructional leadership as a way to answer the research questions for this study. A detailed review of the literature about methodologies was a way to decide on the approach for this research. The reviewed literature offered significant insight into the concepts as applied in K-3 education, as did the perceptions gathered through interviewing principals and parents of students. The conceptual

framework guided the recognition of the educator's leadership ability to create conditions for adapting teaching and learning practices based on diversity and musical preferences. An analysis of the data collected through individual interviews with four principals and three focus groups with eight parents from PTOs sought answers to the research questions.

Findings confirmed that the commitment to sustaining music in the K-3 program is due to results from students' motivation for creative and critical thinking, and their overall enjoyment of school activities. Offering music in the K-3 program has the potential of providing equal opportunities for student growth. The findings also demonstrated that despite the district leaders' interest in maintaining music education in the school curriculum, for most of the participants of this study, politics and fiscal situations are still challenges to including and sustaining music in the K-3 program. The children opportunities to grow led parents to recognize the value of the principals' practices and to demonstrate a willingness to help in maintaining the program. Consequently, in spite of economic challenges in low-income rural areas, the school principals' leadership practices, as well as all the efforts from the educational community, are the foundation for including and sustaining music in the K-3 curriculum.

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Appendix A: Individual Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to share your leadership experiences in your school. With your permission, I will be recording the interview on a digital device, as well as taking notes. I plan to take no more than 60 minutes of your time. This qualitative study seeks to explore the leadership practices of school principals in sustaining music in K-3 programs in low-income rural areas of a small county in North Carolina. I will be using open-ended questions, which will allow you the opportunity to interject ideas or thoughts that you may have as we talk. When the transcription of the recording is completed, I will send you copies for making corrections as needed or for approval.

1. The district website shows you have sustained music education in your school program for over 10 years independently of an economic crisis in the education system. Please, tell me as much possible about this experience.
 - a. Please give me a specific example involving the economic crisis and music in the school program.
 - b. What is your school's population and how many students have access to music education?
2. Considering music as part of K-3 education programs, in what ways can you establish links between music education and a student's enhanced achievement results on standardized reading tests?
 - a. How do you define the meaning of music-making in the K-3 program in your school?
 - b. What stands out for you most about the school's music program?

4. Music education is a part of the program in your school, so, please tell me about your experiences with children learning related to their aptitude for music?
 - a. How do you explain the differences in children's musical, scientific, or mathematical aptitudes?
 - b. What aspects of music education are significant in a student's development?
5. Considering the economic status of the educational system and the lack of mandates for music education in a school program, how can you offer opportunities for music education?
 - a. How might a reduction in funding affect your decisions regarding music education?
 - b. How do you manage a limited budget for providing resources and opportunities for the enhanced education in your school?
6. How do you reconcile with political conditions to include the practices of music in the curriculum to meet the needs of your school?
 - a. How do you handle a music education program in an environment of differences stemming from diversities in a low-income school environment?
 - b. How would you describe the teachers and parents' perceptions of your leadership practices?

7. How do you manage education considering the present view of schools as organizations in a challenging and competitive market?
 - a. If schools have become complex organizations, how do you manage problems and changes that go beyond your role as an educator?
 - b. How do you deal with possible disagreements regarding your educational visions and collaborative teacher interactions?
 - c. How do you describe the support from the parents on your visions?
8. What advice do you have for school principals in low-income rural areas to help them sustain music programs?
 - a. From your experience, in what ways do you believe there is hope for the continuance of music education in public school programs and how might this be possible?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add about your leadership practices that may have led to your school's success and student improvement?

Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Appendix B: Focus Group Interview Protocol

Welcome, and thank you for volunteering to participate in my study. I hope everyone is comfortable. I am Ivone Clark, a general education PhD student at Walden University. I will be the facilitator of our brief discussion, and with your permission, I will be recording this meeting on a digital device, as well as taking notes. I plan to take no more than 60 minutes of your time. We will be talking today to find out about the leadership practices of school principals in sustaining music education in K-3 programs in low-income rural areas in this district. If you feel uncomfortable during the meeting you are welcome to leave or pass on any question. The information is confidential, and all views and ideas are very welcome. One person will talk at a time, and time for responses will be distributed as equally as possible. I would like for you to use name tags, so I can use your name throughout our time together. When my notes and the transcription are completed, I will send you copies for each one of you to review.

1. Considering music as part of K-3 education programs, how do you explain the ways to establish links between music education and a student's enhanced achievement results on standardized reading tests?
2. Please, tell me if facing a budgetary cut, how could you support the school principal in keeping music education in a program?
3. How would you describe the leadership practices of your school principal in dealing with possible disagreements regarding his/her educational visions?

We have only five minutes to conclude our discussion, does anyone have any questions?

Thank you very much for your participation.