Integration of Music across Curriculum Areas in Urban Schools

By

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Abstract

This Masters of Teaching Research Project is a qualitative study on the topic of meaningful music integration across curriculum areas in urban schools. The purpose of this project is to answer the question: How are a sample of elementary teachers in Ontario urban schools integrating music as responsive pedagogy across curriculum subject areas and what perceived impact on students’ academic achievement have they observed? Data was collected through face-to-face interviews with two exemplary teachers. The outcomes of this research can be used to inform music policies and encourage teachers to integrate music across curriculum areas to support with student academic achievement, motivation, and engagement in urban schools.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to Research Study:

A Canadian study conducted in the Toronto District School Board which followed grade nine students for six years found students from low income families have a 33% drop out rate, three times that of students from high income families (TDSB, 2008). Students attending urban schools are at risk for achieving low academic grades (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009) and usually live in high priority neighbourhoods that are more commonly subjected to crime, gangs, and poverty (Milner, 2012; James, 2012). These barriers, among others, encountered by marginalized students attending these schools can present them from reaching their full potential. In addition, being a teacher in an urban school is challenging because of the lack of resources in the schools to cater to the student’s needs (Milner, 2012). The terms urban education, inner-city schools, schools in marginalized communities, and in high priority neighbourhoods are commonly used interchangeably in popular and academic discourse to refer to schools located in predominately low income communities. However, for my MTRP I will only use the term urban schools. Urban is defined as schools located in low-income communities where families are living in community housing, predominately single parent families, high immigrant population, and a lack of resources.

Urban schools are different from other traditional schools because of the high percentage of students living in poverty (City of Toronto, 2006). Some families are not able to provide a healthy breakfast, lunch, or dinner for their children because they are on various forms of government assistance including the Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Also, students may endure emotional trauma due to the crime, single-parent
homes, and domestic abuse that takes place in their homes or neighbourhoods. School plays a significant role because it is the second most common place children spend majority of their time. Students attending urban schools may see school as a safe haven, somewhere they can get away from the pressures of home and community. The hardship that these students face within their community and homes may contribute to their lack of engagement in the classroom. Students attending urban schools can benefit from culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Music plays a significant role in all cultures, and thus has important potential as a responsive pedagogy. It is a universal language that transcends racial, social, economic, and class boundaries (Venezuela, 1997). Moreover, some forms of music, like hip-hop, can explicitly address issues surrounding race, class, and the structural barriers individuals and communities experience. In this way, the potential benefits that music has to offer in schools and for learning are meaningful. Some research is beginning to document the impact of hip-hop education, for example, on the academic engagement of urban youth (Morrell and Duncan-Andrade, 2002). However, education is sometimes based around the Industrial Revolution’s model for core concepts of Literacy and Math, ignoring all forms of the arts (Robinson, 2008). The arts, which include music, can be used in the classroom to teach other subjects. For example, by integrating music with science, students can learn scientific vocabulary through song. Also, in math students can learn multiplication with rhythm and catchy tunes. There are a variety of different genres in music. Some include: rap, hip hop, jazz, pop, gospel, reggae, soca, classical, rock, heavy metal, opera, and techno. Music is a creative art form where children can express themselves freely through singing, playing an instrument, and listening to and making beats. Music and the arts
help in other areas such as: motivation, engagement, and development of self-discipline, initiative, collaborative, and team building skills.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this qualitative research paper is to learn how a sample of Ontario teachers are using music as an instructional integrated teaching strategy across the curriculum in urban schools and to hear teachers’ perspectives on the perceived impact of this pedagogy for students. Teachers play an integral role in the life of their students. “Teachers are vital to the quality of music education for all students and need to take pro-active roles in ensuring the quality and status of music in schools through developing their own professional expertise, learning and values” (Renee Crawford, 2005, p. 6-7). Teachers can use music as a learning tool for their students, but the teacher needs to develop their personal professional knowledge and values of music in order to ensure good quality education (Crawford, 2005). By conducting one-on-one interviews with elementary school teachers working in urban schools who excel at integrating music across curricula in their classrooms, my goal is to learn from teachers committed to integrating music into other curriculum areas. This research paper aims to explore the importance of the integration of music as pedagogy for teachers in urban schools.

**Research Question**

The overall goal of this research project is to investigate how music is being integrated by elementary urban school teachers across curriculum subject areas to improve students’ academic engagement and achievement. The questions I will be focusing on are:
• How are a sample of elementary teachers in Ontario urban schools integrating music as responsive pedagogy across curriculum subject areas and what perceived impact on students’ academic engagement and achievement have they observed?

• How are teachers supported to integrate music across curriculum areas?

• What are some challenges encountered by educators when using music as a responsive pedagogy in the classroom?

**Background of Researcher**

I am currently a second year student in the Master of Teaching program in the Primary/Junior division at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). Prior to coming to OISE, I worked and volunteered with students in urban schools for the last seven years. While working in a high priority neighbourhood, I noticed that many students were not engaged in the material they were being taught. Some students were falling behind because they could not grasp the material being taught to them by the teacher. However, in my observation, the teachers would view the students’ lack of engagement in the material being taught as a learning disability rather than a reaction to instructional strategies that were not engaging. Some teachers would perceive these students as lazy or disobedient. In my experience, volunteering in a school in one of Toronto’s top high priority neighbourhoods, I have encountered students in grade three who did not know how to identify their letters or know how to read. I have also observed the teacher teaching the lesson and some children continuing to talk. Other students complained that they were tired and hungry. Interestingly, the teacher would play music in the classroom during transition and every Friday the students had a talent show. Nine out of the ten students who performed did something to do with musical/rhythmic intelligence by dancing or singing. The
children were engaged and seemed very attentive. I saw the potential in students to learn through the integration of music in the curriculum when a group of boys created a rap song about numbers and letters.

I realized the socio-economic, family, and community-related problems that these children were facing were larger than what was going on in their academic world. It was evident that experiences in their homes and their communities become a part of students’ social identity and was transferred and relayed back to the school environment. Some children in urban schools come to school without breakfast because their parents cannot afford it. They do not have appropriate clothing, and they have access to limited resources.

Foremost, the holistic approach is what I have been taught at OISE. I have been taught to teach to the whole child rather than separate subject disciplines. In order for my teaching pedagogy to be effective, I need to stay mindful that whatever happens to a student outside the classroom is brought into the classroom. As an educator I want my students to be successful. “To learn their best, students must be engaged and motivated. Substantial research shows that students who feel both valued by adults and a part of their schools perform better academically and also have more positive social attitudes, values, and behavior” (Educating the Whole Child, 2007). Students need to be engaged and motivated in the classroom to learn and achieve academic success. Teachers play an important role in students’ academic success by providing a responsive pedagogy.

I attended an urban school from kindergarten to grade six. I observed many students falling behind. I was a student who performed at the class average because the teachers who I encountered took the time to help me and were willing to modify their teaching pedagogy if needed. My math teacher made up a song which helped me to remember my multiplication
tables. In grade four, I took music class and I believed that I had found a new hobby. I played the clarinet and would always take it home. I would practice playing my clarinet on a daily basis, which, in turn, helped me to develop study habits and become more disciplined. Music was pivotal in my development as an adult. My family is from Jamaica and music has a significant impact on the culture, socio-emotional, psychological, and health and well-being of the people on this island. Based on my experience, I realized that if music was brought into other areas of the curriculum in my school, more students may have had a better chance at success.

**Overview:**

In chapter one I have identified my topic, purpose of my study, central research question and subsidiary questions, along with positioning myself in my research study. Chapter two is my literature review where I analysed research from current scholarship on urban education and music integration. Chapter three provides procedure, methodology, and limitations used in this study. In chapter four, my findings from my one-on-one interviews conducted are present. In my fifth chapter, I conclude with my implications of my research findings, recommended practices, areas of further study, and limitations.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Students attending urban schools are at risk for low academic achievements due to low income, and lack of engagement (Ontario Equity and Inclusive Educational Strategy document, 2009). Urban schools have higher rates of drop outs compared to their counterparts (Ontario’s urban and suburban schools, 2008). The literature review will examine current and emerging themes from research on urban education and music integration. I will focus on five main sub-topics for my MTRP which are: 1) Dropout Rates in Ontario and the United States (U.S); 2) The Effect of Disengagement on Dropout Rates in Urban Schools; 3) Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy; 4) Potential Music Pedagogy; 5) Music and Cognitive Development.

What is Urban Education?

Urban education can be perceived in many different ways. For the purposes of my MTRP, urban education refers to schools that have a high population of students living in poverty, a high minority population, and a lack of resources available to students attending these schools (Milner, 2012; James, 2009).

In Canada, characteristics such as social housing, high immigrant/refugee population, and poverty are used to “refer to urban areas or inner city, and schools are termed urban schools, with urban being a handy euphemism for so much that is radicalized these days” (James, 2008, p. 21). The word urban is sometimes used to denote a particular ethnic background or race, but urban education is used to refer to schools located in particular communities. A high population of students attending urban schools in the US are predominately black and Hispanics (Milner, 2012; James, 2008). In Canada urban schools are usually located in neighbourhoods where crime and
poverty are prevalent. The schools serve a linguistically diverse population with a few schools indicating that over thirty different languages are spoken and over sixty percent of their students speak a language other than English (James, 2008). These studies show similarities in features as urban education in Canada and the United States have similar characteristics.

Richard Milner IV (2012), a scholar and professor in the field of urban education, divides urban education into three categories: urban intensive, urban emergent and urban characteristics. All three categories typically have a high percentage of English Language Learners (ELL), minority students, poverty, and low academic achievement. According to Milner (2012) the word urban education is pervasive in society but has diverse meanings when referring to the different schools in the United States. Different geographical locations on the map define what term is appropriate for the type of schools being discussed. However, the three categories used to describe urban education present similarities in regards to the characteristics and challenges found in the schools. For instance, the students may be at risk in terms of diminished resources, lack of qualified teachers, and low academic achievement experienced in urban settings (Milner, 2012; James 2008).

Poverty is a constant challenge in urban schools (James, 2008; Milner, 2012). According to the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Educational Strategy document, students from low-income families may be at risk of lower academic achievement due to the lack of resources (Education Document Ontario, 2013). According to Shevalier and Mckenzie “Despite multiple waves of school reform, urban education still struggles to overcome myriad, well documented issues: personal shortage and high turnovers, underfunding, deteriorating buildings, low academic performance as measured by standardized tests and graduation rates, and many other objective
indicators of deficiency” (2012, p. 1087). Students attending urban schools encounter many struggles that are seen as a hindrance to academic success.

**Urban Education Dropout Rates**

The literature centered on addressing the negative, but harsh reality of urban schools is often supported by statistics and research done in the field. Most of the research found on urban education focuses on schools in the U.S. Richard Curwin’s (2010) research found that urban schools are linked to “the eight plagues: racism, too many languages spoken, drugs, gangs, violence, poor family structure, a school-to-prison pipeline, and high drop-out rates….that lead to despair in faculty, in administration, and worst of all, in students” (p.36). According to Curwin the barriers faced by students attending urban schools lead to a high dropout rate. In Ontario, statistics show students from low income families have a 33% drop out rate, three times that of students from high income families (Ontario’s urban and suburban schools, 2008). These results are very frightening as the statistics in Ontario imply students attending urban schools are at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts. Also, statistics on urban schools in Ontario show that the dropout rates are primarily due to socio-economic factors. Families who are considered low-income are at a disadvantage before going to school because their senses are stimulated differently, emotions are aroused differently, and their perception of the world is different because of the polluted environment they live in and the events they observe (Curwin, 2010).

Research conducted in Canada and the United States, shows that the majority of students dropping out of urban high schools are predominately black; “Many black dropouts believe that given the current social and economic barriers to mobility, education will be of little benefit to
them” (Richardson and Gerlach, 1980). Black students drop out because of the economic barriers they encounter at school and in the community (Richardson et al., 1980). Also, black students drop out of school for four reasons such as: socioeconomics, education, personal, and familial reasons (Milner 2012, Richardson et al., 1980). Although Richardson and Gerlach’s research was conducted in the 1980’s this is still relevant today because the dropout rates amongst black students are still on the rise (Dei, 1997).

The statistics illustrate that the majority of students attending urban schools migrate from foreign countries (James, 2012). This can create barriers for these families because some of them do not speak English, and may have a hard time finding a job. Many families that come to Canada have to leave their country due to war, poverty, or abuse (James, 2012). They have to rely on government assistance for financial support, and may not be able to access the support and the resources needed. Also, a lot of children attending urban schools come from single-parent families. Fathers are not in the picture which leaves the mother to take on both roles of parenting (James, 2012). Gender contributes to the dropout rate because the majority of students that dropout are males and have to help support their families (Dei, 1997). Dei (1997) and James’ (2012) research confirms my beliefs as a student attending an urban school. I saw many students drop out of school at an early age due to poverty, socio-economical status, gender, and family status.

**Dropout Impacted by Disengagement in Urban Schools**

Limited research is available on how disengagement affects dropout rates in urban schools in Canada. The majority of the research focuses on urban education in the U.S. This
research links dropout rates to a lack of student engagement in urban schools (Curwin, 2010; Dei, 1997; Hunter and Caraway, 2014). Studies have found that students attending urban schools have a lack of motivation for many reasons such as: disengagement in classroom lessons, socio-economic status, racism, language barriers, and street culture which present a gap between home and school (Milner, 2012; James, 2012; Curwin 2010). Similarly, Hunter and Caraway’s (2014) research reveals that youth attending urban high schools have a lack of engagement in the classroom. Disengagement is the first sign of potential student dropouts, yet this warning sign is frequently ignored or inappropriately addressed by school agents (Dei, 1997).

In addition, Hunter and Caraway’s (2014) research reveals that students’ lack of engagement may be due to their teachers’ pedagogy. They conducted a study where students attending an urban high school were asked to use Twitter in an attempt to engage them in literacy lessons. The results found that when students are engaged with the classroom lesson they are excited to attend class and the grades are higher (Hunter and Caraway, 2014). However, Hunter and Caraway’s (2014) research study is problematic because according to Milner (2012) and James (2012) urban schools are usually located in low-income neighbourhoods where there is a lack of resources, and poverty is prevalent. Hunter and Caraway’s (2014) research shows that a teacher introduced Twitter in the classroom in response to student interest in Twitter and their electronic devices. If students are living in poverty they may not be able to afford cell phones or electronic devices. This case study shows that the majority of students attending this urban school in the U.S had electronic devices. However, it is important that instructional strategies and tools aim at increasing student engagement. Tools have to be developed that carefully consider the reality experienced by students attending urban schools.
Furthermore, a students’ lack of engagement in urban schools has also been linked to a lack of parent involvement (Calabrese, Corey, Jose, Perez, St. Louis, George, 2004). What students experience in the school with their teachers ends when the school day is over, but when students go home, if their parents are not interested due to factors such as time, education level, and language barriers, then this can also lead to disengagement (Calabrese et al., 2004). This is relevant to my research because it presents another factor influencing the disengagement of urban students. Dei’s (1997) research also shows that students’ disengagement in urban schools is impacted by a range of stakeholders including: administration, teachers, students and parents. Limited research is published on how to help with student engagement in urban schools. I hope that my research findings can make a contribution toward this end.

The early years are important to engage students into the elementary school curriculum. It is important that students develop an interest for learning in the primary grade, because this is where our students are introduced to all the subject areas. If students are not engaged with what they are learning, they become unmotivated, which affects academic achievement. Research shows students that are disengaged will eventually drop out (Calabrese et al., 2004, Dei, 1997). I believe engagement and motivation play an integral role in students’ learning and it is important for primary teachers to support student engagement through lesson planning.

**Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy**

Culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy is a term coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995). In my MTRP, I will refer to culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy as CRRP. CRRP is a tool teachers can use to allow students in a multi-cultural setting to see their culture
reflected in the classroom (Ladson-Billing, 1995). Gay (2000) defines CRRP as “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant to and effective (for students)...” (p. 29). CRRP is a method of teaching that teachers utilize when educating students from diverse cultural backgrounds, to allow students to identify with classroom materials and to see their culture reflected in their learning. However, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy towards Equity and Inclusivity in Ontario Schools (1997) states, “educators who are culturally responsive see equitable and inclusive education as fundamental to supporting high levels of student achievement” (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Gay, 2004). Culturally responsive educators see equity and inclusion playing an integral role in students’ academic achievements.

Research shows that the students attending urban schools have a high population of minority students (Calabrese, Corey, Jose, Perez, St. Louis, George, 2004; James, 2009; Milner, 2012; Richardson and Gerlach, 1980). Thus, CRRP can benefit students attending urban schools because it caters to the needs of a highly diverse student population. Urban teachers need to become aware of this phenomenon and be ready to use CRRP as an analytic tool to develop culturally responsive lessons to maximize student-learning opportunities (Milner, 2011). Scholars have found throughout their studies that CRRP has a positive impact on students’ engagement which can help students attending urban schools (Ladson- Billings, 1995; Milner 2011; Gay, 2004).

Ladson- Billings’ (1995) research shows the need for teachers to reflect on their teaching practice. A study was conducted in the U.S which shows that the immigrant population in the U.S has increased and students of colour account for one third of the student population of all schools. The U.S Department of Commerce (1996) projected that by 2025 students of colour will
account for more than 57 percent of the population. Thus, Ladson-Billing (1995) urges teachers to reflect on their practices and modify their pedagogy accordingly to the demographics of the students in their classrooms. Canada’s immigration rates continue to rise and teachers need to accommodate to all the needs of the students in their classrooms.

Further, Ladson – Billings’ (1995) research illustrates CRRP can be particularly helpful to all students. She refers to the struggles that students have encountered and the stereotypes that have been placed on them in society. Historically, race and low socio-economic status have been deemed as contribution to “at-risk-students” (Ladson- Billings 1995; Dei, 1997). Despite negative publicity of students who attend urban schools, these students can benefit from CRRP in their classroom to foster learning and engagement and improve test scores (Ladson- Billings, 1995). Her study stresses the maintenance and fostering of CRRP in urban settings and introduces three criteria: “an ability to develop a student academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of sociopolitical of critical consciousness” (Ladson- Billings, p.483). Her work is relevant to my study because it shows that CRRP can help with engagement and help with student academic achievements. Limited research is available on the success of students in Canada attending urban schools. I will incorporate questions on teachers’ perspective on student engagement in my interviews.

Shevalier and McKenzie’s (2012) research also illustrates that CRRP can be beneficial to students in urban schools. They discuss why CRRP is important and the theoretical components of CRRP and argue that “the point of culturally responsive teaching is to respond to students in ways that build and sustain meaningful, positive relationships that is, to care for them rather than care about them” (p. 1091). This study examined over 300 journal articles on CRRP and realized that the majority of articles concerned the topics of caring about students instead of caring for
them. Shevalier and McKenzie argue that “Pre-service teachers, in-service teachers, and teacher educators often claim to value and practice modeling but may do so in the detached manner of an exemplar: in effect, modeling caring about teaching rather than caring for others” (p. 1092). This study is applicable to my research because it outlines the relationship of the disconnect between theory and practice, and the need for CRRP in urban education. My research will aim to achieve this through the integration of music across the curriculum.

However, CRRP has limitations. Teachers need to work in collaboration with their peers and stakeholders. “To support culturally responsive pedagogy, school teachers promote reflection, face complex issues head on, find ways to honour community and support authentic collaboration among all stakeholders” (Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Towards Equity and Inclusivity in Ontario Schools, p. 3). CRRP is a collaboration that involves the teacher, administration, parents, and students (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Shevalier and Mckenzie, 2012). In urban schools this can be problematic with such a high diverse population and some parents not able to speak English (Milner, 2012; Calabrese, Corey, Jose, Perez, St. Louis, George, 2004). Also, teachers may not know how to use culture as a responsive pedagogy in urban schools because CRRP is missing from pre-service education. Milner’s (2012) research reveals the awareness of CRRP, but the lack of information given to teachers on how to implement it in their classrooms. For example, during an interview a teacher asked Ladson-Billings how to implement CRRP in the classroom. She replied, “Even if we could tell you how to do it, I would not want us to tell you how to do it” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 39 in Milner’s article). As Howard (1999) so aptly stated, “We can’t teach what we don’t know” (Gay, 2001, p.1). This lack of knowledge of how to implement CRRP may prevent teachers from using CRRP in their classrooms.
Potential of Music Pedagogy

According to the 2009 Ontario Ministry of Education Arts Curriculum Document, “the arts provide a natural vehicle through which students can explore and express themselves and through which they can discover and interpret the world around them” (p. 3). The arts include drama, visual arts, music, and dance, which can enrich the learning experience for students in the classroom, giving them tools for exploration.

The term “integration” comes from the Latin word *integrale*, which means to make something whole (Webster Dictionary). When something is made whole, it is said to be complete. Integration is a combination of subjects taught by the same instructor which purposely draws together knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values from within or across subject areas (Fogarty, 1991). For the intent of my research I define integration as different subjects being taught together to promote critical and creative thinking and a deeper understanding for students, allowing different subjects to be joint together, making it one. Math and music can be linked together in a lesson to allow student to make meaningful connections.

According to Thompson (1992), “The success of any curriculum integration depends on the expertise and motivation of the teachers involved. And, if music education is to be included, principals must ensure that music teachers are active participants in the process” (p.47). The integration of music into the curriculum is a process in which the teacher, principal, and music teacher can work together to create a fun, exciting, meaningful curriculum whereby learning evolves (Thompson, 1992). Venezuela (1997) defines music as a language that is expressed through sounds for which requires no translation, therefore music can be utilized. Music can be understood cross culturally regardless of language spoken. Music is culturally relevant because it
is a universal language (Venezuela, 1997). Moreover, music can be used as a diverse instrument—a form of expression—to promote creativity and engagement with the students in the classroom to help enrich the learning experience; “Interdisciplinary connections can open up possibilities for comprehensive study while preserving the integrity and validity of musical experience” (Barrett, 2007, p. 27). These ideas affirm that of my own experience that music integration enables students to make meaningful connections across curriculum areas while providing comprehensive study.

According to Barrett (2007), a professor of music education, “there are three facets to successful integrate music into the curriculum” (p. 27). First, contextual facets help students to learn about the background or the origin of the work being taught (Barrett, 2007). For example, students maybe studying women’s role in society after World War I. Students can reflect on historical roots through writing lyrics and singing a song. Also, the questions posed by the teacher are important to interdisciplinary work because they allow students to gain a deeper understanding of the subject. Secondly, elemental and structural facets help students to “draw attention to the building blocks of music and the way they are organized in larger forms…Students perceive the salient features of the music—prominent patterns and sounds in rhythm, melody, timbre, harmony, and dynamics” (Barrett, 2007, p. 30). Students can find distinction in music through the integration of the subject being taught. Also, they can identify with different elements of music to engage in critical thinking. For example, a teacher can teach spelling or the alphabet through song. The teacher can use a certain rhythm and melody to teach language arts with music to help students learn. For example, a teacher can use the alphabet song to teach students their letters. The students are learning letters, rhythm, melody, and harmony through the integration of music with language arts. Thirdly, the expressive facets “emphasize
the range of meanings that a work may embody” (Barrett, 2007, p. 31). This is where the teacher assesses the quality of the resources used in the classroom. For example, a teacher can use a picture book to teach students about culture. After reading the book to the class, the teacher can ask each student to get into groups of three or four and use music and movement to represent a cultural dance from a book. As assessment the teacher can evaluate the dance curriculum as well as the language curriculum.

Organizing music integration this way can allow teachers to help students and allow a natural curiosity to flow across subject areas while making learning more meaningful. Scholars demonstrate that teachers can step away from the traditional textbook method and allow students to learn by integrating music across curriculum areas (Thompson, 1992; Venezuela, 1997; Barrett, 2007). In my experience being a student in an urban school, writing yet another essay was boring and this caused me to be disengaged. By using music as a vehicle for learning I believe students will be more invested, excited, and engaged.

Dr. Cynthia Colwell, a professor of music, performed a study with kindergarten students to examine the effect of reading accuracy using three methods of shared reading paired with music. The first group participated in a rehearsal of a song which mimicked the textbook; the second method was song rehearsal and spoken word based on their textbook; and the third method was spoken word and text rehearsal (Colwell, 1994). The students who had music integrated into their language curriculum experienced a higher level of reading accuracy. The results showed that song rehearsal facilitated reading accuracy by serving as a structural prompt. Overall, the students exhibited numerous improvements, including reading accuracy, recall and retention. This study thus found that when teachers integrate music into language arts, students
can excel. The more senses are used to learn the material, the deeper the learning and retention rate.

Howard Gartner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gartner, 1995) suggests that there are no fixed intelligences, but they are all separate: verbal-linguistic, mathematic-logical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, and visual-spatial (Gilman, 2001). Since all eight intelligences are separate, the integration of music into the curriculum may enhance the learning experience. For example, music can be integrated with language arts, math, science, and social studies.

Furthermore, differentiating instructions (D.I) allow teachers’ to tailor their instructions to meet individual needs (Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, and Hardin, 2014). “Differentiating instructions makes sense because it offers different paths to understanding content, process, and products, considering what is appropriate given a child’s profile of strengths, interests, and styles” (Dixon, et al., 2014, p. 1). A teacher can use music to cater to the individual needs of the students in the classroom. For example, if a teacher realizes a student in the class is falling behind in language arts but excels in music, the teacher can integrate language arts with music for this student. The study conducted by Dixon, et al., shows that teachers efficacy plays an important role in D.I because the process requires more time and commitment. The results show when teacher use D.I, students are more engaged and motivated which can increases academic achievement.

**Music and Cognitive Development**

Research illustrates music can have many impacts on children’s cognitive development (Merritt, 1996; Colwell, 1994; Eunjin, 2013). The term cognitive abilities refer to memory,
language, visuospatial abilities, and general intelligences (Schellenberg and Weiss, 2013). Music can impact arousal levels and moods, which in turns affects cognitive development (Schellenberg, 2004). The research suggests that music can help students feel better about themselves and foster confidence (Eunjin, 2013; Merritt, 1996). With increased confidence, students think more positively about themselves and transfer the power of optimism into their education (Hunter and Caraway, 2014). Music can act as a catalyst for learning, since it enhances attentiveness, increases comprehension, builds awareness, self-discipline, creative and critical thinking skills, and promotes imagination (Colwell, 1994; Eunjin, 2013; Merritt, 1996). Also, music can affect our physical wellbeing without us being aware of it (Merritt, 1996). These are some potential benefits in music pedagogy in what my study will be able to help achieve.

Music has been shown to improve cognitive abilities in children because music impacts arousal levels in the brain and boosts mood, which affects cognitive performance (Schellenberg, 2004). Jazz, classical and other types of music can empower the soul, empower the spirit, reduce stress, inspire creativity, and enhance love relationships (Merritt, 1996). Music is a tool for healing and can be utilized in many ways (Meritt, 1996; Schellenberg, 2004). Likewise, music can enhance students’ cognitive abilities, which can help students meet their educational goals (Eunjin, 2013; Meritt, 1996; Schellenberg, 2004).

Music can support recall and retention in the brain (Colwell, 1994). When students sing a passage from a book, they remember the song better, rather than if they read words out of a book (Colwell, 1994). Music can help with improving memory when students sing rhymes because it helps us recall semantic information and keeps learning fresh (Jensen, 2005). Students remember the melody and rhythm of the song being sung and make connections between the words and the rhythm. Students are able to process information in a creative way, which helps with semantic
memory. “The time limit of semantic memory suggest that students will remember very little past a second of input” (Jensen, 2005, p. 132). Teachers can use a variety of activities to engage their students, such as listening to music, singing songs, creating a rap, and dancing. When students are engaged, they retain the information in the frontal lobes of their brain and it is processed for meaning (Jensen, 2005).

Multiple studies have been conducted and these finding show that “the human brain can and does grow new neurons, that these neurons become functional and are highly correlated with memory, and that this process can be regulated” (Jensen, 2005, p.8). Music helps with child’s cognitive, psychomotor and effective domains of the brain (Fratia, 2015). Studies show a high correlation between students who have studied the arts or have had the arts integrated in their classroom, which has been shown to improve academic achievement (Fratia, 2015). The brain is constantly changing and is alert to what is going on around us. When students are listening to music, it helps the brain with spatial abilities to understand and to remember (Jensen, 2005). Students are able to process what they are hearing while it is stored in their brain. Thus, music has been shown to have a positive effect on all areas of the brain.

In summary, students attending urban schools have been stigmatized by their race and low socioeconomic status as being “at-risk youth”. In this literature review, I have used scholarship from both Canada and the United States; however, the majority of my sources originated from the U.S studies, but I feel these are still useful and applicable. Some research has linked the high dropout rates in urban school to the disengagement of students in the classroom. However, culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy is a tool that uses culture as a vehicle for learning in schools which have a high diverse population. Music is CRRP because it is a universal language that transcends across all races and ethnicities, faith, gender, and age barriers.
Scholarship shows that music can be beneficial as it enhances cognitive development and is a vehicle for learning. Also, by integrating music across curricula, it can allow students to develop a deeper understanding of the creative and critical thinking process. Therefore, I do believe by integrating music across curricula in urban schools, it can help with student academic achievements, and have a positive effect on student success, engagement, and motivation.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Procedure

This qualitative research study investigates how teachers can integrate music across curriculum areas in urban schools to improve students’ motivation, engagement, and academic achievement. The study was conducted by first reviewing literature on urban schools, statistics on dropout rates, dropout rates due to lack of student engagement, culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy, the benefits of music on cognitive development, and the integration of music in the classroom. I conducted face-to-face interviews with two exemplary elementary teachers who have integrated music across curriculum areas in urban schools. One of my research participants is still integrating music in her classroom with primary students. The purpose of this research is to answer the question: How are a sample of elementary teachers in Ontario urban schools integrating music as responsive pedagogy across curriculum subject areas and what perceived impact on students’ academic engagement and achievement have they observed?

The information for this study was gathered by a review of books and journal articles related to urban schools, music and integration to gain information on this topic. By reviewing the literature, I have drawn out themes and sub-themes that provided me with an investigation of
my topic and I made reference to them in Chapter Four. Also, sources were provided by my research supervisor and my participants.

**Instruments of Data Collection**

The instruments utilized for the purpose of the data collection were the interviews I had with two consenting participants. The interview questions were centered directly on the concept of the integration of music in urban schools. I prepared my questions before hand to ensure that I asked questions that would allow me to gain a deeper understanding of the integration of music across the curriculum in urban schools. Also, my research supervisor helped me to format some of my questions. For example, some of my questions were:

- What instructional strategies do you use in your classroom when using music?
- Can you give me an example of a lesson in which you used cross curricular music integration?
- What are some of the challenges you face while using music in your classroom as a responsive pedagogy?

These questions allowed my participants to have thoughtful discussions and reflection on their practice. I was at liberty to ask follow-up and probing questions and to share my knowledge on the topic with my research participants.

Qualitative research methods have many perceived benefits. Face-to-face in-depth interview seek to foster learning about individual experiences and viewpoints on a particular set of issues (DiDicco- Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Through my interviews, I was able to obtain two individual experience and viewpoints and compare and contrast them in my chapter four. Also, I was able to compare my participant responses with my literature review and reflect on it. In addition, qualitative research can provide a rich source of knowledge about the information being
investigated and addressed, which provides the researcher with questions and concerns (DiDicco-Bloom et al., 2006). My questions and concerns were answered by my research participants and I was given more scholarly sources, including videos, journal articles, and books to add to my literature review.

Participants

The two research participants are identified throughout this research study by pseudonyms Candice and Lynn; Candice and Lynn were teachers previously working in urban schools in Peel. They both taught primary, junior and intermediate students and are still working in the Peel District School Board, but in different capacities. Both participants have over twenty years of experience in teaching and have worked full-time in urban schools. I was referred to my research participants by my research supervisor Mary Ann Fratia. Lynn is currently an instructional coach and Candice is a music teacher. Candice and Lynn both teach pre-service teachers at a facility of education in Ontario. Both participants presented me with a vast range of teaching experience, as well as the opportunity to gain insights on their beliefs, experiences, and views on music integration in urban schools.

Data Collection and Analysis

After I collected my data through the face-to-face semi structured interviews with exemplary teachers who have worked in urban schools, I transcribed both of the interviews, questions and responses, reading them numerous times as I went along. The questions asked
were directly related to my central research question: How are a sample of elementary teachers in Ontario urban schools integrating music as responsive pedagogy across curriculum subject areas and what perceived impact on students’ academic engagement and achievement have they observed? I began the process of analysis by listening to my voice recordings several times and typing out what was said by my research participants. I read and reread the transcribed interviews for clarity and to find my themes and sub-themes. I focused on four main themes and created sub-themes from the interview responses. I used different coloured highlighters to identify different aspects of music integration, challenges in urban schools, the support teachers receive in their school community, and teachers perceived impact on students’ motivation, engagement, and academic achievement.

Ethics Review Procedures

I followed the ethical review procedures approved for the Masters of Teaching program. I presented my interview candidates with a letter of consent provided by the University of Toronto, and informed them they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The participants were required to read and sign the forms before the interview was conducted (see Appendix B for a template of the letter of consent form used). My forms were given to my research supervisor for approval before I submitted them to my participants. Two copies of the consent forms were made: one copy for myself to keep for my records and a copy for my participants. I maintained the privacy of my participants by using pseudonyms and by keeping the school names anonymous. I also provided them with a copy of my interview notes and a copy of the transcripts to review for accuracy following the interviews.
Prior to the start of each interview, I informed my research participants about the topic of my research and ensured they have had experience integrating music in urban schools. I also informed the participants that they are free to refrain from any questions that they do not feel comfortable answering, and the interviews will be conducted and recorded to facilitate transcription only.

**Limitations**

The primary limitation of my research study is that I could only interview a small number of participants. Consequently, I was not able to discuss what students experienced because I was not able to interview them, which would provide me with more insights on music integration. I was not able to observe any children in my participants’ classrooms. I was only able to interview the teachers and gain knowledge from what they have observed and evaluated. Also, I had a time constraint that I needed to abide by for my research study. In my literature review my limitations are the lack of scholarship in Canada on urban education and music integration.
Chapter 4 Findings

In this chapter, I present findings based on interpretation of data collected through two face-to-face interviews with teachers who work in the Peel District School Board, but in a different capacity. Prior to conducting the interviews, questions were created to examine the integration of music across curricula, its challenges, school support, teacher’s instructional practice, and perceived impact. I intended to gain a deeper understanding of attitudes, concerns, and beliefs of educators to provide depth to literature previously reviewed in chapter two. The purpose of this research was to answer the question how are a sample of elementary teachers in Ontario urban schools integrating music as a responsive pedagogy across curriculum subject areas and what perceived impact on students’ academic engagement and achievement have they observed?

The findings resulted from the interview discussing teachers’ views, practice, and understanding of music integration across curricula. Both teachers have over twenty years of teaching experience working with children. The participants will remain anonymous through pseudonyms.

Candice has over thirty years of experience working as an educator in various fields. She currently teaches young children and writes books for teachers in music education. When asked about her music background, Candice informed me she has been playing instruments, singing, and writing music for many years. While working in the Peel District School Board, she was the music teacher who integrated music across curricula in her classroom. She spoke about her love for music, passion for teaching, instructional strategies, lesson plans implemented, and challenges faced in an urban school.
Lynn was an educator for twenty-six years who taught every grade from one through eight. She also taught music in some capacity to students in those grades as well. Now she is an Instructional Coach for the Peel District School Board from kindergarten to grade twelve, and has been out of the classroom for the last five years. Lynn integrated music across curricula for all her students in her classroom and spoke about her passion, challenges, instructional strategies, and resources used. Lynn also teaches pre-service teachers at a faculty of education in Toronto.

**Key Themes and Findings**

The analysis of the data collected presented four main themes and key findings shared by the research participants. My research findings presented overarching themes and sub-themes. The key themes of this research are the following:

- Teachers Perceived Impact (what they think) on Urban Students’ Academic Achievement, Motivation and Engagement
- Types of Integration and Resources Used in the Classroom
- Teacher Support within the School Community
- Challenges Presented for Teachers Working in Urban Schools

**Finding #1: Teachers Perceived Impact on Urban Students’ Academic Achievement, Motivation and Engagement**

It was clear to both participants that the major reason why they incorporated music into the curriculum was to allow students to gain a deeper understanding, and make more meaningful connections across the curriculum. For Candice, music is a motivational tool that allowed students to bring their passion into the curriculum. “Students who were musically inclined and
students who thought they had no interest in music were able to find something they enjoyed. They made it come to life in our music class”. She provides an example of a student in her class who loved music.

I had one boy I mentored very seriously for two years. He could play the drum and the base guitar. He could only understand music. He was an awkward kid. He lived in a low income neighborhood, and he lived in my classroom. When he graduated, I emailed the music teacher at his high school and said this child needs to live in your class. For some kids it is a fun part of their day, it refreshes them and opens their minds. It give them hope and possibility.

For Candice, music is a great tool that promotes motivation and engagement within the classroom.

When students are engaged with what they are learning, you see that spark that shows through the questions they ask, and the way they interact with their peers. That social factor is very important. Once you get that conversation going, you are able to allow for all students to become involved. Music integration across curricula helps students become involved with the learning experience. They ask questions and they are able to connect learning with popular culture.

Similar to Candice, Lynn believes that music is a great tool to use in urban schools that have great diversity to promote engagement and motivation.

It’s engaging, it allows children to communicate in a different way and different context. It allows kids to reflect and make connections and it’s in those sounds. Especially for
those kids that have the musical intelligence. When they have that musical intelligence it is a way for those kids to connect to the knowledge and skills as well. Some people have a good memory because they have seen it... because they are a visual learner or tactile learner, but some see just a note or a lyric or cadence of someone’s voice certainly supports them to connect to what they are doing. Arts curriculum speaks so strongly to integration. My son has high musical intelligence. He is a very fast skater. I would say Gram, you skate so fast and he said I speed up the song in my head. I asked him what song? He said the skating song. When I want to skate fast I speed up the song in my head.

Candice believes music helps children make connections to knowledge and skills. Music is a great way to help all students become immersed in the curriculum and engaged in the learning process.

Both research participants made reference to passion and how important passion is for teachers to have. “If a teacher lacks passion, her students will lack it also. Music is engaging, it allows students to communicate in a different context. It allows kids to reflect and make connections” (Lynn). “Passion is the key element in student’s motivation and engagement. When a teacher is passionate about what she does, that passion become contagious and transfers to the students” (Candice).

I was excited to hear that teachers need to be passionate about what they are teaching to get students engaged. Research confirms that teachers’ passion transfers to their students. According to Thompson (1992), the success of any curriculum depends on the expertise and motivation of the teachers involved, which in turn transmits to their students. If a student is engaged, that student is learning and making some form of connection with the material.
Motivation happens when the content comes alive and students understand what they are learning. Motivation and engagement work together, encouraging students to get involved.

Finding #2: Types of Integration and Resources Used in the Classroom

In an effort to draw upon the various methods of integration and resources used in the classroom, I framed my interview questions around how teachers are integrating music in their classrooms and the resources they used. Both educators spoke about the way they integrated music in the classroom and resources used in lesson planning. According to Lynn “The integration of curriculum allows students to think outside the box. It allows a student that excels in one subject, but may struggle in another to make connections in both subjects. Music is not passive, but an authentic experience.” Candice discusses her practices by giving an example of a lesson she implemented in the classroom.

I designed a lesson based on kids studying the Underground Railroad. We started with the constellations of the big dipper, and we use it and learn about why it is important for the North Star astronomy. We look at why the North Star is in one place and the other stars aren’t. Nobody knows that we are turning around, but the North Star is right above the pole. We learn some astronomy, study constellations through different cultures what the constellations are called, and use them to develop musical phrases and play them. We use different musical instruments and create a performance of Swing Low Sweet Chariot. Also, we use glow sticks and tableaux, with constellations so it becomes drama, science, and social studies. The music learning is authentic, it involves critical thinking around
developing a constellation, and it’s really huge. This helps with motivation and engagement when you bring in that cultural piece.

Candice discusses her lesson that she implemented and explains the integration process. She integrated science, social studies, language arts, and music to create a lesson for her students. She makes reference to bringing culture into the classroom as a vehicle for learning.

Lynn also shares a lesson that she implemented in her classroom using drama, visual arts, music, and language arts.

I used soundscapes. It’s a drama technique integrated with music and visual arts. I was working on social justice issues with my older kids. I read a book on war and I would read a bit from the book and have small groups of students record sounds through verbs like crash and bang. I would ask my students what they hear, see and feel based on the story. Then I would read a bit more and have them use found objects to create what it would sound like to replicate what they would see and feel, so it’s a soundscape. When kids connect to literature in that way, it’s in an engaging, interactive way. This is better than passive sitting and reading. Sometimes passive reading works for kids, but these kids are also living and breathing the literature. They make connections, they feel it and when they write about it afterwards it’s real. It’s not just a regurgitation of what I want them to hear. It’s a connection text… Yes, read alouds are fantastic for my primary students. The more kids have read and had access to it, the better. Sometimes I do interactive reading where we have music and movement and call backs. For example, when I say what did he say? They say “don’t”, and I say what did he say? They say “don’t”. They immerse in that kind of interaction and the text is ingrained in them. They
are hooked. They ask can you read that again and sometimes I don’t read what’s on the page because they just want that chime in.

Also, Lynn informs me that many of teachers believe music integration across curricula is usually implemented from kindergarten to grade six and stops there. However, she informed me that she integrated music with her grade eight students to have them immerse in the content being taught.

Especially…I don’t know why it cannot happen in the older grades. When I taught grade eight, I did integrate music and I can talk to you about that in an intermediate setting. I was the art teacher, so I taught visual arts drama, but not music. The school had a music teacher, but we did many integrated units. I incorporated music into drama and visual arts as well. It was part of what they did in their culminating task in my class.

Both participants speak about adding that cultural aspect in music education to allow all students to be involved when using music across curricula. Music is culturally responsive and it reflects the culture in which it comes from. “Culture allows for that authentic piece within the curriculum (Candice).” Lynn states, “Music is great for transitions. A lot of teachers that I talk to said they don’t have time for music, but I think it’s a great transition tool. I play cultural music in my classroom and use culture in my curriculum.” Cultural music can be used in the classroom during transitions. For example, when the students are transitioning from their carpet to their desks, music can be played. Lynn believes music can be integrated across curricula all the time, but suggest cultural music can be used for transitions when teachers say they don’t have time for music integration.
For Candice, culture plays an integral role in music integration. Candice states, 

Always, it’s something that came naturally to me. I was a pretty academic kid and I always had a very broad interest in the culture that produced the music whatever culture it was and what it tells us about the world people live in. Music creeps across the curriculum and the kids are learning.

For Candice, her interest in culture allowed her to listen to different types of music to learn about the world around her. Music is culturally relevant because music speaks all languages. It transcends cultural boundaries.

Lynn states, she has to make sure that her lessons are culturally relevant and responsive to engage her students in the curriculum.

I have to make a conscious effort to make sure my music is culturally responsive and reflective of the communities of the kids I teach. Where do I go to access those? The families of my students provide me with resources. Sometimes the resources are in another language and I don’t know what the music is about. I struggle and I think teachers struggle with wanting to engage and reflect the kids in their classrooms.

When we teach our students we should incorporate a holistic approach. We cannot expect to teach different parts of our students. Culture should not be left behind when a student enters the school doors. What happens at home and in the community is brought into the classroom. Therefore, culture should be brought into the classroom and be reflective of our students.

In urban schools there is great diversity. Ladson-Billings research speaks about Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy (CRRP) and the importance of using culture as a vehicle for learning in urban schools. Music can be implemented across curricula to enrich the learning
experience and to introduce culture through various forms. Music is culturally relevant because it is a universal language (Venezuela, 1997). Music can be used as a diverse instrument—a form of expression—to promote creativity and engagement with the students in the classroom to help enrich the learning experience; “Interdisciplinary connections can open up possibilities for comprehensive study while preserving the integrity and validity of musical experience” (Barrett, 2007, p. 27). These ideas affirm that of my own experience that music integration enables students to make a meaningful connection across curriculum areas while being culturally relevant and responsive to the student’s needs.

**Finding #3: Teacher Support within the School Community**

The on-going support within the school community can be beneficial to administration, teachers, and students. Support can start anywhere from sharing resources or giving input during a conversation. Music integration across curricula requires support from the experts in the community (parents and grandparents). For Candice, she did not receive much support in her school. Candice states,

I had a principal that would not say no to me. If I wanted to do something she would say yes, but I did not get the huge support from people jumping in and helping me. I had a few teachers help me with lessons, but in general it was my responsibility. I would of have liked more of a team support, but I did not have that experience.

The administration in her school gave her the approval when she wanted to introduce new lessons ideas and put on musical productions, but she did not receive much support otherwise.
Candice had to rely on her musical background and saw herself as privileged from other teachers because they would come to her when integrating music across curricula.

Lynn had a different experience while working in an urban school. Colleagues and families shared resources with her to use in her classroom.

I have asked parents, I have asked my colleagues of course. I have gone on line, but when you don’t know what you’re looking for it is hard to find it. I find families love to share their materials and resources. You know if we are exploring sounds, families are willing to send in junk and treasures for us. I think we have our central board office and the internet, but I think we have to be very cautious what we take from there.

Support within the school and community is very important in student’s success. Families are a great resource and can provide materials for teachers to use in their classroom. This is a great way to open a door for parent involvement in the school. Families can send in music that is played at home to share with students and teachers. Lynn mentioned resources can also be accessed online, but would not recommend using the internet when you are not sure what you are looking for.

The integration of music into the curriculum is a process in which the teacher, principal, and music teacher can work together to create a fun, exciting, meaningful curriculum whereby learning evolves (Thompson, 1992). I believe teacher collaboration is an effective tool because teachers are able to share resources, ideas, lesson plans, and prior experience. For example, if a teacher implemented a lesson that involved music integration, and it worked well with the students, that teacher could share the lesson with colleagues.
Integration of Music across Curriculum Areas in Urban Schools

I was surprised that Lynn had the support she needed, but Candice did not. However, Candice is a music teacher who has great knowledge and experience in music, so it was not difficult for her to integrate music across curricula. On the other hand, Lynn was a general education teacher who did not have much experience in music and was fortunate to have the support she needed in the school and community. She was able to successfully integrate music across curricula.

Finding #4: Challenges Presented for Teachers Working in Urban Schools

In the literature review and during my interviews, I came across similar views about challenges faced in urban schools. Challenges such as behaviour, poverty, language barriers, and low academic achievement were discussed throughout my interviews. My research participants have two different views on challenges in urban schools. Lynn states,

I come with a different view point. I really don’t see challenges just opportunities and maybe possibilities and of course they are challenges with the kids. I have challenges with my colleagues understanding that all children, no matter what their life experience when they come to us, are capable. I don’t know if all of them share that same belief about children. I think they see them with flaws that they have to fix. Many teachers come to fix kids rather than seeing kids as gems and support them. Students don’t have behavioural challenges, but they behaved according to the way the environment is set up for them by the teacher.

She believed that students are not the problem but the teachers are. In urban schools, research shows there are many challenges that students face such as: low academic achievement, high
dropout rates in the higher grades, lack of motivation and engagement, poverty, and lack of resources. Candice addresses these issues in her interview.

Candice had a different outlook on the challenges presented in urban schools. She believes teachers are presented with many challenges in urban schools.

Some of them will be in any school’s class size, diversity of needs, kids who are… that don’t have the support they need for the grouping they are in, administration sometimes that are not very helpful and supportive, lack of space and resources you need, meeting the needs of very diverse populations, and without always having the background that you need to do the best you could.

Challenges within urban schools can be difficult for many teachers who lack the experience and background needed to be successful. Candice, who has over thirty years’ experience working in urban schools believes that teachers need background experience prior to working in urban schools to be successful. She makes reference to more of the challenges in urban schools. “Okay, there are huge factors such as language, culture, family expectations, and I believe in that model that says, I love teaching in schools with great diversity, but that also means you have to be a better teacher.”

Also, Candice shares an experience she had working in an urban school. She makes reference to poverty, low grades, and violence in the community.

I have worked with many students living in poverty. My last school had a housing project where all the kids from that housing project came to our school and mostly single moms, and mostly African Canadian. There were a lot of gun crimes in that place and many needs amongst the kids there. I worked really hard with the kids there to try and establish
them successfully. The students were struggling in school and had low grades. This community was an island in the middle of a quite wealthy area, so that great disparity within that school was an elephant in the room I would say.

Students attending urban schools have a lot to contend with which can make it challenging for teachers. Candice mentioned low academic achievement as an issue in urban schools. Low academic achievement can sometimes indicate a problem with teacher’s pedagogy and a lack of understanding and connection with the content being taught.

**Overview**

It is apparent that music integration across curricula in urban schools can help with students’ academic achievement, motivation, and engagement. This can be accomplished by teachers who are willing to invest extra time in lesson planning by using the expertise and experience colleagues, administration, and community as well as available resources. I have gained great insight from my two research participants, both of whom are excellent teachers who are willing to integrate music across curricula in urban schools to facilitate student success. Both educators, but in different capacities, have over twenty five years of teaching experience and are still working with students in different fields. Music integration across curricula in urban schools can be implemented from kindergarten to grade twelve. Teachers working in urban schools can use music integration across curricula to support students at any age. Music is culturally responsive and relevant and can be used in the classroom as a vehicle for learning when working in schools with great diversity.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The information gathered from my qualitative research study has reinforced many theories, ideologies, and various opinions. The objective of this final chapter is to share my reflections from the study gathered from both my research participants and my literature review. Therefore, I will discuss my final thoughts, implications, limitations, questions and make suggestions for further research.

Reflections and Implications

It was interesting how the research participants mirrored what was conveyed through my literature review. The concepts and understanding of the integration of music across the curriculum in urban schools gained from my literature review, is the same way in which my two research participants have come to understand them. However, my research participants have allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of music education and the importance of music integration in urban schools. During my interviews, I have acquired insights on how to bridge the gap between theory and practice in the process of music integration in urban schools through the strategies and examples provided by my participants.

My research participants view music integration across curricula in urban schools as an essential tool to help students grasp a deeper meaning of the subject being taught. Students are able to make connections, ask questions, engage in critical thinking, and learn about other cultures through the integration of music in urban schools. Also, music integration helps with motivation, engagement, and is perceived by my research participants to facilitate higher academic achievement. When students are engaged with what they are learning, they become motivated to learn more. This allows them to ask questions, make connections, and interact with
their peers. Students are also able to engage in conversations that deepen their understanding, which is a form of inquiry-based learning.

Another point I wish to address is that my research participants may not have had any formalized training or professional development specifically related to arts integration, but their practice and strategies mirrored my literature review. Both participants said music integration came natural to them; it is a subject that cannot be separated because it just creeps across the curriculum. They have always integrated music across curricula while teaching. Although one research participant (Candice) is a music teacher, she integrated music with other subjects and helped her colleagues do the same. She believed music should not be taught on its own. My other participant (Lynn) is a former teacher who integrated music across the curriculum in urban schools.

Both participants have provided me with suggestions to support students attending urban schools. They have shared with me during our interviews that they have witnessed students gaining higher academic achievement, motivation, and engagement when music is integrated across the curriculum. Music allows students to bring their passion into the curriculum, because music is youth culture, popular culture, and can be used to bring that cultural element into the classroom. Music transcends across all language barriers, culture, tradition, economic status, gender orientation, and generations.

In my literature review, studies have found that students attending urban schools have lack of motivation for many reasons such as: disengagement in classroom lessons, language barriers, high dropout rates, low socio-economic status and street culture which presents a gap between home and school (Milner, 2012; James, 2012; Curwin, 2010). When students lack motivation, this can lead to further problems, such as disengagement and higher dropout rates,
which can cause behavioural issues leading to low academic achievement. I believe these are very interesting points to consider. However, my research participants have seen an improvement in urban students when music is integrated into the curriculum. Music is not the answer to some of the problems that urban students face, but can be used as a tool that improves student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement. Students can bring music into the classroom and teachers can easily integrate music in their lessons. For example, music can be used as a minds on activity in a three-part lesson plan.

During my interview, challenges faced by students attending urban schools were mentioned. However, my participants did not mention high dropout rates in the interview, which was shown in my literature review. I believe the reason is because I did not interview high school teachers that may have witnessed this act. One of my research participants, Lynn, was a former teacher who worked in elementary and intermediate schools. A lack of motivation, engagement, and low academic achievement are signs that are present when students are on the verge of dropping out (Dei, 1997). However, research done by George Dei (1997) and Carl James (2012) suggest that when students lack motivation and engagement at a young age, it continues throughout their schooling, and eventually if these warning signs are not addressed, they will dropout. The early years are very important for teachers to engage their students in their lessons.

I was surprised that both my participants have shared similar stories about how students are more engaged and motivated when music is integrated in the curriculum. Some students who had no interest in what they were learning were able to find something they enjoyed about music and made the subject content come alive. Also, the students are able to make meaningful connections, gain a deeper understanding, think outside the box, and communicate in different
ways. When students are engaged with what they are learning they are motivated to learn more. Motivation and engagement can be pivotal to higher academic achievement.

In addition, music has been shown to help with brain development. Research supports the positive effects of music on the brain. It develops children’s cognitive abilities with recall and retention in the brain. Also, it helps to develop psychomotor skills and affective domains of the brain (body, soul, and mind). In my interview, it was amazing to see that both my research participants also spoke about the benefits of music on the brain, especially at an early age.

My research participants provided me with resources and different types of integration tools that can be used in the classroom. I have learned that music can be integrated with any subjects and can be integrated with the other arts as well. Music can also be used for transitions in the classrooms when changing activities. Also, music integration can be used for all students, including students with exceptionalities, English Language Learners (ELL), and students on IEP’s. It allows students who excel in one subject but struggle in another to make connections in both subjects.

My participants shared that music can be integrated with social studies, science, visual arts, language arts, drama, and math. Music is also an effective tool that lends itself to cultural study, diversity, and acceptance into the classroom. Studies conducted by Gloria Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay suggest that music is an excellent tool for teacher to implement Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy (CRRP) into the classroom. Music bridges the gap between home and school, because it allows students to bring their culture into the classroom with them which is a part of their identity. Students are able to bring their prior knowledge into the classroom and share it with their peers.
Recommended Practices

I put together ideas compiled from my interviews and resources provided by my research supervisor, Mary Ann Fratia.

Teachers can start embedding music into their teaching by…

- Collecting books, songs, poems, CD’s and DVD’s of your favourite artist
- Collecting and displaying interesting instruments around the world
- Familiarizing yourself with the elements of music and do some analysis on your own
- Selecting quality music to perform and listen to
- Assessing students’ interests, musical abilities, and readiness in music-differentiating instruction
- Use picture books to engage and embed literacy development
- Thinking about how to integrate music with the other arts as well as with language, science, social studies, mathematics
- Consider taking a Music AQ course
- Checkout various music education websites (Fratia, 2015)

How to integrate music into your classroom

- Have music playing daily in your classroom
- Use music to set up particular moods in the classroom
- Use music during transitions
- Sing daily and post lyrics
- Hold regular discussions about music related topics
- Invite students, parents to bring CD’s and DVD’s into the classroom of their favourite artist or genre
- Play music as students leave or enter the classroom
- Introduce a new unit or topic with relevant music (Grade 4- Medieval Times)
- Use music as a type of energizer in a three-part lesson (minds on)
- Integrate with other subjects and with other art forms
• Teach songs from other cultures
• Use music to celebrate Black History Month, Asian Heritage Month, Chinese New Year, important dates from other cultures and religious celebrations
• Use music to signal class events (lunch, recess)
• Feature a Canadian composer or musician of the month (Fratia, 2015)

Limitations

The primary limitations in this study are that I am not able to interview students and I was only able to receive information from two teachers and scholarly research. If I had the opportunity to interview students, I may have had different insights to share. Also, there is a lack of research in Canada on urban schools. I had to abide by the time given, which was approximately six to eight months by the University of Toronto. Another limitation is the location of the urban schools that my interview participants worked at in Peel, which had mainly two parents’ income; oppose to some urban schools located in Scarborough that have mainly one parent income.

Areas of Further Study

Upon completion of my Masters of Teaching Research Project, I feel that there is much research done on the benefits of music, but limited research on the benefits of music specifically in the classroom setting. My study contributed to the benefits of music integration across the curriculum in urban schools to improve motivation and engagement. A lack of research was provided on the effects of music on students ‘academic achievement. However, my participants have observed a higher level of achievement in students, when music is integrated. Most
importantly, students’ response to the integration of music is left undiscovered. I am confident that my study was able to address some of these issues.

As a new highly motivated teacher, I am honored to try some of these strategies, tools, and resources I have learned through my professors, my research supervisor, and my research participants and embed them in my classroom teaching. I have observed music being integrated across the curriculum in a number of urban schools in Toronto and I have implemented music integration in my practicum schools. I had positive experiences and have seen great outcomes with my students.

For further study, I feel there needs to be more research done on students’ perceived impact of music integration in urban schools and how music integration can help enhance and support higher academic achievement. As well there is a need for more research on intensive music programs and programs where music plays a significant part in the school day. This can be compared to the public school model where music is offered couple times a week. Research can also be done on teachers that have training in music compared to teachers with no previous experience.

I believe our students’ voices should be heard and teachers need to plan lessons that are engaging and culturally relevant for their students. As educators, we are constantly learning and looking for new ideas and strategies to help our students succeed. We attend professional development workshops and additional qualification courses to enhance our knowledge. Music is an excellent subject to immerse in urban schools. “If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music.” (Albert Einstein)
Conclusion

Teachers should integrate music and the arts into their classroom because it develops the child’s cognitive, psychomotor and effective domains of the brain (Fratia, 2015). Studies show a high correlation between students who have studied the arts, integrated the arts and academic success (Fratia, 2015). It gives all students a ‘voice’ and different ways of processing and understanding information (Fratia, 2015). Also, students learn by doing and creating the arts, because music is engaging and motivating the learning needed to succeed. It engages more senses, it engages all eight multiple intelligences (MI) and often uses higher order thinking skills (Fratia, 2015). Music allows for differentiated instruction (DI) in content, process and product (Fratia, 2015). The more senses and learning systems involved, the more effective, deeper and long lasting the learning will be (Fratia, 2015). Music is a catalyst to enable exploration of the creative process and critical thinking skills, which are highly valued for the 21st century learners and workers (Fratia, 2015). Music provides great understanding across different cultures and customs, time periods and ages; it develops multi-literacies; print literacy, critical literacy, media literacy, visual literacy, and kinaesthetic literacy (physical literacy), integrates naturally with mathematics and offers teachers a wide variety to access and evaluate (Fratia, 2015).

I believe music is a part of life. It is all around us. We hear it every day in schools, stores, in the car, and on television. In every school in Canada, the national anthem is played every day, and students are encouraged to sing along. Students listen to, talk about, and relate to music daily. We cannot escape music because it is a part of every culture. We communicate through music by expressing ourselves in a creative way. This research paper is about exposing our students to new things which allow them to express themselves creatively, and emotionally. Students are provided with creative opportunities when music is integrated across curricula in
urban schools. They are able to bring their own cultures and personal choices into the classroom. We cannot expect students to leave their culture outside the classroom doors. Their culture is a part of their identity, and celebrating and embracing it can be a strong foundation for building inclusive and respectful environment. Music transcends across language barriers, and can help motivate and engage students academically to succeed in urban schools.
References


APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Interview

Date: ______________________

Dear ______________________

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching candidate. I am studying music integration across curriculum in urban schools for the Masters of Teaching for the purposes of investigating an educational topic as a major assignment for our program. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

I am writing a report on this study as a requirement of the Master of Teaching Program. My course instructor who is providing support for the process this year is Dr. Mary Lynn Tessaro. My research supervisor is Mary Ann Fratia. The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 40 minute interview that will be tape-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you. I can conduct the interview at your office or workplace, in a public place, or anywhere else that you might prefer.
The contents of this interview will be used for my assignment, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific questions. I will destroy the tape recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher name: ___________________
Phone number: _________________ Email: ___________________
Instructor’s Name: ____________________________ Email: _______________________
Research Supervisor’s Name: ____________________________ Email: _______________________
Phone #: __________________ Email: ___________________
Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Eleanor Pinney and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature: ________________________________
Name (printed): ________________________________
Date: ________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. How long have you been teaching in an urban school?

2. What are some challenges you face as a teacher in an urban school?

3. What inspired you to start using music as a teaching tool?

4. How long have you been integrating music across curriculum areas?

5. In your opinion, what is the importance of the integration of music pedagogy in your classroom?

6. What is your music background?

7. What instructional strategies do you use in your classroom when using music activities?

8. Can you give me an example of a lesson in which you used cross curricular music integration?

9. What are some of the challenges you face while using music in your classroom as a responsive pedagogy?

10. What support (other teachers, administration, or community) do you have in the school for planning lessons in music?

11. Do you assess music expectations as well as well as other subject expectations?

12. How do you evaluate your students when integrating music across curricula?

13. What perceived impact does music have on student engagement, motivation, and achievement?