

THE VULNERABILITY OF URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ARTS PROGRAMS: A  
CASE STUDY

By

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## ABSTRACT

### THE VULNERABILITY OF URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ARTS PROGRAMS: A CASE STUDY

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In the post-NCLB accountability era, researchers have found consistent evidence of curriculum narrowing in school districts across the country. While macro-level studies have examined the redirection of instructional time and resources toward tested subjects (e.g., mathematics and reading) and have shown cuts to school arts programs, little research has focused on how school districts decide to make arts instruction cuts. With the intent of improving our understanding of cuts to elementary arts programs, the purpose of this research was to investigate how one urban school (Lansing School District in Lansing, Michigan) eliminated its elementary arts specialists. Research questions were: (a) What policy conditions enabled the Lansing School District's decision to cut its elementary arts specialists? (b) How did the decision-making process unfold? (c) How do people involved with the decision describe the subsequent impacts of the cuts?

This instrumental case study drew on policy analysis to investigate how macro-level policy conditions interact with micro-level decision-making processes to cause arts education policy changes. Data sources included 18 interviews with former Lansing School District teachers, current employees, and community arts provider representatives, as well as related documents and researcher memos. Data were collected over the course of six months. After interviews were coded emergently for themes, I used the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993) to organize findings by research question. Trustworthiness was

enhanced through researcher reflexivity, collection of multiple data sources, prolonged engagement with the research site, participant member checks, and peer review of analysis.

Findings showed that a confluence of macro- and micro-level policy conditions enabled the cuts. Conditions included declining enrollment and budget problems spurred by school choice laws and other factors, faltering school achievement performance, and a negative perception of elementary arts teachers and subject areas. The elementary arts programs had also been weakened through teacher layoffs, permissive teacher certification/assignment policies, poor oversight, and lapsed grant funding. Analysis showed that the decision-making process was characterized by rival coalitions whose membership was defined by belief systems. These coalitions engaged in framing/imaging tactics, policy-oriented learning, “devil shift” blaming, and coordination to advance their agendas. Elementary arts teachers were likely weakened by a diversity of coalition membership and a lack of a parental/community coalition. I also found that when a community arts provider coalition surfaced after the cuts were announced, its influence was hindered by internal disagreements.

Finally, analysis suggested that in the wake of the cuts to specialist positions, elementary students in Lansing have received inconsistent arts education experiences. Because of classroom teachers’ lack of efficacy and ability, loss of daily planning time, and the inconsistent visits from community arts groups and small contingent of arts coordinators employed by the district, little or no curricular arts education is occurring for students in grades kindergarten through sixth grade. Based on the findings, I offer critical reflection on a number of topics and offer general recommendations as well as implications for researchers.

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*For our little family.*

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In March of 2013, the Lansing School District (LSD) in Lansing, Michigan reached a decision with its teachers union on a five-year contract. The district had been faced with a large budget deficit, and closing the gap necessitated tough decisions. Over 80 FTEs were cut, including the entire elementary art, music, and physical education teaching staff. The cuts to elementary visual art and music amounted to 27 teaching positions. With the “specials” teachers gone, the responsibility for elementary arts and physical education would now fall on the classroom teachers. This controversial move resulted from a stark choice for teachers in the union: all teachers could either accept a 15% pay cut over three years, or could agree to give up their daily planning time and accept the new teaching responsibilities. In the end, over 80% of union members voted in favor of the latter option.

The decision initiated a public relations scramble, with the local and national arts communities decrying the decision and the district countering that the arts programs had not been cut, merely redesigned. Early accounts suggested the arts would now be contracted out to “community artists,” which caught local arts organizations off guard (Wells, 2013). Without notice to these arts groups, Lansing School District’s Superintendent, Dr. Yvonne Caamal Canul, suggested a coordinated plan: “We kind of wanted to redesign the arts, music, and P.E. program to bring in community expertise. There are relationships with Wharton [Center], Michigan State University and the arts community which is very vibrant here in Lansing” (Li, 2013). A memo from the Superintendent to staff from the same time echoed this purported partnership: “The district ... will begin redesigning our arts and physical education programming efforts in grades K–5 so that there are high levels of inclusivity with the community” (Monday Morning Memo, March 25, 2013). However, the district’s decision spurred local arts

organizations to close ranks and withhold services in an attempt to leverage a return of the traditional elementary arts programs. Michigan State University issued a statement against the move, and within days, the story had been picked up by national arts organizations and education blogs (Ravitch, 2013).

The district rhetoric that followed the decision to cut instruction by specialists was especially interesting. Rather than a grim message acknowledging that an unfortunate decision was made to remedy an alarming fiscal situation, administrators painted an optimistic picture. In a news story soon after the decision was made, district spokesperson Bob Kolt noted, “It was an opportunity to reshape and enhance the arts” (Wells, 2013). In another new report, the same spokesperson said, “[Elementary arts and PE] will not be replaced, it will just be a better product and learning opportunity” (Wittrock, 2013). Another quotation from the district spokesperson reiterated this “long-awaited improvement” rhetoric: “What we’re doing is very exciting — there’s not a model that we’re looking at ... Parents weren’t happy with the system the way it was. We’re going to work to make ours better. We’re going to focus to create a quality program that creates value” (Kolt in Ross, 2013).

Over the following summer, the district hired seven consultants (from the pool of teachers who had been laid off) to create lesson plans and give guidance to the classroom teachers who would now teach arts and physical education. Internal documents (meeting agendas and minutes) track the development of this new instructional department. A review of meeting agendas from June and July 2013 show that the new staffers are first referred to as “program specialists,” then “coordinators,” and finally “consultants.” A June 10<sup>th</sup> planning meeting agenda includes the bullet point, “Name the group.” From a review of these documents, one can see the new elementary arts program coming together in real time, as staff negotiated and discussed

priorities, workflow, and communications. A final bullet point from the June 10<sup>th</sup> agenda reads: “How can we resell the program to the Arts community?”

At first glance, this may seem to be a rather unexceptional instance. After all, curricular/personnel cuts in urban areas are not new or exceptional. As Roza (2012) suggested, “It is an annual ritual in many urban school districts these days: figuring out where to nip and tuck the budget and how to spread the pain” (p. 54). This also is not the only recent example of cuts to arts specialist positions in urban areas. High-profile cases of proposed or executed cuts include districts in Buffalo (Kingston, 2014), Milwaukee (Miner, 2011; Trafi-Prats & Woywod, 2013), and Los Angeles (Plummer, 2014). The Center for Arts Education (2013) reported an 18% reduction in certified arts teachers at the middle school level in New York City between 2004 and 2012. Contemporary discourse in arts advocacy circles almost assumes a place on the proverbial chopping block, and the tenuous status of the arts in schools reaches back to the 1980s-1990s battles over what would be considered a core subject (Elpus, 2013; Ravitch, 1995), and even back to the slow acceptance of the first school music programs in Boston (Mark & Madura, 2014).

As an instrumental case study, however, the Lansing School District’s (LSD) decision provides a fascinating example of how a confluence of factors can cause vulnerability for urban elementary school arts programs. Studying the Lansing School District can illuminate issues and provide some answers to questions that plague many urban school districts. These questions are both timely in the sense that they reference recent policy developments, and timeless in the sense that they represent persistent issues of justice, equity, and stakeholder values.

In this chapter, I first briefly discuss how studying a policy development like the one in LSD raises important issues and questions. I offer only brief introductions here, but will review literature on these topics extensively in Chapter Two.

### **Equity and Opportunity in Urban Schools**

Although issues of equity in schooling exist in all kinds of communities, urban centers<sup>1</sup> have long been sites of intense debates about resources and opportunities (Kozol, 1991, 2005). As Fitzpatrick (2011) notes, the majority of schools in America are in large or midsize cities or accompanying urban fringe areas, and these schools serve more than two thirds of all public school students in the United States. On average, urban schools are more likely to serve low income students (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), and a variety of stakeholders at local and national levels have long debated the appropriate role of school systems in dealing with poverty (Lipman, 2004). Some critics have noted that even equalizing urban per pupil spending with that of suburban districts (or in certain cases, exceeding suburban levels) is not sufficient to facilitate satisfactory outcomes amidst more systemic community issues (Lipman, 2004; Kozol, 2005). Others have criticized aggressively what they see as low expectations and bureaucratic waste in urban public schools and have responded with market-based reforms (Carlson, 1993; Ravitch, 2013b). With more and more Americans living in urban areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), the attention demanded by equity issues is not likely to subside.

Some scholars have even suggested that equity is such an important topic in urban schooling as to be used as a kind of rhetorical device. Christenson (2007) suggested that top-down school reforms often co-opt the language of social justice-focused programs such as after

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<sup>1</sup> Urban refers to densely populated areas, and the US Census Bureau recognizes both “urban centers” (over 50,000 people) and “urbanized areas” (between 2,500 and 50,000) (US Census Bureau, 2012).



school and community center activities for at-risk youth. In this sense, efforts to raise stakes for standardized testing outcomes—a recent focus of reformers—may be framed as ways to remedy historical disenfranchisement (Christenson, 2007). Hursh (2008) further suggests that recent accountability systems can be explained by situating efforts to close the achievement gap within dominant neoliberal frameworks. In sum, the persistent themes of equity and social justice in urban schooling can be seen as a form of currency.

Urban schools have been ground zero for the most contentious school reform efforts including school vouchers, charter schools, and school choice programs (Lipman, 2004). In 2011-2012, while 24% of traditional public schools were urban, the majority of charter schools (55%) were located in cities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). A narrative of equity and access is at the heart of many of the debates over these issues. Some advocates of vouchers and school choice suggest that these reforms give urban families options and help to level the playing field (Nathan, 1998). Opponents counter that school choice policies exacerbate funding problems in urban public schools (Arsen & Ni, 2012; Ni & Arsen, 2011) by promoting “sustained outflows of students and revenue from districts charged with educating the highest-need children” (Arsen, 2013, n.p.). Questions over charter school quality are complex and far from definitive. Though some charters have demonstrated improvement in terms of student test scores, charters have not, on the whole, been shown to outperform their public school counterparts (Center for Research on Education Outcomes, 2009, 2013).

Though there are technical definitions for how the government classifies urbanicity, it is also clear that the term “urban” has both nuance and a variety of social dimensions. In terms of nuance, there are clear differences between an urban center such as the newly-urban Grand Island, Nebraska (2010 population 50,400) and the New York-Newark area (2010 population

18,351,295) (US Census Bureau, 2010). The density (persons per square mile) also differs significantly. Additionally, there are complicated sociopolitical dimensions to the term “urban,” including the conflicting notions of urban centers as places of sophistication/culture versus decay/danger (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007). Scholars note that connotations of urban schooling are often negative (Boutte, 2012; Watson, Charner-Laird, Kirkpatrick, Szczesiul, & Gordon, 2006). Boutte (2012) suggests:

Sociopolitically, the term *urban* is frequently codified to refer to students of color who are often unruly, poor, and lack academic skills ... The nature of existing power relationships between White people and people of color in the United States is inherently signified in the term urban. Whether referred to as “urban,” “inner-city,” or other supposedly euphemistic terminology, connotations of “disadvantaged” and “deficit” are suggested (p. 520).

Schmidt (2011) concurs, noting that, “To qualify an educational enterprise as *urban* is not an endeavor without perils, as the urban exists within a complex and at times severely biased set of perceptions” (p. 1). In discourse about urban spaces, scholars such as Gaztambide-Fernandez (2011) encourage starting with the materialist definition of urban (i.e., population density), but moving on to considerations of these deeper sociological/cultural meanings.

Recent legal developments have demonstrated that urban schools also are sites of debates over equity of opportunity. For example, defendants in *Vergara v. State of California* successfully sued the state of California over employment statutes (e.g., tenure rules, dismissal rules) they claimed caused inadequate teaching quality for students in five districts. The named plaintiff was a student in Los Angeles Unified School District (Fensterwald, 2014). The trial brought to the fore research showing that teachers in urban schools tend to be less qualified and

less effective according to value-added models (Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002), while other scholars countered that teachers account for little of the variance in student test scores, and VAMs may unduly penalize teachers of high-poverty students (Raudenbush, 2013). In a second lawsuit, parents in Pennsylvania sued the state for not providing an adequate education for their children (Graham, 2014). A third major development has come in the form of threatened action from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. In one recent letter, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan sent a letter to states and districts warning that the office would investigate instances of unequal access to educational resources (e.g., advanced courses, arts courses) (Klein, 2014). Another letter warned that states must demonstrate equal access to high-quality teachers for poor and minority children (Rich, 2014).

### **Magnet Arts Education Programs**

While many urban districts maintain arts programs that match the sequential arts offerings present at rural and suburban districts, division of urban districts into magnet schools has changed the delivery of arts instruction (Goldring & Smrekar, 1999). Magnet schools first were accepted as a means of racial desegregation in 1975, and recent estimates suggest an overwhelming prevalence of magnets—including arts magnets—in urban districts nationwide (Goldring & Smrekar, 1999). Around 50% of large urban districts include magnet schools in their desegregation plans, while only around 10% of suburban districts do the same (Goldring & Smrekar, 1999).

The existence of arts magnet schools can lead to an ironic phenomenon: inequity within urban districts (or within school buildings) that mirror general imbalances between many suburban and urban locales (Karpinski, 2006; Wilson, 2001). Evidence for this tracking is mixed, however, with analyses of large data sets demonstrating nuanced results for racial tracking in

magnet schools (Davis, 2014). Magnet programs are supported by federal categorical grants such as the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP), which can improve funding for certain schools by effectively bypassing local funding constraints (Goldring & Smrekar, 1999). In fact, LSD received almost \$4 million in September 2013 to develop “STEAM” magnet schools: schools that integrate the arts (A) into science, technology, engineering, and math programs (STEM) (Smith, 2013).

Milwaukee presents a representative story of the arts magnet narrative. The city started using arts magnets in its 1970s desegregation plan and was eventually singled out as an example of excellence for the use of such schools (Miner, 2011). The magnet metaphor is apt, as the district intended to draw students from the suburbs with these specialized programs (Miner, 2011). But in 2011, Milwaukee Public Schools faced drastic cuts of over \$80 million and “art, music, and phys-ed teachers became an endangered species” (Miner, 2011, p. 4). Several years later, Milwaukee schools are restoring arts positions across the district in an effort to boost school attendance (Toner, 2014). In sum, the arts often take on fascinating significance in urban districts—both as magnets to attract new students, and as one of the first subjects to be cut (Trafi-Prats & Woywod, 2013).

### **The Effects of the Accountability Era on Music Curricula**

Cuts such as the ones in LSD bring up issues related to how the accountability era has affected school curricula. Though definitions of school accountability can differ (Thompson-Shriver, 2009), I operationalize “era of accountability” to mean the post-NCLB era of school reform that includes accountability measures focusing on schools (e.g., “adequate yearly progress,” school report cards) and teachers (e.g., high-stakes teacher evaluation procedures, tying teacher effectiveness to standardized test scores, erosion of teacher tenure), as exacerbated

most recently by the federal “Race to the Top” program (White House Press Office, n.d.). Although accountability measures have existed in different forms for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, LaVigne and Good (2013) note that the post-NCLB “need to document progress in education has had a lasting effect,” calling our current situation “an accountability addiction” (p. 1).

Although music was designated as a core subject under *Goals 2000* and *No Child Left Behind*, it has still been marginalized because it is not a tested subject (Elpus, 2013; Koza, 2010). Since NCLB only mandates tests in math and reading in grades 3-8 (and less frequently in science) (United States Department of Education, n.d.), other subjects have been ignored in comparison. Numerous studies confirm not only that curriculum has been narrowed, but that this narrowing effect is felt disproportionately by high-poverty and high-minority groups. This narrowing includes less class time for the arts, fewer class offerings in the arts, and efforts to include tested-subject content in arts classes (see Chapter Two for review of this literature). In sum, while the standards-era core status for the arts inspired adoption of state standards and widespread optimism, features of NCLB meant that the arts were still largely considered to be “worth less” (Koza, 2010).

### **Specialists vs. Generalists: Teacher Certification**

When a district like LSD moves to include instruction in the arts by elementary classroom teachers (generalists) in place of instruction by certified arts teachers (specialists), it raises persistent questions about teacher qualifications. What does it mean to be qualified to teach a subject? What does it mean to be certified to teach a subject? Are the two synonymous? The NCLB language required that all teachers of core subjects meet qualification requirements by 2005-2006 in their assigned areas, defined as: (a) having a bachelor’s degree in the subject,

(b) have full/continuing state certification, and (c) have demonstrated subject-matter competency (often as assessed by a teacher certification exam) (Education Commission of the States, 2014). Until the “highly qualified” provisions in the *No Child Left Behind* act were enacted, certification was determined locally and differed from state to state. This previous arrangement meant that educators could teach “out of field” and/or obtain emergency/provisional certification (Education Commission of the States, 2014). Not surprisingly, there are correlations between teaching out of field and school district poverty level (Ingersoll, 2005).

Recent national statistics indicate that 91% of elementary school music classes and 84% of visual arts courses are taught by certified arts teachers (Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012). These statistics do not necessarily tell a complete story because they are not disaggregated. Even though the majority of students are taught by “certified” teachers, it is unclear whether these teachers are specialists or generalists with an “all subjects” certification. Byo (1999) reports 1995 statistics suggesting that 70% of elementary school music courses were taught by specialists alone, 22% by a combination of specialists and generalists, and 8% by generalists alone.

Forty-two states have some sort of arts certification language in place and specify the requirements (credit hours or alternative certification routes), and six states include no language about arts teacher certification (Arts Education Partnership, 2014). The difference in preparation is not small: elementary teachers certified to teach arts subjects generally take one or two courses, which pales in comparison to certified arts teachers whose academic major in college involve (on average) over 100 credit hours of coursework in the art form (Parsad & Spiegelman, 2012).

Certification rules can be changed by altering a state’s administrative code, often under the control of a state’s board of education or state Superintendent. A recent case from Ohio

demonstrates the ease with which an administrative code change can affect district staffing options. In early November 2014, proposed changes to Ohio's administrative code (chapter 3301-35.4) would eliminate provisions that expressly require districts to provide specialists. Specifically, this includes elementary art, music, and physical education teachers as well as school nurses, librarians, counselors, and social workers (Yutzey, 2014). New language in the administrative code would more broadly define "educational services personnel," which critics see as an invitation to cut specialists' positions (Candisky, 2014; Yutzey, 2014).

Certification guidelines for elementary teachers often are less straightforward than for secondary (6-12) teachers. While secondary teachers often are certified in a single subject, elementary teachers may be certified to teach "all subjects" if students spend the majority of their day in a self-contained classroom with a single educator. In the case of a state like the one in which LSD operates, some elementary teachers are certified to teach all core subjects based on coursework in their teacher preparation program and on subject matter tests (Michigan Department of Education, 2014). While such broad certification provides flexibility for states and districts, it also invites potential problems. Research on generalists teaching music and art suggests that they often do so without confidence, passion, or integrity (Byo, 1999, 2000; Colwell, 2008; Oreck, 2004). In fact, some research suggests they rarely include arts instruction in their elementary classrooms except in instances of holiday celebrations and other special events (Bresler, 1994; LaJevic, 2013; Stake, Bresler, & Mabry 1991). As Eisner (1999) suggests, administrators who do not employ specialists may be expecting classroom teachers "to teach what they do not know and often do not love" (p. 19).

## **Changing Definitions of Arts Education**

Parallel to the changes in who provides school arts education (generalists instead of specialists), there have been documented changes in the “what” of arts curricula. Two related movements—arts integration and STEAM—serve as exemplars of the changing definitions of what constitutes arts education. Arts integration refers to the practice of combining an art form with another core content area. STEAM refers to the movement to include the arts in the federally-sponsored effort to develop more graduates in STEM fields—that is science, technology, engineering, and math (Rhode Island School of Design, 2014; Ryan, 2014). Specific definitions of these terms differ greatly and often do not match what happens in schools where such integration is attempted (Chapman, 2005). While prominent sources such as the Kennedy Center (n.d.) define arts integration as a supplement to sequential arts instruction taught by certified arts teachers, some schools that feature arts integration have arrangements similar to LSD’s curriculum (a handful of arts consultants offering assistance to generalists). Chapman (2005) also points out that most elementary school schedules guarantee that generalists and arts specialists cannot plan integration lessons collaboratively.

Arts integration and STEAM programs also represent a shifting significance to arts education from a stand-alone subject area to a means of improvement for other outcomes. Arts integration often is trumpeted as a means to improving test score performance by federal groups (President’s Committee on Arts and Humanities, 2011), and there is federal money available to set up STEAM magnet schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The arts also are seen as a method of “turning around” failing schools in high-poverty areas. In this sense, they are seen as a means to ends such as improving attendance, parent engagement, and student motivation (President’s Committee on Arts and Humanities, 2014). Increasingly, one can see the



displacement of sequential arts instruction in favor of integration. As an example, even though the Los Angeles Unified School District was able recently to raise millions from property taxes, the money will go toward hiring 100 new arts integration teachers, while elementary instrumental music teachers in the district will now each travel to 10 schools, and planned cuts will reduce courses from year-long to semester-long (Plummer, 2014).

Bresler (1995) theorizes about the continuum of arts integration. She posits that there are four kinds of integration: subservient, affective, social integration, and co-equal. In subservient integration—which she notes is most common—the arts are used as decoration but lack integrity. Affective integration involves exposure to the arts as a means of tapping into student feelings (e.g., playing music and asking students to write about how they feel). Social integration means using the arts for purposes of community building, such as when a school puts on a play for parents or features music from different cultural backgrounds. Finally, co-equal integration matches the Kennedy Center’s (n.d.) definition: rigorous, sequential objectives are equally pursued in both the art form and the core content area. Snyder (2001) offered a related framework of integration, recognizing the three modes of connection (one subject area in service of another), correlation (two areas sharing materials/activities), and integration (each subject pursuing its own theme but in tandem). Most recent research on the implementation of arts integration finds that co-equal integration is rare and that integration is often superficial (LaJevic, 2013; Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006).

Decisions like the one in LSD also bring the relationship between community arts providers and urban school districts to the fore. As mentioned, district officials from LSD announced shortly after the vote to cut elementary arts specialists’ positions that they would involve community arts organizations in their new plans. While LSD ultimately was not

successful in doing so, urban districts' practice of drawing upon community arts partnerships/resources is well founded. Big cities such as Chicago (Chicago Public Schools, 2013) and New York (New York City Department of Education, 2008) stress the importance of community arts providers and cultural institutions in their arts education plans/blueprints. The distinction, however, is that such arts education plans stress that community arts providers should only supplement the work of certified arts specialists, a viewpoint echoed in position papers from the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education (2012, 2014).

Numerous authors have suggested that, when school districts partner with community arts providers and visiting artists, student outcomes are positive (Costello, 1995; Heath & Roach, 1999; Krensky, 2001; Weitz, 1996). Other scholars have warned, however, that when school arts education programs rely too heavily on outside groups, economic problems or accountability pressures can create possibilities for wholesale outsourcing. Vasquez Heilig, Cole, and Aguilar (2010) discuss how a provision in Texas law HB. 3 established a pilot program for students in Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio "to satisfy their fine arts requirement through an outside organization or program if it was not provided within their school district" (Vasquez Heilig, Cole, & Aguilar, 2010). Clearly, differences exist in how community arts providers interact with, complement, or fully replace public school arts programs (Robinson, 1998).

One can find an interesting example of emphasis on curricular arts instruction colliding with outside programming in comments made by LSD's Superintendent. In September 2013, the John Lennon Educational Tour Bus visited Lansing's Everett High School for a community forum on the elementary arts decision in LSD. In her opening remarks, the Superintendent stressed her love for the arts and talked about cultural experiences from her youth—all of which centered on enrichment outside of school (see Yvonne Caamal Canul speech transcript in

appendix G). Such enrichment opportunities, however, are not likely to be available to many of the economically disadvantaged youth in LSD. In a survey of 1,583 inner city middle school students, the vast majority did not participate in any after school events or lessons (Shann, 2001). As Holloway and Krensky (2001) summarize, “The consequences of cuts and gaps in arts curricula in urban schools are a progressive degeneration of challenging arts instruction to students who can least afford opportunities in the private sector or after school” (p. 354).

### **School Funding Structures**

School funding structures are an important aspect of understanding how urban districts make determinations about budgetary cuts. While laws vary from state to state, the basic formula is the same. Most states use some kind of foundation funding, which is a minimum base allocation weighted by type of student (Roza, 2010). They also may use a modified foundation funding arrangement in which the base amount varies for every district, or they may allocate funds for staffing costs based on student enrollment (Roza, 2010). These base funds are then supplemented by “categoricals”: targeted grants at the state or federal level. When legislators seek to enact changes, they most often tie funding to these kinds of categorical in a kind of bid for local control (Roza, 2010).

Michigan, the state in which LSD operates, changed its funding structure in the mid-1990s in an effort to equalize per pupil expenditures (Roy, 2011). Under this new arrangement, the state shouldered more of the burden for school spending, with the majority of operating funds funneling through Michigan’s school aid fund that raises money through “a mix of sin and sales taxes” (Baker, 2014, p. 14). Local districts can still raise thousands of dollars per pupil through nonhomestead property taxes and “hold-harmless” millages. Funds for school facilities, however, fall solely on local districts. This provision is rare—Michigan is one of only eight states with

such a rule—and this leads to a disparity of school facility quality (MASB, 2013). Urban districts such as LSD are often characterized by aging school buildings, lack of current technology infrastructure, and vacant properties left when enrollment declines (Davis & Arsen, 2008). In sum, economically sensitive state finance policies, combined with choice/charter school policies that take per pupil funding from public schools are “interacting to create a downward spiral in the state’s urban districts” (Arsen, 2013, n.p.). This certainly seems to be the case for a district like LSD, which has lost around 4,000 students since 2008 (MI School Data, 2015). LSD also is estimated to have lost about 40% of its potential student-aged population to other private schools and other public schools in the 2014-2015 school year (Caamal Canul, 2015). A variety of forces brought about the budget deficit, and cuts to staffing were a natural choice to fill the budget gap, since staffing costs account for roughly 60-70% of any school budget (Roza, 2010).

### **Labor Laws and Politics**

Ultimately, the decision in LSD to cut the elementary arts and P.E. teachers was part of a contract negotiated between the district and the teachers union. Understanding how labor law and bargaining work is essential therefore to introducing oneself to a situation like the one in LSD. The evolution of labor law in Michigan is fairly straightforward. In 1947, the Hutchinson Act was passed to clarify how employers would work with public employee labor unions (Harty, 2014). When amended in 1965, this became known as the Public Employees Relations Act (PERA) and gave public employees the same collective bargaining rights as described in the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) (Heron, 2002).

Under the provisions of the PERA, unions and districts must bargain “in good faith over wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment” (MCL 423.215, section 15 of PERA). For a district like LSD, this practice governs the bargaining that determines contract

stipulations for teachers, bus drivers, food service workers, and other staff. While certain topics such as those listed (i.e., wages and hours) are mandatory subjects of bargaining, other subjects are classified as “permissive,” meaning they can be bargained, and some subjects such as pupil contact time required to receive full state aid are “prohibited” and cannot be bargained (Harty, 2014). These prohibited subjects can be discussed, but they are the exclusive authority of the school employer. Depending on how LSD’s decision is framed influences whether it required bargaining. A decision to cut elementary arts specialist positions is fully in the employer’s control, but the decision to cut elementary classroom teachers’ planning periods required bargaining.

Labor relations do not exist a vacuum, however. In general, and especially in the case of LSD, labor contracts are influenced by political realities (Hammer & Mazeter, 1993; Moe, 2011). The major political force to influence bargaining in LSD was the controversial “Right to Work” law passed in 2012. This law amended section 9 and 10 of the PERA to prohibit agency shop arrangements in which union participation (or a fee assessed for non-members) is a requirement of employment (Harty, 2014). This law impelled teachers unions to settle contracts before March 28, 2013 so that agency shop rules could be grandfathered in for the duration of the contract (Harty, 2014). LSD may have reacted to the pressure by passing their contract at the “eleventh hour” on March 21<sup>st</sup>, though administrators have denied the law as a reason for passing the contract.

Political pressure also may have come from a second source related to state-level efforts to overhaul failing schools. In June of 2011, Michigan’s governor created a state takeover school district and gave power to the State Superintendent or local emergency managers to place schools into the statewide district. Called the “Educational Achievement Authority” or EAA, the

system began with 15 schools with planned expansion to follow (Higgins, 2011). Schools could enter the EAA after being in the bottom 5% of schools statewide for three consecutive years (Higgins, 2011). The program has attracted scorn from critics who decry the idea of the district as undemocratic (Ravitch, 2014) and denounce the curriculum, instruction, test results, and efforts to recruit students (Eclectablog, 2014).

In March 2013, just before the decision to cut elementary arts specialists, Lansing's administrators were in a panic over proposed legislation that would have opened up its schools to being placed in the EAA (Balaskovitz, 2013). At the time, six buildings from LSD would have been likely to join the existing 15 schools (Balaskovitz, 2013). Responding to state pressure to improve its schools, LSD had reconfigured buildings in 2012, a necessary move to demonstrate an attempt at improving test scores (Inglot, 2013). While there is no reason to think the district's decision to cut arts specialists is related directly to the chance of losing control of its schools to the EAA, the example serves to demonstrate significant political pressure that LSD was under. For LSD to avoid being placed in the statewide takeover district for failing schools, it appeared to be on a course driven by a singular focus on improving its standardized test scores.

### **Summary and Reflections**

In this introductory chapter, I have attempted to frame the present study. By describing both what happened in LSD, and then relating the policy action to persistent educational issues surrounding the decision, my goal is to set the stage for the general purpose of the study. The purpose of the study is extrinsic to the research site of LSD in the sense that by studying LSD's decision in depth, one can gain insight into the topics described in this opening chapter. To describe fully the need for my specific research focus and design, one needs to understand how the research literature supports the study. In Chapter Two, I review relevant research literature on

a variety of the topics introduced in Chapter One. These include curriculum narrowing under accountability and narrowed curriculum and instruction for high-poverty, minority, and urban populations.

I also discuss literature on the complicated status of the arts as a core subject, literature on teacher certification, studies that address generalist teachers engaging in arts instruction, and literature on arts integration. I finish with studies that have looked specifically at how school districts cut or keep their arts programs intact. These final studies (Major, 2010, 2013; Schultz, 2006) are most closely related to my study, and I will discuss how my approach both mirrors and deviates from theirs.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

With the intent of improving our understanding of cuts to elementary arts programs, the purpose of this research is to investigate how one urban school district cut its elementary arts specialists. Research questions are:

1. What policy conditions enabled the Lansing School District's decision to cut its elementary arts specialists?
2. How did the decision-making process unfold?
3. How do people involved with the decision describe the subsequent impacts of the cuts?

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As I discuss briefly in Chapter One, a policy decision like the one undertaken in LSD raises a number of issues. These issues are wide ranging and include equity and opportunity in urban schools, urban arts magnet schools, the effects of accountability on school music curriculum, instruction by specialists versus generalists, changing definitions of arts education, school funding, and labor relations. In this chapter, I review research literature on these topics, and I offer summary and synthesis of each issue. In addition, I include research literature on cuts to arts specialist positions. I also demonstrate how gaps in the research literature lead to a need for the present study. This chapter does not represent an exhaustive account of all related literature, but includes the scholarship most relevant to a case study of LSD and its policy developments in elementary arts education.

Anecdotal accounts have long pointed to the ability of accountability reforms to negatively impact arts programs (Ashford, 2004; Dillon 2006). But the specific mechanisms through which these negative effects occur are worth examining. In general, a review of the literature on post-NCLB accountability reforms (and some pre-NCLB state-level accountability systems) largely support the anecdotal accounts of problematic impacts on school arts programs. In this section, I review the literature on how the standards movement of the 1980s-1990s and the high-stakes testing era of the early 2000s have affected arts education through extensive curriculum narrowing and targeted time reductions for accountability-based subgroups. I also discuss how accountability initiatives impact high-poverty and high-minority groups disproportionately. Finally, I review the complicated role of federal core status for the arts and the changing definition of arts education.



## **Curriculum Narrowing**

A number of studies have found that under *No Child Left Behind*, curriculum was narrowed to focus more on tested subjects. Since NCLB only mandates tests in math and reading in grades 3-8 (and less frequently in science) (United States Department of Education, n.d.), other subjects have been ignored by comparison. Triangulation of data sources—from national surveys, examination of national high school transcript studies, studies within states and large metropolitan areas, and small-scale qualitative studies—produces a fairly clear picture of the narrowing of the curriculum since the inception of NCLB in 2001-2002.

### **National Studies**

Pedulla, Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramos, and Miao (2003) surveyed a nationally representative group of teachers about the effects of NCLB on curricula. Respondents largely indicated that time had been reallocated in their schools toward the tested subjects of math and reading. Similar results were found in von Zastrow and Janc's (2004) study of the liberal arts in schools. Through a national study of principals, the authors found that 25% indicated having cut back on arts courses, and 33% anticipated future cuts.

A series of national studies from the Center on Education Policy (CEP) helped to provide more specifics on the nature of this time reallocation. The CEP's report from 2006 found that 71% of responding elementary schools indicated they had cut back on science, social studies, and the arts to focus more time on math and reading. Of this 71%, 20% indicated having cut back on the arts. A follow-up study from 2007 provided information on cuts in terms of time. Schools indicated that they had cut an average of 145 minutes per week across the non-tested subjects, lunch, and recess time. Furthermore, a third study from 2008 study broke down this reduction in

time by subject area. Respondents indicated that visual art and music had been cut an average of 57 minutes per week.

Two studies by Abril and Gault explore principals' attitudes toward music in the elementary (2006) and secondary (2008) school settings. Principals in these studies indicated generally strong support for music programs and rated most purposes of music classes high on a five-point Likert-type scale. They indicated in open-response questions that the biggest challenge to maintaining school music programs was high-stakes testing under NCLB. These results mirror those of Heffner (2007), who surveyed 214 district and state arts supervisors about the impact of high-stakes testing on music education in the United States since 2001. Arts supervisors indicated that high-stakes testing had negatively impacted the number and variety of music courses, funding for programs, instructional time, and student enrollment in music classes.

Some national studies have used the School and Staffing Survey (SASS) data to investigate curriculum narrowing, and results have suggested a mixed picture with regard to subject marginalization. Dee, Jacob, and Schwartz (2013) examined several waves of the School and Staffing Survey (SASS) to examine responses given by teachers regarding instructional time allotments. They found clear evidence that academic core time (their term for non-arts, health, and physical education courses) had been shifted to focus more on math and reading and less on science and social studies. However, the authors indicated no overall time change in the amount of core academic time versus "non-academic" courses. The study does not discuss the arts in particular, and it is not immediately clear what SASS questions were used to examine time allotted toward the arts.

Fitchett, Heafner, and Lambert (2014) also examined SASS data and developed a multilevel model (through Hierarchical Linear Modeling) to describe elementary social studies

marginalization. Not surprisingly, the authors found that state testing policy (i.e., whether a state tests social studies) predicted time spent on social studies instruction. Teachers who were more likely to make time for social studies instruction were assigned to later grade levels, had less students with IEPs, and reported more professional autonomy.

### **State/Large City Studies**

Jones, Jones, Hardin, and Chapman (1999) investigated educators' perceptions of teaching under a new state accountability system, titled "The New ABCs of Public Education." The researchers surveyed a stratified random sample of North Carolina elementary teachers (N = 236) regarding changes to curriculum and instruction. Around two-thirds of respondents indicated increased instructional time for reading/writing, and 56% indicated increased math instruction. The mean number of minutes spent daily in various subject areas ranged from 401 minutes in reading to 46 minutes in music and 44 minutes in visual art.

Jacob (2005) examined the effects of a pre-NCLB accountability program in Chicago Public Schools during the 1996-1997 school year. He used a different estimation strategy than in the aforementioned studies, in that he studied achievement scores on high-stakes tests and low-stakes tests (i.e., those that did not count for accountability purposes). He found clear evidence that scores on the high-stakes tests in math and reading were much higher than tests of social studies and science knowledge. Jacob suggested that it was likely that teachers had reallocated their time and effort away from non-tested subjects. No specific mention is made of the arts in this study, but it stands to reason that they were similarly marginalized.

Hamilton et al. (2007) present data on NCLB effects in three states: Georgia, California, and Pennsylvania. They find that curricula were narrowed toward tested subjects, but that states differed significantly in their specific responses. Respondents from Pennsylvania, for example,

indicated that time spent on the arts stayed roughly the same, while California indicated larger cuts. The researchers also present data from frustrated parents who note that school has been made less enjoyable for their students because of NCLB. While other state surveys present some slightly different findings, they tend to find the same evidence of narrowing. Stecher, Barron, Chun, and Ross (2000) find evidence of narrowing under a pre-NCLB system in Washington State, and VanFossen (2005) describes the marginalization of social studies in Indiana.

There also are some state-specific studies that have investigated the effects of NCLB on music programs. For example, the Music for All Foundation (2004) focused on the unprecedented decline in enrollment in California's school music programs. They found evidence of large decreases in music enrollment at the elementary and secondary levels, including a 50% decrease amidst an overall 5% increase in overall student enrollment. While the authors do not offer specific causal claims, they suggest that accounts from local education officials blame a mix of budgetary cuts and accountability-based curriculum narrowing.

Gerrity (2009) surveyed 179 high school principals in Ohio about the effects of NCLB. Like Abril and Gault (2006, 2008), Gerrity found that principals indicate high support for music education programs, but acknowledge cuts. The author reports that 43% of programs have been cut back or eliminated due to the emphasis on subjects tested under NCLB. Similar results have been found in Wisconsin. Koza (2010) reports that an annual survey of Wisconsin Superintendents found that in 2006-2007, 58% of districts decreased the amount of arts course offerings. Also, 60% of Superintendents indicated that NCLB had narrowed the curriculum in their districts.

Diamond (2012) examined the links between accountability policies, curricular content, and instructional strategies in eight Chicago public schools. The study included interviews with

teachers, surveys, and classroom observations. The researcher asserts that such policies only penetrate classrooms partially, affecting content more than pedagogy. In line with numerous other studies, participant teachers suggested that testing pressures caused administrators to demand the prioritization of two tested areas: math and reading. One teacher said: “Well, our Principal says those are the two things we must do first. If we have to skip everything else—we won’t say that out loud—but if you have to skip everything else, that is fine as long as you get math and the reading done. Those are the two things that they are tested on” (p. 163).

### **Qualitative Studies**

Au (2007) performed a metasynthesis of 49 qualitative studies that had investigated the impact of high-stakes testing on instruction. To complete a metasynthesis of qualitative research involved using an approach in which a master template of codes was applied to all included studies. The author found that for studies in which testing had been reported to affect instruction, instruction had “contracted” or narrowed in 69.4% of cases. Curriculum also was largely narrowed to tested subjects and fragmented into tested bits. Au also found high amounts of teacher-centered pedagogy. The author points out that this narrowing was not universally found in the metasynthesis. In a significant minority (28.6%) of studies, subject matter was expanded and led to more curricular integration.

Mathison and Freeman (2003) undertook a year-long ethnographic field study of two elementary schools in upstate New York. The researchers sought to understand how the elementary teachers responded to pressure to prepare for standardized tests, and to investigate the interaction of the testing requirements with curricular decisions. Findings included teachers’ accounts of “front-loading” tested content in the first months of the school year at the expense of non-tested subjects. Whole days of school are structured toward a given test until the test date

passes (e.g., the ELA test in January), and then restructured toward the next upcoming tests (e.g., math and science). One participant related:

I find that I often put social studies and science on the back burner to get through the reading and the writing. And I find that I'm spending a good 2 1/2 to 3 hours a day on language arts and I'd rather not. I'd rather be able to teach every subject every day and that doesn't often happen in my class. I wish it did, but it doesn't. Right now we are under the gun, we are under pressure (p. 14).

Watanabe (2007) undertook one of the only ethnographic studies of how accountability pressures shape English language arts (ELA) curriculum and teacher priorities. Using sustained observations and interviews with 13 teachers in five middle schools in North Carolina, the researcher found that the teachers' philosophies of teaching and learning (progressive, constructivist) collided with the underlying theory of high-stakes testing (essentialism). For example, teachers desired that their students choose reading materials and understand how to write "like a real writer writes" (p. 327), but felt constrained to focus on mastery of discrete skills in preparation for a standardized, timed essay. Teachers also expressed frustration at being forced to cut collaborative projects from their curriculum.

Several studies of curriculum narrowing and decreased time for the arts have used a qualitative case study approach. Spohn (2008) interviewed six visual arts teachers about the effects of NCLB on their programs. The researcher found that respondents were frustrated at the waning support from administrators for the arts. Principals had told the arts teachers that their programs would become extra-curricular activities if math and reading test scores did not improve. The teachers also reported fewer sections of arts classes being offered. West (2012) interviewed ten music teachers in Michigan about the effects experienced when their schools did

not make adequate yearly progress (AYP). He found that the music teachers were losing students because required remediation classes for struggling students were being scheduled at the same time as their music courses.

### **Targeted Cuts for Accountability-Based Subgroups**

When schools do not make AYP under NCLB, they face a range of sanctions including mandatory school choice provisions and school turnaround/reconstitution (Lipman, 2004). As a result, accountability effects on arts programs are felt most distinctly at struggling schools/districts with high proportions of low-SES and minority students (Powers, 2003). The targeting also can be seen within school buildings, as students who are struggling in math and reading have been systematically removed from non-tested subjects.

Because NCLB specified certain proficiency targets for schools (i.e., a percentage of the school must achieve a certain test score), studies have shown that schools respond strategically and focus efforts on the students who are most likely to help the school make AYP. Booher-Jennings (2005) studied this strategic maneuvering in the Texas accountability system that became the basis for the NCLB model. She referred to the practice as “educational triage.” The author present a single case study of a school in which teachers divided kids into three groups: the *high-flyers* (those who were sure to be proficient), the *bubble kids* (those who were right on the bubble between proficient and not proficient), and the *hopeless kids* (those whose test scores in the early part of the year indicated they would likely not become proficient). She found that teachers focused their efforts almost solely on the bubble kids and ignore the high- and low-achieving students. As the spring test data approached, bubble kids were taken out of electives for extra practice in math and reading.

In a discussion of macro-level policy and case studies of individual elementary schools, Lipman (2004) reports on similar instances of this “educational triage” in Chicago public schools. She writes, “At one school, in the weeks before the test, the desks of ‘bubble kids’ (those near to passing) line the halls as the children are pulled out of their classes to spend extra time working with tutors on test preparation” (p. 43). Schools with triage practices, the researcher argues, are serving primarily low-income African-Americans and Latinos/as. Test prep activities, Lipman asserts, “widen educational inequalities by institutionalizing a narrowed curriculum and less intellectually challenging work” (p. 43). This led the author to conclude these triage practices run counter to the claims behind accountability policies, namely that such policies promote equity.

Diamond and Spillane (2004) report similar instances of “triage” in urban elementary schools in Chicago. The researchers spent time at four sites: two high-performing urban elementary schools and two low-performing “probation” schools. They found that, in the low-performing schools, staff targeted their efforts at kids who were closest to the test-passing threshold since these students could most easily help the school overcome its probationary status. As a result, the lowest-performing students in the probationary schools received less attention. In terms of subject matter, the two probationary schools had actually narrowed instruction even beyond the two tested subjects (math and reading) to focus almost solely on reading.

This practice of formally adding extra instructional time in place of electives is sometimes called double-blocking or double-dosing, and has become a strategy commonly used under NCLB (Cavanagh, 2006). Bartik and Lachowska (2014) studied the double-blocking system in a Midwestern district and found that the process may not reliably help student achievement in tested subjects. Students double-blocked in reading showed improvement when



the second period of reading used different curriculum and instructional techniques, but students in math showed no significant differences, which the authors attributed to the lack of curricular/instructional change.

Rutledge and Neal (2013) also found that data collection and reporting becomes a legitimating force for double-blocking students. The authors studied two elementary schools in which students struggling with tested subjects were automatically removed from all electives unless their parents opted for them to get art, music, and physical education. The researchers suggested that teachers/administrators felt justified in their choices because they were being “data-driven” and noted that, “the numbers speak for themselves.” The authors suggest that the technical-rational logic of identifying as “data driven” helps to legitimizes decisions about curriculum and pedagogy that might otherwise clash with personal philosophies around teaching and learning.

Policies also have been written into state law. Baker (2012) reports on a 2008 Louisiana law that ordered struggling students to be opted out of the requirements in music, arts and crafts, health, and physical education. The law Baker cites stated: “For students in grades 5–8 who have scored below the Basic level on LEAP21 [the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program] in English language arts or mathematics, the minimum time requirements in health, music, arts and crafts, or electives are suggested in lieu of required” (Louisiana Department of Education [LDE] 2008, 45).

### **Disproportionate Cuts for Minorities and Students in Poverty**

The importance of disaggregating the national/regional data on access to arts education is shown by the studies indicating disproportionate cuts for certain students. Recent reports point out that, often because schools struggling to make AYP are centralized in high-poverty areas,

curriculum narrowing and loss of opportunities are felt most acutely in these locations (Government Accountability Office, 2009; National Association of State Boards of Education, 2003; National Task Force on the Arts in Education, 2009; President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, 2011). High-poverty schools often lack the capacity to deal with accountability reforms, which can result in massive reallocation of resources toward testing. Some have termed this an "educational apartheid" (Berliner, 2009; Kozol, 2005).

In a study of trends in national education statistics from 1999-2000 to 2009-2010, Parsad and Spiegelman (2012) showed that, on average nationally, access to arts instruction is high. More than 90% of students have access to a certified music teacher, more than 80% have access to a certified visual arts teacher, and the numbers are predictably lower for theatre and dance. However, gaps in access based on socio-economic status are seen easily. While 91% of low-poverty schools have yearlong visual arts instruction, only 83% of high-poverty schools offer the same. And while 56% of low-poverty secondary schools offer five or more visual arts courses, only 20% of high-poverty schools offer the same number of visual arts courses. Other studies show that participation by high-poverty students is comparably low in Advanced Placement (AP) music courses (National Task Force on Arts in Education, 2009). There is some evidence of these disparities that has been shown in state-specific studies as well. Woodworth et al. (2007) found large gaps in access to arts education. In low-poverty schools, 45% had access to music education and 49% had access to visual arts instruction. The numbers were 20% lower in high-poverty schools for each subject area.

Some scholars have investigated whether these cuts to the arts disproportionately impact minorities. In a study of public participation in the arts released by the National Endowment for the Arts (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011), researchers found a widening gap in reported childhood arts

education experience. In 1982, 50% of African-Americans reported having childhood arts education compared to 59% for Whites. In 2009, 57% of Whites reported childhood experience while only around 26% of African-Americans reported the same.

Salvador and Allegood (2014) investigated access to music education in two large metropolitan areas. The researchers looked at schools in the Detroit vicinity and in the Washington, D.C. area and put schools into quartiles by percentage of minority enrollment. The authors found large disparities in access between the upper and lower quartiles (as based on minority enrollment percentage). In the Detroit area, schools in the lowest minority quartile had 100% access to music programs across elementary/secondary levels, but only 40-60% (depending on schooling level) of high non-white schools offered music.

### **Narrowed Pedagogical Options in Urban Schools**

Crocco and Costigan (2007) investigated the experiences of novice middle and high school teachers in New York City with respect to narrowing of curriculum and pedagogy under accountability pressures. Specifically, the authors sought to study how the narrowing contributed to beginning teachers' "perceptions about their opportunities for developing a satisfying teaching practice" (p. 514), since these perceptions might influence retention. Middle school teachers reported being upset at not being able to devote sufficient time to social studies, while high school teachers reported that the social studies curriculum was so broad as to limit pedagogy to direct instruction. Despite frustrations with narrowing of curriculum and pedagogy, many participants "seemed to be able to devise strategies for their students and themselves that kept them working in urban schools" (p. 527).

In a related study, Costigan (2013) describes personal accounts of seven New York City teachers working to pursue their preferred pedagogical approach (aesthetic, transactional,

inquiry-based) within a neoliberal framework of test-based accountability. Findings suggested that participants felt tension between the approaches that they were instructed to use in their schools' professional development (e.g., fact-based readings, drilling, reductionist analysis) and the strategies they felt their students needed (e.g., constructivist approaches, critical analysis).

In sum, it is crucial to disaggregate national/regional data on access to arts education. With accountability affecting high-poverty and high-minority schools more intensely, one misses crucial details if only looking at broad averages. As Salvador and Allegood (2014) discuss, a look at the statistics from Parsad and Spiegelman's (2012) study make the effects of NCLB on arts programs seem minimal. Even a focus on the Detroit metropolitan area average would obscure the huge gaps in access, leading the authors to argue for specific attention to poverty and minority. Elpus (2014) makes a similar point in his recent study on national music course enrollment trends. Elpus presents data from ten high school transcript studies and finds that there has been almost no change in the percentage of high school students enrolling in at least one music course (about 34% in both 1982 and 2009). But when disaggregating the data, the author finds that NCLB had negative affects on the amounts of students enrolling who were Hispanic, English language learners, and those on individual education plans (IEPs).

## **Summary**

It is important to remember that these issues have not been accidental, but have occurred by design. Even though then-Secretary of Education Rod Paige wrote an urgent letter to Superintendents urging them to use Title I monies to support arts education (Paige, 2004), NCLB was designed from a structural standpoint to focus attention on AYP-relevant subjects. As Neal and Schanzenbach (2010) demonstrate, certain children are "left behind by design" under NCLB.

I would argue, as others have (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2003; von Zastrow & Janc, 2004), that certain subjects, including the arts, are “left behind by design.”

### **The Status of the Arts in Schools: Federal Core?**

Accountability systems of the 1990s and early 2000s presented both cause for concern and reason for celebration when first introduced. Although not first included in the national education goals that President George H. W. Bush enunciated in AMERICA 2000, the arts eventually lobbied for and received official core status under Goals 2000 legislation (Elpus, 2013). Arts advocates largely were overjoyed at the development and quickly developed national standards in the arts. Optimism for equal footing for the arts was high (Elpus, 2013; Koza, 2010). Since the recognition of the arts as core, the impacts on numerous indicators—standards, enrollment, access—have been mixed. While Elpus (2013) reports some positive impacts, others have noted that the arts ended up as “secondary core,” since they were not tested for adequate yearly progress (Chapman, 2005; Vasquez Heilig, Cole, & Aguilar, 2010).

Elpus (2013) estimated the impact of core status on music education by independently pooling school-level data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 and the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002. Elpus specifically investigated the number of unique music courses that high schools offered, how many arts courses were required for graduation, and the probability that schools would enforce an arts graduation requirement. The author found generally positive impacts for schools in states that had no arts mandates (or flexible mandates) prior to Goals 2000. These states were more likely to increase the number of arts credits required for graduation and were more likely to enforce a mandate. There was no significant effect on unique courses offered.

The federal core status designation on its own had little effect on whether arts programs saw cuts in personnel or time allotted, because it tied no funding to the state's provision of arts programs (Koza, 2010). As a result, states and local school districts had no incentive to direct funding to the arts, especially as compared to directing resources to tested subjects. Scholars suggest that the existence and strength of arts programs thus is often the result only of specific school board support or of the efforts of specific teachers and administrators, which in turn is highly dependent on the local financial situation (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008; Roza, 2010). This is illustrated by a comparison of several big cities. In 2003, Denver successfully passed a 16 million dollar property tax increase and used it to fund 100 new elementary arts teachers (Ashford, 2004). In Chicago, support was pledged for elementary arts instruction, but funded at less than \$1 million across the sprawling district, resulting in almost no compliance with mandated arts requirements (Anderson, 2014).

### **Generalists, Specialists, and Teacher Certification**

Certification is an important policy condition for understanding the status of arts education in LSD and other urban school districts. As with the other issues I have discussed, this is a complex and confusing issue. As was the case with arts standards, arts teacher certification was strengthened by the “core” status push of the late 1990s (Elpus, 2013). Prominent groups called for reforms (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1992; National Art Education Association, 1999; National Endowment for the Arts, 1988), which led to broad changes in state certification policies (Zakaras & Lowell, 2008). As discussed in Chapter One, these requirements were developed further by the “highly qualified teacher” provision of NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

The arts, especially at the elementary level, have historically been taught both by certified music specialists and classroom teachers/generalists. It was especially prevalent in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for classroom teachers to devote part of their day to arts instruction under the guidance of a music/art supervisor (Annett, 1939). However, authors recently have noted that in the current age of codified arts standards and curricula, elementary classroom teacher certification requirements have not kept pace (Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer, 2009).

Moreover, some research has suggested that classroom teachers feel generally unprepared to lead arts instruction. Stake, Bresler, and Mabry (1991) offered eight case studies of elementary generalist teachers responsible for arts instruction at elementary schools spread around the United States. They found that in most contexts, the classroom teacher was attempting to integrate the arts without knowledge of the arts or assistance from a certified arts teacher. As a result, the arts content was mostly used to enhance basic skill training (e.g., memorizing the names of the presidents by singing a song). If asked to prioritize, classroom teachers generally preferred teaching visual art to music. Formal help in the form of curriculum guides and requirements to turn in students' art projects largely were ignored in the schools studied.

McCarthy Malin (1993) studied elementary generalist teachers' music instruction. Participants (N = 167) responded to a questionnaire about how they used music in their classrooms and how they felt about their abilities. Over 70% of respondents indicated that they used music in instruction, and singing was the most common musical activity. Consistent with other research, music was used most commonly to enhance special occasions rather than to develop musical skill. Participants indicated that they rarely interacted with their school's music specialist. The researcher found grade level differences, with teachers of lower grades being

more likely to engage in frequent music instruction. The participants in this study were not, as in the case of LSD, teaching music in the absence of music specialists. The findings, therefore, are of interest but not directly comparable to contexts in which generalists are solely responsible for instruction.

Byo (1999, 2000) took a slightly different approach than other researchers by comparing elementary generalists' and music specialists' perceived ability to implement the national standards in their music instruction. Byo sent surveys to music teachers and fourth-grade classroom teachers in Florida to ask about the feasibility of covering the national standards, including questions on need time, resources, and personal abilities. Findings suggested that music specialists were more amenable to covering the standards, and indicated that they found such instruction to be more feasible than the generalists. As a caveat, this study did not necessarily survey generalist teachers who were responsible for any music instruction, but merely asked about efficacy for hypothetical situations.

Several researchers have investigated teachers' beliefs about using the arts in their teaching. Oreck (2004) surveyed 423 K-12 teachers with his 48-item "Teaching with the Arts" questionnaire (Oreck, 2000) and sought to understand teachers' attitudes toward teaching with the arts and to explain variance in reported attitudes. Echoing other research, the participants largely indicated that, while they had positive attitudes toward the arts, they rarely used them in their teaching. A regression analysis showed that self-efficacy for artistic and creative ability predicted arts use more than any other factor. Constraints on using the arts included pressures to teach mandated and tested curriculum, with one teacher indicating that his use of improvisational theatre games came only after a stressful state testing period had passed. In Oreck's (2006) follow-up study, the author interviewed six of the teachers from his 2004 research to delve more



deeply into how these educators “see and define art and how *they* articulate the factors that influence their current use of the arts in teaching” (p. 5). The participants’ most cited rationale for including the arts in instruction was recognition of a diversity of learning styles among students. The teachers also discussed the importance of professional development workshops with artists.

Garvis (2013) investigated the self-efficacy of novice generalist teachers to teach music as compared to math and English. Participants were 201 beginning teachers (years 1, 2, or 3) of students ages 9-14 in Queensland, Australia. In Queensland, the author explains, generalist teachers are almost solely responsible for music instruction. Results of the survey suggested that beginning teachers report much lower overall self-efficacy for teaching music (mean of 3.441 on a 9 point scale) as compared to English (mean of 7.065) and math (mean of 7.022). Perhaps most interesting is the interaction between years taught and self-efficacy. As teachers increased in experience, their self-efficacy for math and English increased, and their self-efficacy for teaching music decreased.

Wiggins and Wiggins (2008) investigated music instruction by generalists in an unnamed country in which few music specialists are employed. Surveys were sent to 200 schools, and the researchers visited 17 schools to observe teaching and interview teachers and administrators. The goal of the research was to describe in depth the nature of the generalists’ music instruction. The researchers reported that many teachers who were innovative and student-centered when teaching other subjects changed into didactic, teacher-centered models when trying to teach music. Generalist teachers largely relied on one or two individuals in each school building who could lead music instruction in large-group (e.g., full school assemblies). The researchers also noted that while survey responses demonstrated confidence and comfort teaching music,

interviews hinted at the opposite: “In one school, where the principal was the music specialist, the principal told us that all of his teachers teach music to their students at least two times a week. As soon as he left the staff room, the teachers told us this was not really true, that they did the best they could, which they said was not much” (p. 18).

Garvis and Pendergast (2012) use a story constellation approach to describe the experiences of a primary teacher and his principal at a school in Australia. In the narrative informed case study, the researchers present the dual stories of the generalist teacher, Steven, who is responsible for music instruction, and of the principal at Steven’s school, Elizabeth. The findings are presented through long narratives grouped by theme. Steven reports that while he is somewhat comfortable teaching visual arts, he rarely teaches music because of his inadequate teacher prep curriculum. Both Steven and Elizabeth also talk about the impact of standardized testing reforms for literacy and numeracy on generalists’ music instruction. The principal, Elizabeth, notes: “I think at the moment, what is happening on the national scene is very much driven by government agenda, we have these levels of skills and if you’re not going to get that then sack the principal and teachers won’t receive bonuses. It’s that whole accountability” (p. 117).

### **Changing Definitions of Arts Education**

It also seems to be the case that changes to sequential arts instruction in schools are affected by the overwhelming accountability emphasis on math and reading test scores. Two related movements—arts integration and STEAM—serve as exemplars of how arts can often be paid lip service but become subsumed or subservient to these tested subjects. Arts integration refers to the practice of combining an art form with another core content area. STEAM refers to the movement to include the arts in the federally-sponsored effort to develop more graduates in

STEM fields—that is science, technology, engineering, and math (Rhode Island School of Design, 2014; Ryan, 2014). Specific definitions of these terms differ greatly (LaJevic, 2013), and Mishook and Kornhaber (2006) note that “arts integration” itself is a “contested and confusing term” (p. 4). For example, the Kennedy Center (n.d.) defines arts integration as a supplement to sequential arts instruction taught by certified arts teachers, and says that true arts integration satisfies objectives in both the arts area and the core content area. As I will discuss, this is rarely borne out in reality.

Some of the optimism surrounding arts integration programs comes from large-scale arts-based reforms projects such as the “A+ School Program” in North Carolina and the Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE) program. Reporting on the “A+” program, Gunzenhauser and Noblit (2001) suggest general success in terms of teacher buy-in and school culture change. The participating network of schools has grown from 25 in 1995, to 40 schools in 2014 (North Carolina Arts Council, 2014). In an assessment of the CAPE program, Catterall and Waldorf (1999) report several prominent findings. First, teachers and teaching artists were most likely to integrate arts into reading instruction and were most likely to use visual arts. Students in CAPE schools demonstrated higher achievement, but the differences were only significant at the elementary school level.

Some researchers have investigated arts integration in individual elementary schools. Bresler (1994) undertook a qualitative study of classroom generalists attempting to integrate music into their instruction. The study’s participants were three elementary schools in Illinois and 39 classroom teachers, three music specialists, a retired music specialist, and district/school administrators. The author found that inclusion of the arts was inconsistent and that most generalist teachers felt uncomfortable integrating the arts. Even generalists teachers with musical

backgrounds lacked an understanding of how to sequence musical activities to add complexity and often repeated activities without changing or adding musical elements.

Whitaker (1996) describes findings from a year-long investigation into the efforts of an elementary music specialist asked to integrate music instruction with her generalist colleagues' curriculum. Whitaker designed a qualitative case study conducted in tandem with the participant to investigate the objectives of the integration project, the content and structure of the project, and the impacts on the teachers and students. In the findings of the study, the music specialist reported some frustration at being responsible for integration and noted that she had to go on "walkabouts" to each classroom to find out what curricular content might work for an integration experience. The specialist said her positioning became one of "second class" status and isolation. The generalist teachers, by contrast, admitted to often resenting the integration efforts among other requirements. One generalist said, "Twenty minutes with music, twenty minutes with art, twenty minutes creative movement and twenty minutes with drama and I'm supposed to be writing narratives and I have parent conferences and so forth ... I am ready to die already" (p. 93).

Giles & Frego (2004) undertook a pilot study of the music integration activities used by elementary classroom teachers. The researchers interviewed 18 generalist teachers evenly divided among grades one, three, and six. Activities were categorized according to Bresler's (1995) continuum of integration (subservient, affective, social, co-equal cognitive). Findings suggested that 13 of the 18 teachers described subservient integration activities (e.g., singing a song about the water cycle), nine of 18 described affective integration activities (e.g., playing background music while students engage in writing), and five teachers used social integration (e.g., singing patriotic songs to highlight a holiday). Only one teacher described a co-equal

cognitive integration activity in which students sang rounds and learned about harmony and form. Integration was rare with half of the teachers engaged in music activities for less than 15 minutes per week and the other half averaged 42 minutes (median of 30 minutes) per week.

Mishook and Kornhaber (2006) report on arts integration in the era of accountability, comparing reported practices at “arts-focused schools” and “non-arts-focused schools.” The researchers interviewed principals and arts coordinators and categorized their responses about arts integration practices through use of Bresler’s (1995) typography. Findings suggested that arts-focused schools were likely to describe “co-equal” integration experiences, in which the arts subject area and the academic subject area received balanced attention. Non-arts-focused schools, with one exception, reported what Bresler (1995) calls “subservient” integration, in which the arts content area is subsumed by the other content area. Keeping the small sample in mind, the authors also note that schools with higher poverty levels were more likely to engage in subservient arts integration practices.

Colwell (2008) investigated self-reports of music teachers and classroom teachers before and after a course in integrating music with core academic objectives. The participants (18 music teachers and 19 generalists) rated their self-efficacy for teaching music, self-efficacy for integration, intention to integrate, and general attitudes toward integration. There were no significant differences in pre- and post-tests responses by classroom teachers with regard to musical ability, musical knowledge, perceived importance of music as an independent subject, and comfort with teaching music. There was, however, a significant post-test difference (more positive) in both music specialists and generalists’ attitudes (i.e., comfort level) toward music integration to support core academic objectives. However, while all teachers said they were more comfortable with the idea, they actually indicated less intent to integrate after the workshop.

Another concerning result was that even generalists who indicated they had no music specialist at their school showed no increase in professed responsibility for teaching music between pre-test and post-test. Colwell notes that this may have implications for districts without music specialists.

LaJevic (2013) studied arts integration in an elementary school in southwestern Pennsylvania. Participants included two kindergarten teachers, one first-grade teacher, two second-grade teachers, and one art teacher. Data sources included individual interviews, focus group interviews, observations of arts integration instruction, district documentation on arts integration, and students' project artifacts. The researcher found that while teachers were excited to attempt arts integration, the arts were largely devalued and diluted. LaJevic notes, "Arts Integration was often used to fill up extra class time in the schedule and was viewed as fun busy-time doings" (p. 10). Activities included coloring in worksheets and cutting out snowflakes to hang on the walls as decoration, with little or no attention given to the integrity of the arts disciplines.

Finally, there also is some evidence suggesting a kind of "reverse integration," in which arts teachers are being asked to integrate tested subjects into their sequential arts instruction. Gerrity (2009) found that 60% of principals expected their arts teachers to include instruction in math and reading. French (2009) found that upper elementary music teachers were being asked to supplement instruction with these subjects, and Shaw (2014) found that music teachers discussed being asked to incorporate lessons in fractions and common core vocabulary into music courses.

### **Cuts to Arts Specialist Positions**

Several researchers have studied cuts to music specialist positions. Fields (1982) investigated how decisions are made about cuts to elementary instrumental music programs in a California county. Research questions focused on the relationships between cuts and factors including budget limitations, support from the school community, school policy, and student/teacher ratios. By analyzing survey responses from 81 principals, Fields found no significant correlation between cuts to instrumental music and reported budgetary issues. There also were no significant correlations between student/teacher ratio and cuts or between the existence of a policy for providing creative arts programs and cuts. Significant correlations were found for parental support and administrator support. Fields points out that administrators' most cited reason for cuts (budgetary problems) did not account completely for the decision to keep or cut programs.

Schultz (2006) studied how elementary school arts programs have been affected by recent education reform. The author interviewed six administrators with at least 20 years experience working in Alabama elementary schools about their perception of how the rise of technical standards had impacted student access to the arts. Schultz found that elementary students are at risk for limited exposure to fine arts because arts positions are not funded or mandated at the elementary level. As a result, schools that offer instruction by arts specialists do so by providing local funding and strong Superintendent support. Schools with flourishing elementary arts programs maintained instruction through proactive battling for position in the curriculum. Finally, administrators noted that elementary schools that had not previously offered arts instruction found it incredibly difficult to start such programs in the face of accountability pressures.

The most recent study of cuts to arts specialist positions was conducted by Burrack, Payne, Bazan, and Hellman (2014). The researchers investigated the impact of budgetary cuts on music teaching positions and district funding in Kansas, Nebraska, and Missouri. Administrators from 462 schools in the tri-state area responded to a survey and indicated music specialists staffing levels. The researchers report troubling cuts, with 375 positions lost in 2011-2012 alone. Over the course of four years, there was a reported loss of 638 music teaching positions. According to the authors, “the majority of losses occurred in general music. If these results were to be generalized, the actual numbers of positions lost could potentially be staggering” (p. 40). Echoing findings from Fields (1982), neither budgetary problems nor declining enrollment (overall or in arts courses) wholly explained the cuts, leading the authors to blame a combination of budget cuts and accountability pressures.

Researchers also have focused on how certain schools and districts are able to sustain music programs in challenging conditions. Coysh (2005) examined how two thriving Canadian secondary school music programs were able to flourish amidst challenging policy conditions. Coysh identified these challenging conditions as insufficient funding, school scheduling, agendas of political leaders, elimination of a required arts credit, decreased staffing, and reduced student enrollment. The two thriving programs were able to work through limitations because of the music teachers’ aggressive advocacy and aggressive scheduling. Thriving music programs also had sufficient funding, regularly demonstrated connections/relevance to the local community, and focused on providing both musical and social education for students.

The study most closely related to the topic of the present study in topic was done by Major (2010, 2013). The author investigated how a small school district made decisions about sustaining its music program amidst a decade of budgetary cuts. Major offers a case study of a



district in a suburb of Detroit, Michigan that had not targeted its music programs when budget cuts had occurred. Through an analysis of district documents and interviews with administrators, the researcher found that decision makers spoke of a commitment to a well-rounded education. The decision makers considered their personal philosophies and values and demands of the students and parents in the community. Music students often sacrificed taking advanced placement courses to enroll in secondary music classes, which sent messages about the importance of these programs. Administrators also spoke of keeping music programs strong for fiscal reasons including keeping students (and per pupil funds) in the district, to attract new residents to the district, and because music programs often offered a “bang for the buck” (over 100 students in a marching band class, for example).

### **Need for Present Study**

As the literature reviewed in this chapter demonstrates, the profession has begun to build a body of knowledge around a number of interrelated issues related to the status of elementary arts programs. A major issue affecting these programs seems to be curriculum narrowing under the post-NCLB era of accountability. Evidence exists of broad curricular narrowing toward the subjects that matter for test-based sanctions and rewards—that is, math and English language arts. In this narrowed curriculum, time spent on social studies, the arts, physical education, and even science—which has been recently privileged in the push for STEM curriculum—has decreased on the whole. Evidence from the literature also suggests the effects of narrowing are felt more severely in schools with high levels of poverty and high numbers of minority students, and are experienced disproportionately by subgroups within schools (e.g., triage, double-blocking).

The review of literature also demonstrates that access to a certified arts specialist teaching a sequential, standards-based curriculum is not guaranteed. Because of a combination of factors that include certification rules and changing definitions of arts instruction (e.g., arts integration, STEAM), elementary schools in adjoining states or communities may provide wildly disparate experience for students. Whether elementary arts programs are taught by a generalist or specialist likely makes a difference for students, since the literature suggests that generalists often eschew the responsibility to provide arts instruction and feel unqualified to deliver such instruction.

Though there are several studies that have addressed how district personnel make decisions about arts specialists and programs (Burrack et al., 2014; Major, 2010, 2013), there are important gaps in the literature. For example, Burrack et al. (2014) demonstrates cuts on a broad scale through the use of a multi-state survey. The authors hint that several factors—including budget cuts and accountability pressures—may be to blame, but are not able to deeply investigate these issues because of their research design. Major (2010, 2013) offers such an in-depth look at a single case, but gives an example of maintaining programs rather than cutting back. My study, which seeks to understand how cuts were enacted in an urban district, can help to illuminate the gaps in the literature.

The present study also can connect the literature base reviewed in Chapter Two with some of the important topics discussed in Chapter One. These issues, which are part of any discussion about a decision like LSD's, have little or no accompanying body of research. For example, debates of equity and justice in urban music education programs are underrepresented in the research literature. Additionally, the significance of school funding structures, labor relations, and magnet programs rarely have been discussed in music education research. There

also has been little discussion around the sometimes tense relationship between community arts organizations and urban school districts. The present study will help to address and represent stakeholders' beliefs about such timely issues.

Finally, the present study will make a novel contribution by combining policy analysis with qualitative case study data. This methodology is important because some literature suggests a disconnect between macro-level policy conditions and micro-level realities. For example, a recent study (Abril & Bannerman, 2014) found that elementary music specialists (N = 432) did not perceive macro-level (state and national) issues to be important in affecting their programs, with the exception of music-specific policies (e.g., standards). The participants prioritized meso-level (district) and micro-level (school). The present study will seek to show how all three levels are interrelated. The combination of Lansing-specific data with state and national policy issues will make an important link.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

With the intent of improving our understanding of cuts to elementary arts programs, the purpose of this research is to investigate how one urban school district cut its elementary arts specialists. Research questions are:

4. What policy conditions enabled the Lansing School District's decision to cut its elementary arts specialists?
5. How did the decision-making process unfold?
6. How do people involved with the decision describe the subsequent impacts of the cuts?

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### **Design**

At its roots, this study drew upon both case study design and policy analysis.

Characterizing the project as one design and not the other negates the intended comprehensive picture of how the LSD decision occurred and what it means for arts education. Therefore, the study can be categorized as a case study with an embedded policy analysis, or as an example of a “policy footprint” approach (McLaughlin, 1987), in which policy analysis uses a local instance to, as McLaughlin (1990) says, represent both macro perspectives and micro realities.

### **Case Study**

This study employed a case study design, which can be defined as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit” (Merriam, 1988, p. 16). Merriam notes that, “case studies are particularistic, descriptive and heuristic, and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources” (p. 16). I chose to use a case study design to investigate LSD’s decision so that I could engage in sustained, in-depth data collection, and offer a rich description of this data (Creswell, 2009).

Stake (2006) notes that a strength of case study design is its “attention to the local situation” (Stake, 2006, p. 34). Another strength of this design is that it places emphasis on both the interpretations of the researcher and participants, allowing for “multiple realities, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening” (Stake, 1995, p. 12). In a complex and contested situation such as the one that is the focus of the present study, a case study allowed for such plurality of viewpoints. This case study was intended to be instrumental in its design (Stake, 1995). Thus, while I was interested in the particulars of the LSD situation, and sought to describe the nuances of what happened in LSD in rich detail, the intent was to focus attention on

the phenomenon of cuts to urban school district elementary arts programs. In this sense, the choice of case is important because it helps in pursuing the external interest or phenomenon of interest (Stake, 1995).

While not purely an example of a phenomenological case study, this study draws on phenomenology both as epistemology and inquiry method (Patton, 2002). As an epistemological stance, phenomenology is described as acknowledging and accentuating multiple realities, subjective truths, and personal experiences of a given phenomenon (Patton, 2002). As described by Moustakas (1994) and van Manen (1990), phenomenology is a research methodology that seeks to describe the lived experiences, perceived essence, and meaning-making surrounding a phenomenon. My interview questions were especially informed by the tradition's focus on personal experiences.

### **Policy Analysis**

As a discipline, policy analysis is a broad field that includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches to understanding how policies are formed, implemented, and carried out (Sabatier, 2007). Policy analysis is varied enough to evade unified description, but often involves researching/studying, clarifying and describing, analyzing, evaluating, and recommending a course of action from among alternatives (Mann, 1975). Policy analysis also can attend to early stages of the policy cycle such as agenda setting and policy formation, or it can attend to the implementation and consequences of enacted policy (Mann, 1975). Some policy analysts start from a perspective of a rational and orderly policy cycle (Howlett & Ramesh, 1995; Lasswell, 1956), while also acknowledging that reality diverges from the ideal cycle. Other scholars have rejected early rational-choice policy-cycle models, arguing that this kind of approach is ill suited to real-world contexts because the stages often overlap, actors may be involved in all aspects at

once, and actual institutions are loosely-coupled and operate with unclear technology (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972; Sabatier, 2007). Even though critics have rejected some early rational stages/cycle approaches, the basic approach to the policy analysis design remains more or less the same, even for post-modern and critical policy approaches (e.g., Ball, 1994, 1998; Grace, 1984; Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009).

In general education literature, policy plays a substantial role with myriad books and numerous professional journals/databases (e.g., *Educational Policy*, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *Education Policy Analysis Archives*) devoted to the study of educational policy. In addition, educational policy is regularly a topic of scholarship in other fields. Notable economists (see the work of Hanushek, Figlio, Chetty, Friedman, Rockoff, and many others) have focused on education, and education policy figures prominently in public policy, political science, and sociology research agendas. Topics of educational policy analysis include policy formation, implementation, and reviews of policy effects. Because educational policy-making is a complex endeavor (Weaver-Hightower, 2008) involving federal, state, and local levels, policy analysts often focus on the interplay between these points of influence (Fusarelli, 2002; Hamann & Lane, 2004; Hill, 2001; Spillane et al., 2002). Other analysts have investigated how special interests and coalitions influence educational policy (McDonnell & Weatherford, 2013; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014; Stout & Stevens, 2000).

Though policy matters have long been a concern for the arts education field, formal policy analysis is a relatively ignored area of arts education scholarship. As Aguilar (2011) noted, many articles have been devoted to tracking the implementation of arts education policy (e.g., Baker, 2012; Chapman, 2004; Elpus, 2013, 2014; Hourigan, 2011) or offering broad principles for developing and understanding policy issues (e.g., Forari, 2007; Hope, 2002;

Horsley, 2009; Richmond, 2002; Schmidt, 2009). But few articles in the arts education policy sphere have made use of any recognized policy analysis strategies/frameworks. Notable exceptions include the work of Jorgensen (1985) on decision-making in music education, Aguilar (2011) who reviews policy formation frameworks and creates a conceptual model for studying policy recommendations, and Kos (2010) who recommends specific policy analysis steps.

Because this study was concerned with the genesis of a local-level policy regarding the delivery of elementary arts education, I drew upon an accepted policy formation conceptual framework. In using Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's (1993) "Advocacy Coalition Framework," my goal was to illuminate how a policy subsystem (defined by coalitions and independent actors) interfaces with long-term and sudden external forces to advance policy agendas.

### **Sampling**

This study used purposeful sampling to select an "information rich case" from which "one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance" (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Purposeful sampling is a common strategy of qualitative researchers for whom the goal is in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations (Patton, 2002). My choice of Lansing School District can be thought of as a kind of intensity sample (Patton, 2002). An intensity sample involves an information-rich case that demonstrates "the phenomenon of interest intensely" (Patton, 2002, p. 234), but is not so extreme/deviant as to "distort the manifestation of the phenomenon of interest" (p. 234).

I consider Lansing School District to be an intensity sample because it cut a significant number of arts specialists in a sudden move after years of maintaining staffing (see discussion in Chapter Four). While I could have selected other urban sites, some other potential sites had arts

programs (elementary and secondary) that had, through slow decline, been in disarray for years. I felt those site-specific staffing particulars could make studying the phenomenon of interest difficult or impossible.

### **Description of Research Site**

Lansing School District is located in a mid-sized urban area in Michigan. Lansing's population in 2010 was around 110,000 with more than 300,000 in the greater urban area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Spanning around 35 square miles, the city houses state government buildings, two law schools, four hospitals, and a community college. Lansing is also adjacent to East Lansing, which houses Michigan State University. In terms of race/ethnicity demographics, the city's population in 2010 was 55.5% White, 22.9% Black or African-American, and 12.5% Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Income levels demonstrate relatively high levels of poverty in Lansing. The school district's demographics, however, do not match those of the city. Lansing School District's 2010 demographics were 29% white, 54% black and 18% Hispanic (Lansing School District, 2013). Students in Lansing also represent a linguistic diversity and have come from many different countries of origin. In 2013, the LSD had 2,167 bilingual students who spoke 53 native languages and originated from 67 different countries (Lansing School District, 2013).

In 2000, the median income for a household in the city was around \$35,000, and the median income for a family was around \$40,000. The per capita income for the city was around \$18,000. About 13% of families and 17% of the population were below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Because of economic problems experienced across the State of Michigan related to auto and other manufacturing sector declines, Lansing is one of the poorest capital



regions in the country. Its poverty rate places it 46<sup>th</sup> out of 50 capital regions in the U.S. (Hinkley, 2014).

The fall 2014 student count for the district was 11,640 (Lansing School District, 2015).

The school district population is spread out over 27 separate school buildings, including 22 elementary schools. After a recent reorganization initiated by Superintendent Yvonne Caamal-Canul, the general configuration by building is pre-K-3, 4-6, and 7-12. Several buildings, however, serve grades K-8. The district has a variety of magnet programs including four STEM schools, two STEAM magnets (grades K-3 and 4-6 respectively), a Montessori magnet program, a visual and performing arts school, and a Spanish immersion school (Lansing School District, 2013). The organization of schools in the district has been (and likely will continue to be) in flux. In the last 10 years, the LSD has closed several schools, reorganized by grade span, and initiated the aforementioned magnet programs. In a March 2015 bond proposal presentation to the school board, the Superintendent proposed that the LSD look into selling/leasing two schools, remodeling two schools, moving several magnet programs, and developing a new magnet program. See Table 1 for a current chart of schools by grade levels and curricular focus.

Annual state test data shows the low proficiency rates of students in the district. For example, around 25% of third grade students (state average around 40%) and less than 10% of eighth grade students were deemed proficient in mathematics in the 2013-2014 school year (state average around 34%). In reading, just under 50% of third grade students were proficient (state average around 60%), and around 44% of eighth grade students reached proficiency (state average around 75%) (MI School Data, 2014).

Table 1: List of Lansing School District Schools by Grade Level and Focus

School Name	Grades	Magnet/Curricular Focus
Averill	K-3	Spanish Immersion
Cavanaugh	K-3	STEAM
Cumberland	K-3	
Fairview	K-3	STEM
Forest View	K-3	
Gier Park	K-3	
Kendon	K-3	
Lyons	K-3	
REO	K-3	
Riddle	K-3	
Willow	K-3	
Attwood	4-6	
Lewton	4-6	Global Studies/Spanish Immersion
Mt. Hope	4-6	STEAM
Pattengill	4-6	
Sheridan Road	4-6	STEM
Gardner	K-8	Leadership, Law, & Government
Pleasant View	K-8	Visual/Performing Arts
Rich	K-8	STEM
Wexford	K-8	Montessori
Eastern	7-12	International Baccalaureate
Everett	7-12	New Tech (7-10)
Sexton	7-12	Math, Science, & Engineering
Woodcreek	9-12	Alternative Education
Beekman	Ages 3-26	Adaptive/Special Education
North	K-6	Special Education
Post Oak	K-6	International Baccalaureate, Chinese Immersion

Due to systemic declines in the automobile manufacturing sector (and exacerbated by the recession), Michigan lost 0.6% of its population between 2000 and 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), making it the only state to do so over the 2000-2010 time period (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Michigan's public schools similarly lost around 200,000 students (11.8% of population) between 2003 and 2013, with some departing because of the exodus from the state and others enrolling in charter schools (Kaffer, 2014). Around ten charter schools operate within the Lansing School District borders, and in 2013 the district reported losing over 1,500 students (previously enrolled in LSD) to these charters and estimates losing over 25,000 students to charters/parochial schools since 2000 (Lansing School District, 2013). Like other urban areas in the state, Lansing also declined in population (around 4% between 2000 and 2010), and LSD's enrollment has fallen from around 14,500 (2008-2009) to around 11,640 students in the 2014-2015 school year (MI School Data, 2014). This represents a 20% decline, with consistent drops of 500-700 students a year. Many of these students use Michigan's school-choice laws to enroll in surrounding districts. LSD reports that since the fall of 2004, it has lost 27,825 student FTEs (full-time equivalents) to these nearby districts (Lansing School District, 2013).

### **Theoretical Lens**

This study was guided by two theoretical conceptions of educational policy. First, I view policy as messy and complex rather than orderly and governed by rationality or rules (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972). Ball (1998) notes that policy making is "inevitably a process of bricolage," and says that "most policies are ramshackle, compromise, hit and miss affairs, that are reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected through complex processes of influence, text production, dissemination and, ultimately, re-creation in contexts of practice" (p. 126). Stages of policy formation overlap (Nakamura, 1987), and players in the policy game regularly change the

rules, cheat, and change roles (Long, 1958; Sabatier, 2007). With this in mind, I relate the policy developments in the LSD to a theory that recognizes complexity and nuance.

Second, I view meaning and significance in educational policy as existing in both macro-level analysis and micro-level conditions and at the intersection between the two (Lipman, 2004; McLaughlin, 1987, 1990; Olson & Craig, 2009; Ozga, 1990). As McLaughlin (1987) noted, educational policy study should be concerned with “systemwide, or macrolevel dimensions of official policies and microlevel meanings, how they are experienced by teachers, students, and principals in schools” (p. 4). Educational policy-making is shaped by a kind of “street-level bureaucracy” (Lipsky, 1980), in which teachers and other local actors mediate policy implementation based on resources, values, and beliefs (Coburn, 2004; Diamond & Spillane, 2004; Spillane, 2004). Spillane (2004) suggests that: “Teachers, district and school administrators, and other locals often fail to notice, intentionally ignore, or selectively attend to policies, especially those that are inconsistent with their own agendas” (p. 5). Indeed, local actors may even act as “nonauthorized policymakers” (Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009, p. 769) as they reinterpret and direct policy at the district and classroom levels, often leading to incomplete or varied implementation (McDermott, 2000).

### **Researcher’s Lens**

I come to this research study both with connections to the research site and phenomenon and with some notable distance. I grew up less than an hour from Lansing and formerly taught public school music nearby. I also have experience with elementary generalist teachers engaging in arts instruction, as I recently taught a college course titled, “Performing Arts for the Elementary Teacher.” Most significantly, at the time of researching and writing this study, I was a student at Michigan State University. Not only was the Lansing School District located less

than five miles away from where I went everyday to learn, work, and teach, I observed/supervised an intern teacher in Lansing's Eastern High School. Also, my advisor, Dr. Mitchell Robinson, was embroiled in the public debate that followed the decision. All of these factors brought immediacy to the site and research topic.

In some ways, this proximity to the topic creates a kind of "insider status" that can lend insight and empathy to my research report. However, familiarity also can prevent a researcher from adequately focusing on the topic and cases. I therefore needed to be careful to balance my insider status through reflexivity (Merriam, 2009), by engaging in critical self-reflection of my assumptions and biases regarding public school arts instruction. As Moustakas (1994) cautions, I purposefully needed to "bracket" my experience to view phenomena with "fresh eyes." At times this bracketing was difficult. As I wrote in a researcher memo:

It's hard to be restrained and clinical about this. I'm mostly doing okay with that, but there have been several moments of late where I'm in an interview—either in person or on the phone—and I want to interrupt and raise my voice. "But, but—what about [blank]?!". It's hard not to. After all, this is a charged issue for me. I care about these kids getting a real arts education on a regular basis. They deserve it!" (researcher memo, January 9, 2015).

It also is important to acknowledge the distance that exists between me and the research site, participants, and phenomenon of interest. As a White, middle/upper class doctoral student, I acknowledge that I may have a lack of understanding about the culture, values, and priorities in the LSD. As a part of my identity, I carry power and privilege that may hinder my abilities to understand the topic of my research (Bradley, 2007). This research experience, as well as a prior experience in which I created and implemented a free summer music program for youth in a

high-poverty elementary school, have ingrained in me the importance of realizing how a university-affiliated researcher is perceived in some urban schools. The notion of a “white knight” hero descending on a “down and out” community with students of color is problematic and can be resented by long-time members of the community (McIntyre, 1997). These issues notwithstanding, I believe that studies of contexts like the LSD should not be avoided because of issues of researcher privilege and unfamiliarity. Researchers must, however, engage in critical self-examination.

## **Data Sources**

### **Interviews**

In total, I interviewed 18 people involved with Lansing’s decision. I engaged in purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) to select informants who were closely involved with and affected by aspects of Lansing’s policy decision. I bounded this to include (a) current LSD teachers, instructional support staff, administrators, and school board members; (b) music and art specialists who retired, moved to a different school district, or lost their jobs after the March 2013 decision; and (c) community arts providers who were engaged in conversations about providing arts instruction in LSD. Within this population, I built a list of potential participants from personal contacts, contacts provided by a colleague, and names found in news stories about the Lansing decision. As the research progressed, I also used snowball sampling (Patton, 2002) to find participants who were willing to speak on the issue. If a participant suggested I speak with someone, I added that person to my prospective participants list and obtained contact information. This strategy may have invited bias to the data set, as those participants who were recommended to me may have been especially opinionated or motivated to speak out on the issue. To counter this, I sought both confirming and disconfirming evidence from interviewees.

Interviews were semi-structured so that participants both could address similar topics and pursue topics of individual importance. When designing interview questions, I drew from relevant literature on the study's topic. While I had developed a list of possible questions, I intentionally encouraged the interview to be emergent so as to support conversations that were personalized and free flowing. In order to view the phenomena with an open mind and to keep the interview focus on the participants' experiences (Van Manen, 1990), I practiced what Kvale (1996) calls "deliberate naïveté" (p. 33) by asking for explanation and clarification even on topics with which I am familiar from my own experience.

While I preferred to conduct interviews in person, I was only able to make this work with seven of the participants. The other 11 interviews occurred over the phone due to distance or scheduling issues. The interviews lasted between 35 and 90 minutes, and all interviews were audio recorded and promptly transcribed to provide an accurate record of what each participant said. When transcribing interview audiotapes, it is important to remember that important information is inevitably lost. As Polkinghorne (2005) notes, "Lost is the way in which things were said, the pacing, the intonation, and the emphasis in the talk" (p. 142). Therefore, I took notes while interviewing, whenever possible, and used these notes as analytical memos. I also used the analytical memos to engage in self-reflection about the interpersonal dynamics of the interview procedure. Scholars caution that qualitative interviews can be hierarchical relationships with power imbalances between interviewer and interviewee (Kvale, 2006; Weis & Fine, 2000), and they encourage critical reflection to develop sensitivity to these issues.

### **Access Issues**

Because of the tension around the 2013 cuts, I encountered a number of challenging issues around access to data and participants. The first and major access issue came when my

request for research in the district was formally denied. After receiving IRB approval from Michigan State University (see Appendix A), I contacted LSD's Department of Accountability and School Improvement, which handles all research requests. I turned in a research application specifying my intent to interview district employees and observe elementary classroom teachers. On December 1, 2014, I received a letter attached to an email informing me that my request had been denied (see Appendix B). The letter stated: "The district is undergoing several restructuring initiatives and is unable to accommodate research applications that do not directly benefit our improvement goals."

Since I had intended on addressing my third research question—regarding the current state of elementary arts instruction and the impacts of the cuts—through sustained observation of elementary classroom teachers and the consultants from the Department of Innovative Arts and Fitness, this denial of access had a serious effect on the overall research design. It also was not immediately clear to me what impact the LSD's denial of access would have on my ability to contact and recruit interviewees. After speaking with my committee members, I decided to contact the MSU IRB and explain the situation. The IRB confirmed that, even with the district's denial of formal access, the status of approval had not changed, and I would still be able to contact employees on their personal time (i.e., outside of school hours).

The inability to use district resources to identify and contact participants made recruitment more complicated and more difficult. For example, in deference to current employee privacy, I did not feel comfortable sending emails through the district's email system. As a result, I contacted potential informants through personal email addresses, by phone, and via Facebook. Participant recommendations from interviewees became crucial following this denial of access. In all instances of contacting potential participants, I fully explained the situation



around the research. This included telling them that the formal research request had been denied, but that they could feel free to speak to me on their own time. I assured each informant confidentiality.

Several aspects of my interaction with potential informants (and with eventual participants, during interviews) were interesting in relation to the district's denial of access. Both current and former employees were frightened to talk—even “off the record”—because they feared reprisal from LSD administrators. One potential informant who was a current employee decided not to participate because of this fear. A former employee (who ultimately participated) asked for a couple months to consider participation because she feared any possible backlash if she was identified. Over and over, interviewees would stop the interview and ask: “This is confidential, right?” Or: “You’re not using names, right?” When asking for recommendations for other participants, several interviewees told me to be very careful in contacting current employees. Some said that younger teachers would not dare speak with me. One informant clarified that this fear stemmed from the general perception that LSD administrators were “punishers” (see more discussion in Chapter Five).

This hesitancy to speak seemed to be balanced with an intense desire to, as several participants put it, “set the story straight.” In the snowball sampling process, several informants said something to the effect of, “You should contact [name]. She’s dying to talk.” Others, at the beginning of our conversation, would laugh and say, “I hope you’re ready—I have a lot to say.” The interviews seemed cathartic for some, perhaps because it gave them a chance to speak plainly on something about which they felt passionate. Several times, interviewees cursed, hit the table, and cried as they recounted the way this decision made them feel.

## **Documents**

I gathered and analyzed all relevant documents about the policy decision-making in LSD. Documents included school board meeting agendas and minutes, the Superintendent's "Monday Memo" to LSD staff, the district's monthly newsletter ("The Bright Side"), human resources documents (e.g., job postings), materials from meetings of the Department of Innovative Arts and Fitness, lesson plans, and news articles about the LSD decision. I also gathered any relevant materials (e.g., screenshots of posts, photos posted by the district) from social networking sites such as Facebook. Document analysis mainly served to address the second research questions, as these documents illuminated the framing/imaging and messaging surrounding the decision-making process. As with interview transcripts, I treated the documents as a separate data source and used them as a means of triangulation. This triangulation was especially important in the present study, because it deals with policy, which can be considered both official text and action (Ball, 1994).

## **Researcher Memos**

I wrote researcher memos during or immediately after each interview, which included reflections on the interview, unresolved questions, questions for future interviews, and contact information for potential informants. Sometimes I also jotted down ideas for titles and subheadings based on compelling quotations. I also wrote several general memos that included thoughts and observations throughout the data collection process. Writing these memos helped me to begin to analyze and synthesize across the data set, and they also served as a repository for interpretations.

## **Procedure and Timeline**

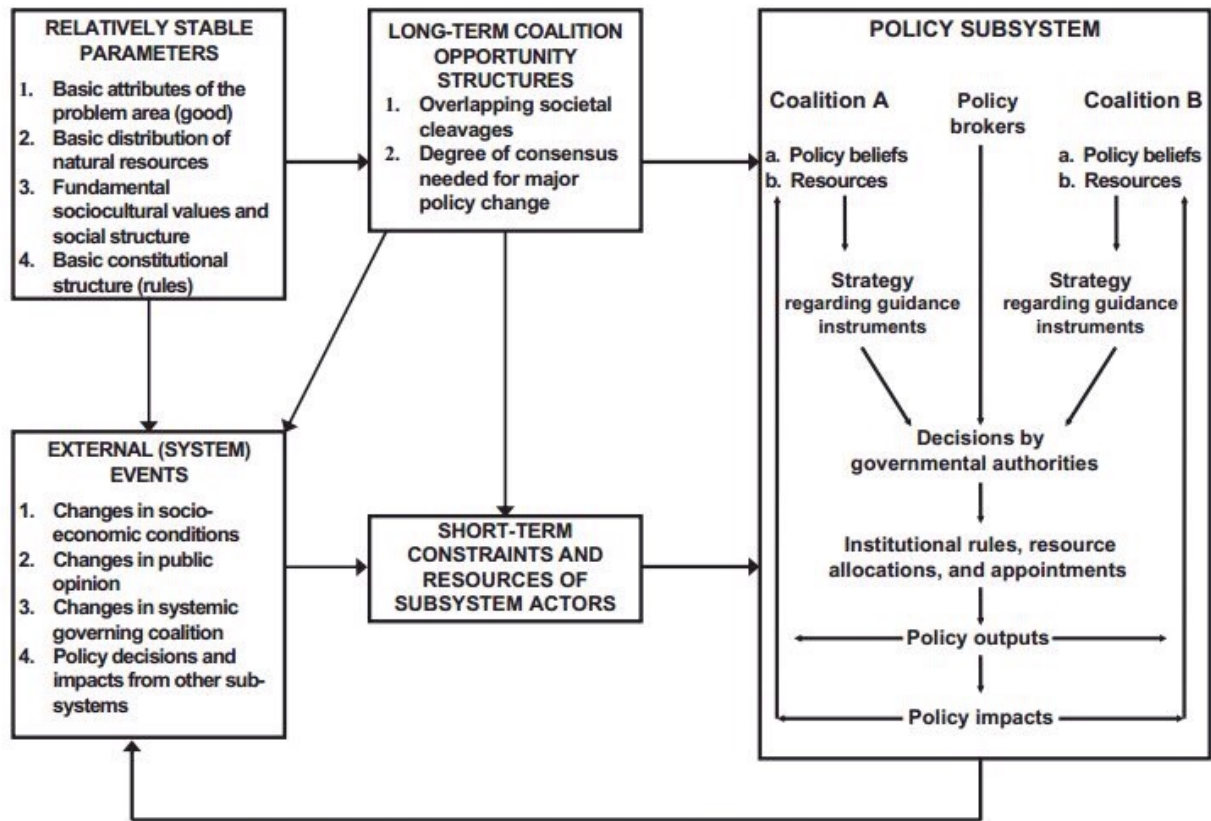
After obtaining initial IRB approval from Michigan State University on November 4, 2014 and getting second approval based on my updated research plan on December 2, 2014, I began to contact and recruit potential participants. I first interviewed individuals who were not currently district employees (i.e., former employees, community arts providers), and then moved on to speaking with current employees. I conducted all interviews between late December 2014 and early April 2015. I also began to compile relevant documents for analysis during this period. The analysis phase began during this time period and overlapped with continuing data collection. Analysis continued through the end of April, and I wrote findings and summary chapters between May and June with a defense meeting in July 2015.

## **Analysis**

### **Policy Formation Analysis**

I drew upon the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993) to help analyze the policy conditions that enabled the decision in LSD (research question one) and the decision-making process (research question two). Frameworks of this type have been used to provide a means for understanding large-scale policy developments (e.g., national air transportation policy), but also have been used in smaller scale analysis of educational contexts (see Houlihan & Green, 2006; Stout & Stevens, 2000). The ACF focuses on how policies are formulated by coalitions of like-minded actors and policy brokers. See Figure 1 below for a pictorial representation of the framework model.

Figure 1: Advocacy Coalition Framework Diagram



2007 Advocacy Coalition Framework Flow Diagram

ACF conceptualizes the coalition's actions within a policy subsystem, which can include multiple coalitions and policy brokers who help advance solutions. In this sense, I interpret the different groups involved with Lansing's decision (e.g., the music and art specialists, the union leadership, the classroom teachers, LSD administrators, community arts providers) to be coalitions within a subsystem. External to the policy subsystem are significant forces that shape the policy formation process. Some of these are called "relatively stable parameters," and they include the basic resources surrounding a problem area, the fundamental nature of culture and social structures, and other rules/norms (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). For the purposes of this analysis, I considered existing policy conditions and resources in Lansing to be these

“relatively stable parameters.” Other external forces, according to ACF, are more dynamic and sudden, including drastic changes in socio-economic conditions, changes in public opinion, and momentous policy changes from other subsystems. In Lansing’s case, these include impending “Right to Work” legislation and a large budget deficit.

### **Interview Transcripts Coding**

When reviewing individual interview transcripts, I first followed an eclectic coding method (Saldaña, 2013) that draws upon multiple coding methodologies (e.g., values coding, *in vivo* coding, emotions coding). Throughout the coding process, I used the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to check preliminary codes against other data sources such as documents and researcher memos. The initial round of coding yielded 234 codes (see Appendix C) attached to 1,171 excerpts, for a total of 1,713 code applications across the interview transcript data set. Based on ongoing reflection, comparison across the data set, and constant reference to the research questions, I then updated and revise my initial codes. I dropped several codes that were shown to be not relevant or not substantiated across the data set. I used code-mapping (Saldaña, 2013) to group codes into a list of subcategories and categories. I then arranged these broader categories by research question (see Appendix D).

### **Trustworthiness**

I used several strategies to ensure trustworthiness. As Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest, trustworthiness can be thought of as the combination of the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of qualitative data. To ensure credibility (i.e., an accurate interpretation of participants’ meaning), I employed member checks with all participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I conducted these member checks at several stages of the project, making available interview transcripts, codes/themes, and the final written research report available to participants for

clarification and comment. Few participants made changes to their interview transcripts, though one former arts teacher printed out her transcript and mailed the hard copy to me with extensive edits. These edits corrected misspellings, clarified dates that were discussed, and in several instances, removed sentences altogether. One other participant—a community arts provider—reviewed a transcript and called to follow up with me about something they had forgotten to discuss.

My personal credibility also is important and was strengthened through my prolonged exposure to the research topic. Because I had been closely following all developments surrounding Lansing's decision for the better part of two years, this extended immersion time helped to ensure a thorough understanding related to the continued implementation of the arts education policy change (Creswell, 2009). To pursue dependability (or consistency) in the data set, I followed consistent research procedures (e.g., using an interview protocol) and triangulated both methods and data sources (Patton, 2002). I used the constant comparative method to look for patterns and themes across interviews, researcher memos, and collection of documents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988) and also considered rival explanations and disconfirming evidence (Yin, 2003). I used rich, thick description to clarify details and the essence of the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the interpretivist tradition, criteria such as explicitness and vividness are considered vital validation criteria (Whittlemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001).

Finally, Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest pursuing confirmability, which they view as the constructivist/interpretivist analog to "objectivity" or external validity. In attempting confirmability, I used several strategies. First, I clarified my researcher biases so that the reader understands my position and the lens that I bring to the study (Merriam, 1988). Second, I sought

disconfirming evidence for emerging conclusions (Patton, 2002), and I engaged in peer reviews/debriefing sessions with knowledgeable colleagues who played the role of “devil’s advocate” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Following recommendations from Patton (2002) and Creswell (2009), I engaged peers familiar with the topic and research site, as well as a colleague with no connection to the study.

### **Limitations**

This study has potential limitations. Because this is a single case study, results are not generalizable to all school districts. This kind of generalizability based on statistical power, however, is not the goal of qualitative case study research. As Stake (1995) notes, the case study researcher should attend to the particularities of the case in order to add in-depth information to a general body of knowledge. In addition, it may be possible that findings from this study can be transferred to other similar contexts. As Guba & Lincoln (1981) suggested:

The degree of transferability is a direct function of the similarity between the two contexts, what we shall call “fittingness.” Fittingness is defined as degree of congruence between sending and receiving contexts. If context A and B are “sufficiently” congruent, then working hypotheses from a sending originating context may be applicable in the receiving context (p. 124).

In this sense, transferability is thought of as situational. As Schwartz (1996) notes, rich description of contextual factors in a qualitative study lead to possible relevance for comparable sites or populations. Schwartz refers to this as “logical situational generalizability” (1996, p. 7).

### **How Data Are Reported**

I report the findings in chapters devoted to covering the three research questions. In Chapter Four, I focus on the policy conditions that enabled LSD’s decision to cut elementary arts

specialists. In Chapter Five, I describe how the decision was implemented, including discussions of the various coalitions and their framing/messaging strategies. In Chapter Six, I investigate the impacts, almost two years later, of the policy decision on elementary arts education in the district. Finally, I summarize the findings and offer conclusions and recommendations in Chapter Seven.



## CHAPTER FOUR: ENABLING CONDITIONS

### **Introduction**

In order to discuss the confluence of conditions that enabled the Lansing School District's (LSD) decision to cut its elementary arts specialists, I draw upon several data sources. First, I present evidence from the LSD's own reports on district finances. These include the district's budgetary reports, its application for federal grant monies, and bond proposal presentation materials. I supplement these sources with information from Moody's Investors Service regarding the outlook for the LSD's general obligation rating (debt rating). Third, I draw upon news stories about the conditions discussed. Finally, I use findings from participant interviews in this chapter. I present quotations from participants where relevant.

### **Interpreting Conditions as "Relatively Stable Parameters"**

I use the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993) to frame the conditions in this chapter. The ACF seeks to explain policy formation by illuminating how a policy subsystem operates within larger external constraints (see Figure 1). The external constraints include "relatively stable parameters" and "sudden shocks" (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). The differentiation between stable and sudden is not always clearly delineated, though some texts on the ACF point to stable factors being in place for 100 years (Weible, Sabatier, & McQueen, 2009). For the purposes of this analysis, I define these relatively stable parameters as those which participants described as long-term or ongoing and/or those that seem to fit the ACF's definition of being stable over time and demonstrating resistance to change (Weible, Sabatier, & McQueen, 2009).

Specifically, the ACF gives examples of relatively stable parameters as (a) basic attributes of the problem area, (b) basic distribution of natural resources, (c) fundamental

sociocultural values and social structure, and (d) basic constitutional structure (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). As mentioned in Chapter Three, the ACF has most frequently been applied to national policymaking endeavors, which explains the language in those examples (i.e., natural resources, constitutional structure). However, applying these concepts to a school district decision is possible with only minor tweaks. For example, “basic attributes of the problem area” can remain unchanged. The problem area—here, public schooling—surely has basic attributes. These include factors such as funding and governance structures, conventions for staffing, curriculum requirements, and many more. “Distribution of natural resources” certainly applies, as school districts are reliant on defined revenues from the state and from local tax sources. The third example, “fundamental sociocultural values and social structure” also is applicable to a district like Lansing. In this context, I interpret this to mean the value that society at large (and more locally, within the state of Michigan or the community of Lansing) places on schools and on elementary arts programming. “Basic constitutional rules” could be interpreted as applying to the rules that govern public school districts.

Based on these definitions of “relatively stable parameters,” I discuss the following as conditions that contributed to Lansing’s decision to cut its elementary arts specialists: declining enrollment and budget problems, school performance accountability, the gradual rise and fall of the LSD arts programs, negative perception of art, music and physical education (AMPE) teachers, and the structural weakening of AMPE programs. Last, I reflect on what ACF calls mediating factors—those factors that (in the 2007 ACF revision) intercede between these stable parameters and the policy subsystem. These include the degree of consensus necessary for policy change, and the short-term constraints and resources around the subsystem.

## **Declining Enrollment and Budget Problems**

The ACF makes the conceptual distinction between parameters/conditions that are somewhat stable, and more sudden external shocks (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). In reality, this distinction can be debatable. In the case of district finances, for example, one can see both stable forces (long-term budget shortfalls caused by declining enrollment and state aid changes), as well as more sudden forces at work (the threat of the appointment of an emergency financial manager). In this chapter, I discuss more about the long-term financial picture, and I save a discussion of the sudden shocks for Chapter Five.

As discussed briefly in the description of the research site (Chapter Three), declining enrollment had been a long-time problem for Lansing School District. In the 1970s, the district had more than 40 elementary schools and close to 20,000 students enrolled. For a variety of reasons, including macro-level issues such as the recession and the erosion of Michigan's auto-industry, and local issues such as "white flight" from city centers to suburbs, the district has been in a decline for years. While reliable enrollment numbers from pre-2002 are difficult to find, a worsening of this trend in the last 15-20 years seems clear. A news article from 2002 says that, between 1980 and 2002, LSD lost around 3,500 students, with around 3,000 leaving the district between 1995 and 2002 (Sturm, 2002).

### **School Choice**

Michigan's school choice law also has been a factor in the more recent decline in LSD enrollment. Michigan's "school of choice" provision was enacted in 1996 as part of the State School Aid Act, and it allowed parents to send their students to out-of-district schools more easily (Sturm, 2002). In the first six years of the school of choice law being in effect, LSD did not fare well. The district lost around 1,200 students to other districts during this time, which

accounted for \$6 million in budgetary losses (Sturm, 2002). Nearby districts did much better over the same period, with the East Lansing schools, for example, gaining around 450 students (a net gain of \$3.6 million in revenue) (Sturm, 2002). On the West side of the LSD's boundaries, Waverly Community Schools brought in 269 students for a total net gain of \$2.8 million (Sturm, 2002).

Lansing's number of students lost through school choice decisions was similarly troubling in the fall of 2014. In a March bond proposal presentation, the Superintendent discussed the numbers: of the 19,277 students eligible for grades K-12, 7,637 students were choosing to go elsewhere. Of these, 5,995 were attending another public school option (Caamal Canul, 2015). While this reporting does not break down this 5,995 into public school charter enrollment and school choice enrollment, it still suggests a large number of students lost to school choice. These numbers are supported by a Moody's Investors Service brief from 2013, which showed that 17% of Lansing's potential students were enrolled in other public districts in 2011-2012 (Moody's Investors Service, 2013). School choice was mentioned several times in my interviews with former teachers, and one participant remarked on what she had seen:

Just a mass exodus out of the urban area. Schools of choice killed Lansing. East Lansing, I believe, has 35% of their students that are school of choice. Where do they come from? Lansing schools. Those who are left anymore are the captive audience, people who can't go anywhere else. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

### **Teacher Layoffs**

Teachers discussed how they had seen the mass exodus of students affect staffing levels. A former music teacher noted that the district had been in a sustained period of layoffs and cuts, and this trajectory enabled the 2013 cuts to the AMPE department:

So every year when you lost those kids, you lost that money, you have to get rid of positions. So when I first came in, our association of teachers was about 1,100 members. We're down to 850 now. So that many teachers in a 10-year period are gone. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

Several participants talked about how the period of constant layoffs had taken a toll both personally and on the district's ability to focus on children and develop any kind of long-term strategy. Being laid off often meant not getting paid during the summer and sometimes being rehired the day before the school year began. Constant pink slips brought personal stress for a former teacher:

In the eight years I was in Lansing, I'd been laid off seven different times. Most of those [times I was] surviving all the way through summer until we started the school year again. So I was on unemployment many of those times and not knowing if I'd have a job in the fall. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

Several participants said they had gotten used to the situation, and they discussed it with a sense of resignation. One said he had gotten used to "wondering if I have a job the next day for the last 10 years," and remembered that being recalled on "opening day" had become "par for the course" (interview transcript, February 23, 2015).

Participants also discussed how these layoffs had affected the health of the district as a whole. One former teacher noted that some strong arts teachers left the district because of the instability: "I know a lot of the people who were former teachers [in LSD] who have left and gone elsewhere." She continued, discussing an exemplary music teacher who was driven to a nearby district:

[Teacher's name] was a Lansing teacher, yeah. Absolutely. And obviously doing a fantastic job ... but did not have support of administration for his program and saw the greener grass, saw he could have a more pleasant work environment. So the layoffs have killed. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

Another well-respected teacher who led the high school band at Everett High School left the district in 2013 after being laid off. In a news story on the layoff, the teacher, Ben Baldwin, is quoted:

“That was my first time getting pink-slipped. It’s never happened to me before,” he said.

“I understand it’s a result of all the changes the district is going through with the elimination of planning periods, but I couldn’t take the risk. And that’s what it really came down to. Even though I was there for 11 years, when you get a pink slip, you have to start looking around.” (Inglot, 2013)

### **Magnet School Strategy**

As mentioned, the LSD has been operating under a mandatory desegregation plan since the 1970s. In addition to experimenting with busing arrangements and changing the boundaries that govern neighborhood school enrollment (e.g., “cluster plans”), one part of the district’s plan has been developing magnet schools (Lansing School District, 2013). With the stated goal of “reducing black student isolation,” (Lansing School District, 2013) these magnet programs have been placed in schools with high-minority, academically struggling populations. In addition to ensuring academically challenging/rigorous options for all students in the district, the secondary goal is to encourage wealthier, white students to stay in the district. Not only have the district’s demographics changed on the whole (42% minority and 58% white in 1988, 71% minority and 29% white in 2012), but the district’s demographics are now the opposite of those in the city of

Lansing, which shows 28% minority population and 72% white (Lansing School District, 2013). In other words, the district seems to enroll and retain little of its potential white population.

From 2001 to 2012, the district opened ten magnet schools, and it added six more magnet programs in 2013 with the help of a \$10 million grant from the federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP). The district, in its MSAP application, discusses the enrollment goals of the magnet program: “In short, LSD must entice families it once served to return to the district by improving current academic programs through rigorous, innovative magnet schools” (Lansing School District, 2013, p. 6). The funds awarded through the new grant will pay for focus teachers (2-3 year appointments created to organize the magnet theme of the school), and fund curriculum, technology, professional development, and marketing of the new schools. Because the school district has seen declining revenues generated from traditional local and state sources, outside funding sources present the only means of creating these kinds of programs to attract/retain students. As the district states in its 2013 MSAP application, the start up costs of a magnet school launch project are too high for the district, and therefore require federal funding up front and community partnerships to sustain (Lansing School District, 2013).

Participants spoke glowingly of the effects the original (pre-2013) magnet schools had on the district’s ability to attract and retain talented students, and they were especially complimentary of the visual and performing arts school (Pleasant View). A former teacher, who had worked at Pleasant View, spoke of the perceived strength of the school:

I was at Pleasant View, the arts magnet school. We had full enrollment every year with a waiting list ... That was a huge draw that we had in that building. We drew kids from out of district to Pleasant View. Out of district to a Lansing school so they could study arts! (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

A former art teacher remembered drawing kids to Pleasant View from nearby towns like Haslett and Williamston because of the reputation of the arts programs. Several participants spoke of Pleasant View as a “dream school,” in which students were motivated, resources were plentiful, and the school was sheltered from the impact of teacher turnover. Participants said that, in contrast to what often seemed like a constant “band-aid approach” taken by the district to address short-term enrollment/budget problems, the magnets were an example of strong district strategy.

### **Facilities Issues and State Aid Decreases**

In addition to the problems associated with declining student enrollment, the Lansing School District had seen the “relatively stable parameter” of financial problems affected by the state of its facilities and the declining state aid revenues. In terms of facilities, the LSD was faced with a combination of old/crumbling buildings, and vacant/underused properties. These capital improvement issues are problems for Lansing because of how Michigan’s school funding structures work. In 1994, when Michigan revamped its school aid structure, it directed most funds through the state (i.e., the school aid fund), but required that funds for facilities fall solely on local districts. Districts can raise funds for facilities through either sinking fund millages or bond proposals. While similar in some ways (i.e., reliance on voters approving a tax increase), the two strategies also differ in important respects. Both sinking fund millages and bonds can support new construction, remodeling, infrastructure improvements, and site improvements. But sinking fund millage proceeds cannot fund technology or equipment, while bond funds can (Caamal Canul, 2015).

Facilities issues are, of course, also related to enrollment. When buildings are old and in disrepair, it can be a factor in school choice decisions, making a district less attractive. Also, when enrollment declines steeply, as it has in the LSD, a district can be left with many underused



or vacant properties that also cannot be maintained due to declining per-pupil funding. Out of the 27 buildings with instructional programs (i.e., not administrative or other buildings), the average date of building is 1960, with one building (Eastern HS) dating to 1928, and two buildings (Mt. Hope Elementary and Sexton HS) dating to the 1940s. The only building constructed since the 1970s is Pattengill, built in 2007 (Caamal Canul, 2015). The district, in spite of its efforts to shed schools that were no longer needed, still has two unneeded buildings that it leases, and three vacant properties (Caamal Canul, 2015).

School aid funding appropriations from the state also have impacted the LSD's financial health negatively. Whether or not the current governor, Rick Snyder, has cut education funding has been a contentious debate. Those who blame the state cite per pupil funding levels that have fallen or stagnated. A senate fiscal analysis of per pupil funding shows that Lansing's funding, over a 10-year period, ticked up from \$7,443 in 2005-2006 to a high of \$7,835 in 2008-2009, and then fell to a low of \$7,314 in both 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 (Senate Fiscal Agency, 2015). Overall education funding has recently increased, but these funds have largely gone toward employee retirement costs, and have not staved off the financial hardships felt by districts like Lansing (Brush, 2014). Several of my participants were quick to place the blame for the 2013 cuts squarely on the state's lack of education funding. One pointedly said, "It's the state's fault that that decision had to be made." A current teacher agreed: "We did what we had to do to keep the district moving forward ... And whose fault is that? The district's or the state? The teachers' or the state?" (interview transcript, March 5, 2015).

A school district's ability to borrow money for facilities is dependent on its financial standing and debt obligations. This reality has negatively impacted Lansing as well. Moody's, an agency that rates school districts, has been steadily downgrading the Lansing School District

(Moody's Investors Service, 2013; 2015). In December 2013, the downgrade report ("Moody's Downgrades Lansing School District's (MI) GO Rating to A1; Outlook Negative"), cited the district's challenges as "limited revenue raising flexibility," "long-term trend of declining enrollment factoring unfavorably into the state aid formula," and "recent operating deficits resulting in narrow reserves" (Moody's Investors Service, 2013, n.p.).

The outlook is negative, the report indicates, because of the declining enrollment trend. In 2015, Moody's downgraded the LSD again (Moody's Investors Service, 2015). As both recent Moody's reports indicate, the district's reserves—its fund balance—has run low. In 2009-2010, the LSD had a fund balance of \$14,613,171. In 2013-2014, this had dwindled to \$3,399,771. The fund balance currently sits at a problematic level, as the Michigan School Business Officials (MSBO) recommend that districts maintain a fund balance equal to 15-20% of operating budget (MSBO, 2014).

These rating downgrades hurt the LSD's ability to borrow (i.e., to issue debt). At the same time, the LSD is not able to avoid seeking bond/millage money. In March 2015, LSD Superintendent Yvonne Caamal Canul presented on a bond proposal at a school board study session (Caamal Canul, 2015). The Superintendent recommended pursuing a two-mill increase in May 2016 to pay for facilities improvements. The proposal would raise around \$110 million for the district, and funds would largely be used to renovate or demolish decaying buildings (Palmer, 2015). Several teachers with whom I spoke were pessimistic about the chance of such a bond passing. One current teacher said it "had no chance," because the community would not support it. A former teacher told me that it would be interesting to see whether the current employees would support any bond because of fundamental distrust over past administration actions.

## **School Performance Accountability**

Like district finances, test-based accountability systems acted as a relatively stable parameter in one sense and also functioned as a sudden shock. The district also dealt with the long-time perception—what the ACF would call a fundamental sociocultural value—that it was a place of poor academic performance spurred by low student motivation, discipline problems, and fighting/violence. In the wake of the school choice law in 1996, the district dealt with high-profile instances of negative press. First, Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero moved his kids out of Lansing School District, noting that his daughter had been harassed by other students (Sturm, 2002). Michigan’s former governor Jennifer Granholm also chose to move her children to East Lansing Public Schools.

As a stable parameter, the district had dealt with low state standardized test scores across the district for years before the 2013 cuts. As a snapshot, the 2011 MEAP results find, on average of all LSD students, 55% of sixth grade students failing the reading test, 84% failing the math test, and 85% failing the social studies test. These numbers are worse for eighth grade students on average with 67% failing the reading test, 91% failing the math test, and 98% failing the science test (note: social studies and science are only tested once per grade span) (Lansing School District, 2013). At the high school level, one of the three buildings (Eastern High School) has been chronically failing in terms of test score performance. As indicated by the 2011 eleventh Grade Michigan Merit Examination results, 82% of Eastern students were not meeting basic standards in English, math, science, and social studies. Over 90% failed the science and social studies tests (Lansing School District, 2013). In different years, numerous schools have failed to make “adequate yearly progress” under NCLB.

Many schools in the LSD have come under formal scrutiny for being low-achieving. The state's system for labeling "failing" schools used the "persistently lowest achieving" (PLA) label until 2011, after which these schools were labeled as "priority schools." These labeling systems use a combination of test score data and graduation rates averaged across several years to arrive as designations (Michigan Department of Education, 2015a). The labeling systems followed 2009 provisions in the federal school improvement grant system and requirements in ESEA (NCLB) waivers gained after 2011 that required states to label the bottom 5% of schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The two labeling systems differ slightly, as PLA designations required "a complex set of tiers and pools of schools to draw from, whereas the Priority school designation is based on the Top-to-Bottom listing of schools" (Michigan Department of Education, 2015).

Schools that are labeled as "Priority" must devise and submit a "reform/redesign plan" that "focuses on rapid turnaround" (Michigan Department of Education, 2015). The schools then have three years to implement the plan, with constant monitoring from the state. Ten of Lansing's schools have been "Priority" schools in the last few years, and all selected a "transformation" plan that focuses on (a) teacher and administrator effectiveness, (b) instructional reform, (c) "extending or repurposing time for instruction and teacher planning time," (d) becoming community oriented, and (e) providing flexibility and support (Michigan Department of Education, 2015). Some of these ten schools managed to emerge from the bottom 5%, but others have remained. Eastern High School has come under special scrutiny, since it has been in the bottom 5% of schools for five years. Because the redesign plan is supposed to be given four years for implementation, some have called for the school to be closed (Gantert, 2014).

While ample research suggests that schools began to narrow the time allotted for non-tested subjects in the wake of test-based accountability systems (see Chapters One and Two for a review of literature), Lansing seems to have maintained (and improved) instructional time for elementary arts up until the 2013 cuts. As I discuss in the next section of this chapter, the district had increased the amount of elementary art and music teachers steadily between the 1970s and just before the cuts occurred. Through union contract negotiations, teachers had successfully secured more planning time such that elementary students received art once per week for 60 minutes per class, and music twice per week for 30 minutes per class. Participants with whom I spoke suggested that this amount had changed slightly, with one former music teacher saying: “It has changed several times since 2001, ranging from 30 to 45 min once to twice per week. One year [music] was 38 minute sessions.”

### **The Rise and Fall of the LSD Arts Programs**

The 2013 cuts came at a time when the district was in the midst of a downturn. The arts programming in the district had been slowly declining since around 2007, when worsening economic conditions began to have tangible effects on staffing and curriculum. It is also true that the early 2000s represented a kind of “heyday” for the LSD’s arts programs. The district had increased its support and staffing levels since another low point—the 1970s. The overall trajectory, then, is arc-shaped. One of my participants, a retired arts teacher who joined the district in the 1970s, talked about the gradual increase in arts programming: “[I started in] 1977, and then as the years progressed, things started getting better. They started thinking about planning time for teachers and how we would offset planning time” (interview transcript, January 20, 2015) This teacher remembered a very small arts staff trying to cover over 30

elementary schools, which necessitated traveling to 10 different schools (per teacher) and only seeing each class once per month.

Current LSD classroom teachers and arts specialists spoke of the previous era of little elementary arts instruction by specialists. When I asked a classroom teacher about regularity of instruction in the 1970s when she started in the LSD, she noted: “When I started, we didn’t have a whole lot of anything. I think we had it maybe very periodically, so we were happy to get them” (interview transcript, February 13, 2015) Another classroom teacher who grew up attending elementary school in the district said, “I went [to] school in Lansing. Like, I’m from Lansing. And we didn’t [have specialists] when I was a kid either. The classroom teacher did it! Just like we’re doing now” (interview transcript, March 5, 2015). Another LSD teacher who grew up in Lansing said the same: “We’ve seen similar times. When I was growing up in Lansing School District in the ‘70s, they only had two music teachers and [AMPE] was servicing more than 30 buildings at the time. I think it was up to 35 [elementary schools] back in the ‘70s.” This lack of specialists at the elementary level improved slowly but was still prevalent in the late 1990s. A classroom teacher remembered that even in 2000, instruction was sporadic: “When I got hired 14 years ago, we got art like once a month, and music—I don’t know, once every 3 weeks. We didn’t have what we had when it got cut” (interview transcript, March 5, 2015).

Arts programming improved in the district first at the secondary level, and came later to the elementary schools. These improvements in weekly arts time for elementary students came through negotiations. As a current classroom teacher noted, “We had worked to increase it, to increase it, to increase it to try to get elementary the same as high school, where they have almost an hour every single day.” The “it” here is two-pronged, of course. “It” is both arts programming and planning time. In other words, these increases in student contact time with arts specialists

came via contract negotiations because what was negotiated was expanded planning time for classroom teachers. A current LSD teacher also suggested the increases came in response to a different understanding about the value of the arts:

More people know a lot more now about the importance of arts education than they did in the '70s. I think they always knew it was important, but not a lot of people did. And as more people knew the importance of music in particular, that's when our numbers started to climb. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

For those teachers who were aware of this long, slow process of improvement, the 2013 cuts were especially upsetting. A retired arts teacher discussed how enjoyable it was to work in the “heyday” of the early 2000s after being spread so thin: “From 2000 on it was better and better and better. The last eight years I taught, I taught specifically in one school and I'd say about 2000 it started. It was fun, you know? It was great. So yeah, that's—and now we're back to where we were [laughs]” (interview transcript, January 20, 2015). The district had employed only a handful of endorsed arts specialists in the 1970s to teach elementary school art and music. By the time of the 2013 cuts, there were 27 FTEs in art and music. This retired teacher discussed this history of increased staffing in the period immediately preceding the cuts:

I also was in on meetings with the Superintendent and HR and some other people, some regular teachers and that, and I was trying to describe to them—because I'd been in the district for so long—what it was like when I first started teaching. Having to go to 10 schools, only seeing everybody once a month, and how it had progressively gotten better, and giving them suggestions and they didn't want to hear it. They didn't want—they didn't want to hear anything. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

### **“Lansing Used to be a Powerhouse”**

As mentioned earlier, current and former LSD teachers spoke fondly of the early 2000s as a “heyday” for arts education. A former elementary art teacher noted that there was a time in the district when one could brag about what was happening:

I remember when the district was wonderful. It was a powerhouse ... We had all kinds of great programs. It was wonderful. It was something to be proud of. And I used to brag about [LSD]. You know, people say that Lansing—in the press—is this, that and the other, all this negative stuff. But I would tell people, “No—you really need to check out some of the things there. It’s good.” (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

One former arts teacher decided to apply to the district at the urging of a friend who stressed how strong the programs were in the early 2000s: “I was encouraged to come to Lansing by a fellow colleague who had just retired. He encouraged me to come and I knew that working at a bigger school district would be—there would be more opportunity because, and I’d known this, but in a district the size of Lansing, there’s a lot of grants, there’s a lot of opportunities. And that did come true, it was fabulous. (interview transcript, January 5, 2015).

Other teachers echoed this idea that, in the early 2000s, Lansing was a place that drew good teachers who had a sense of mission about teaching in an urban district. “A current classroom teacher, however, mentioned that the loss of the elementary arts programs had changed her perception of working in LSD:

I remember starting out and you felt so good about working in Lansing because you knew those kids needed you. And you knew you were making a difference, and now it’s an embarrassment in many ways to tell people you’re in Lansing. You’re almost more embarrassed than you are proud of being there now ... You don’t even want to tell



anybody anymore that you're a Lansing teacher because it's embarrassing, if that makes sense. (interview transcript, February 13, 2015)

### **Federal Grants Enhance Arts Instruction**

In addition to gradual increases in sequential arts instruction provided by increases in teacher planning time, the district's "heyday" included rich curricular enhancements provided by federal grant monies and community partnerships. Across the interview data set, most participants spoke glowingly of these programs, describing them as "excellent," "amazing," "wonderful," "fantastic," "exciting," and "phenomenal." At the same time, several participants who were intimately involved with the organizing and administering the grants noted that not all LSD teachers embraced the programming provided. They also spoke of disappointment with how the grant department was cut once the funds ran out and no new arts grants were pursued.

### **Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS).**

In 2003, Lansing School District began an arts-integration project in its visual and performing arts magnet school, Pleasant View Elementary. Pleasant View had just opened in the 2001-2002 school year as part of the rollout of themed magnet schools across the district. The project was based around "Visual Thinking Strategies" (VTS). Visual Thinking Strategies are a pedagogical practice/intervention that has been applied in numerous schools and museums, and involves using aesthetic/social-constructivist techniques to engage students in higher-order thinking and aesthetic judgment (Charland, 2011).

As a former LSD employee discussed, "It's about looking at art and leading a guided discussion about what [students are] observing, and it forces the observer to go back and either talk about the evidence—what were they seeing that makes them say something, or reframe what they're thinking or saying" (interview transcript, January 21, 2015). As applied in LSD, teachers

first would have their students write a description of some object, then engage in 10-12 guided viewings led by the teacher (using VTS), and then write a second time. The former LSD employee familiar with the project said that the second attempt at writing was “richer, and better, and more descriptive” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015).

### **PAINTS Grant.**

The Lansing School District applied for and received several federal “Arts in Education—Model Development and Dissemination” (AEMDD) grants. One of these was for a project called PAINTS, which stood for “Promoting Arts Integration in Teaching Standards.” The grant summary describes it as a joint project between LSD, Michigan State University, Wharton Center for the Performing Arts (a nearby performing arts venue operated by MSU), and Kresge Art Museum (MSU’s art museum). Grant funds (around \$275,000) were provided to cover “research-based arts integration programs for K-8 students and other instructional staff” (Lansing School District, 2006). The goals of the program included (a) enhancing teachers’ arts content knowledge, (b) providing instructional strategies, (c) developing arts integration skills, (d) integrating technology into instruction, and (e) “promoting on-going communication between teachers” (Lansing School District, 2006). The grant expanded the VTS work from one school (Pleasant View) to four schools (adding Wexford Montessori School, Lewton Elementary, and Bingham Elementary), covering 1,233 students and 140 teachers (Charland, 2011). A retired art teacher spoke glowingly of the PAINTS program, noting: “We got lots of professional development, new art materials, document cameras, laptops. It was technology-bound, too. And a lot of field trips for kids, too” (interview transcript, January 5, 2015).

The specific goals of AEMDD grants necessitated that the LSD publicize the work. As the AEMDD website discusses, these grants are discretionary and competitive, and they are

meant to further the development of programs such that “strategies for integrating the arts into the regular elementary and middle school curricula” could be “implemented, expanded, documented, evaluated, and disseminated” (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). This dissemination occurred in several ways. As a former LSD employee discussed, the district’s VTS programs were the subject of a research study by Professor William Charland, an art education professor from nearby Western Michigan University. In addition to writing about the phases of VTS implementation (see Charland, 2011), district personnel traveled to several conferences around the country to present on its PAINTS program.

### **Picturing America.**

The last arts-integration focused grant that LSD received was funded through the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The \$75,000 grant was awarded to fund two conferences in the 2011-2012 school year for “up to 70 K-12 Michigan teachers on the history of Michigan’s pre- and post-World War II manufacturing might and its influence on the arts, culture, and society” (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2011). The project’s exact title was “Picturing America: The Legacy of the ‘Arsenal of Democracy’” (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2011). The NEH provided portfolios and LSD personnel operated the professional development conferences with support from Michigan State University.

### **Mini-Grants, Field Trips, Collaboration.**

Arts specialists in the district also were successful in receiving mini-grants from the Lansing Education Advancement Foundation for small-scale projects. These small grants—each totaling \$400-500—facilitated art projects in school gardens, paid for field trips and materials, or enabled the schools to bring in guests such as opera singers and country music artists. Arts teachers collaborated with classroom teachers on arts-integration projects and presented on the

projects for national audiences. A former art teacher discussed the positive teacher-teacher collaborations:

It was absolutely wonderful. I got to work with classroom teachers, I was able to collaborate with them ... There were a lot of things like that going on with arts specialists and classroom teachers. So those were great, great times with kids. They were going to the Wharton Center all the time. They were taken to the DIA [Detroit Institute of Arts], they were going to REACH [studio art center], all kinds of stuff. (interview transcript, January 5, 2015)

Another grant-funded program facilitated intensive nature experiences for students. The program, called “BIG Lesson,” involved a classroom teacher and art teacher taking students to a nature center for a weeklong, site-based learning experience.

The district also forged effective partnerships with a local art studio, “REACH Studio Art.” Because REACH was located in Lansing, and was close to one of the LSD’s elementary schools (Moors Park Elementary, now closed), this partnership was convenient. For several years, students could be bused to REACH for after-school art programs. In addition, in the 2009-2010 school year, REACH initiated an after-school project with the LSD and Michigan State University’s Residential College for Arts and Humanities. Called “Patterns of Place,” the project included four faculty artists from MSU including a poet, painter, printmaker, and photographer. The collaboration yielded an exhibition at REACH, in which around 90 pieces of art from 70 student artists were displayed.

#### **“MI Arts” Grant.**

The other major national grant discussed by LSD personnel was operated through the Lincoln Center Institute in New York City. Termed the “Michigan Art Project” or “MI Art,” the

federally-funded program brought seven teaching artists to Lansing between 2005 and 2009 and also operated in-depth professional development for Lansing teachers. Rather than “one-off” experiences, this professional development consisted of full immersion weeks in New York City, summer institutes, and ongoing development training. As with other grant-funded projects, classroom teachers and arts specialists spoke favorably of the experience. A former arts teacher said: “We’d gone through a partnership with Lincoln Center in New York City, where for four years they had specialists come and teach us how to teach—I can’t think of the word— affectively? We went to New York, they came here ... And that was just excellent. And a lot of the classroom teachers got in on it and everything” (interview transcript, January 5, 2015). Another commented: “I was Lincoln Center trained. It was an amazing program.”

### **Grant Programs Not Universally Appreciated/Adopted.**

Though the grant-funded programs that were present between 2003 and 2012 created a sort of high point in terms of the arts, not every teacher appreciated or adopted these offerings. As discussed in Charland’s (2011) article, participation varied widely in LSD: “Participation during the inaugural semester ranged from those teachers who jumped in with both feet, to those who made sincere but cautious attempts, to the few who did no VTS at all” (p. 9). Classroom teachers cited reasons for not embracing VTS that included “ever-increasing accountability and newly mandated reading initiatives” (p. 9). Charland does, however, cite survey data showing an increase in belief in VTS over several years of implementation in Lansing.

This mixed attitude among teachers toward grant-funded arts-based programming was not confined to the classroom teachers but also included endorsed arts specialists. As a former LSD employee recalled, arts-based/arts-integration strategies only were embraced by teachers who were younger or especially attached to the concepts:

I think we had 26 art teachers that we were working with. I would say maybe 5 or 6 of them really embraced that, and they were the best teachers, they were the most innovative people ... Most teachers though, thought of it as something more to put on their plate.

(interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

She noted that the most experienced teachers were “entrenched” in their ways and not as open-minded as the “younger, more energetic, more pliable teachers.” She also found this to be an issue when it came to the technology-training component of the PAINTS grant. The technology component that teachers were supposed to be doing with their students was not working because the teachers themselves did not have the “digital literacy” to implement the strategies. Even after \$100,000 was then reallocated for technology training for the teachers, the older educators still balked at the program. This former employee noted: “We conducted a lot of professional development and I would say more than 50% of the teachers—and they tend to be the older teachers—they didn’t want anything to do with it” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015).

### **Grant Funding Allowed to Lapse.**

Once the federally supported grants—including the federal AEMDD grant, the Lincoln Center Institute Grant, and the National Endowment for the Humanities grant—ran their course, they were not replaced and no new arts-in-education funding was pursued. The personnel who managed these grants also were let go in 2013 just before the sweeping cuts came. Several participants expressed how upset they were at this decision by the district. One former art teacher said:

Those grants ended and it was very curious. They ended and then—it’s like they no longer needed us because, I mean, [the grants] weren’t funding our salaries, but they were funding all these programs. And they had to be done by us [arts specialists], so it was

curious. Within a year, then ... those programs weren't run anymore, and they weren't pursuing them, like they were supposed to. (interview transcript, January 5, 2015)

Several former teachers went as far as to allege that the district had violated the terms of the grant, because the grant applications involved the intent to sustain programming after the grant funding ended. One former teacher said: "The sustainability, is very interesting ... They're supposed to sustain them at some level. But whatever level now is zilch" (interview transcript, January 5, 2015). Another said, "A lot of federal grants that you apply for, a lot of grants, one of the stipulations is they fund you for so many years and then the reason why they have to go through the district is because the district has to sign that they will pledge funds for so many years beyond. And so all those, they ran out and the district didn't fund them, as I understand it" (interview transcript, January 6, 2015). Another questioned why the district was not "in trouble" for abandoning the grant-funded programs.

A former employee with knowledge of the grants, however, noted that intention to sustain at the time of initial funding is all that is required by law: "The grants were taken through, all the way to their culmination, we spent all the money we have committed on the program, we did all the things that we said we would do. What the district did not do was pursue more grants for the arts." This employee suggested that the failure to reapply for more grants or sustain the current programs likely was due to the change in district leadership, as the new Superintendent had just come into the district in 2012. She said: "The reason for that probably was, from my perspective, is that we had a brand new Superintendent ... I think there were so many things that needed to be addressed that this was kind of put on a back burner" (interview transcript, January 21, 2015).

## **“We’re on the Downslope Now”: Cuts to Instrumental Music**

Several teachers with whom I spoke talked about how one marker of the declining “health” of the arts programs in the LSD was the decision to make beginning band extra-curricular. In 2012, the district reorganized the grade levels in its buildings. As a result, the sixth grade bands were no longer concentrated in the middle schools (which had been grades six to eight). They instead were put into many buildings that housed grades four to six. Also, the fifth and sixth grade bands had been operating on a “pullout lesson” model, where a teacher pulls out small groups of like-instrument students from another class to work on beginning fundamentals. District administrators then asked music teachers to run the fifth and sixth grade programs after school. This necessitated that the band meet at a single site, meaning that interested students would all have to be bused to one school. A current music teacher remembered:

[LSD has gone] through lots of transitions in the past decade, one of which was the beginning band program going from in-class, school hours, to after school ... [It] started out okay, but Lansing is such a widespread city [that having] one site for the kids—we started out with 200 kids, not a bad turnout. And it was down to about 140 by the time we ended it [that spring]. And after that, that—they couldn’t find teachers to continue the position. We had it for another year as an after-school program, and now, I don’t even think students will get an opportunity to start on the band or string instrument until they get to seventh grade. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

As the district was considering the cuts to beginning band, they discussed the issue at a board meeting. A former music teacher remembered the conversation about a perceived lack of student learning in fifth grade band:



One of the administrators got up and said, “Well, all they know how to do at the end of the year is “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.” ... The fifth grade program was eventually killed as well ... [First] they decided to move it—they were going to try it extracurricular. And they did it I think twice a week and had the kids shipped to different schools. It just didn’t work, and these are urban kids—you can’t just ship them everywhere and expect them to be able to get there or get home. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

Participants also discussed the “decimation of the strings program” as a turning point in the downward slope of the arts programs. Several factors may have contributed, including teachers being asked to teach outside their area of specialty. One former teacher related: “We saw decimation of the strings program for sure, in Lansing. That was starting even before I got there. The strings program was going down hill because they couldn’t get teachers who were actually string teachers there” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015). Several other isolated cuts occurred as well. One highly respected strings teacher left the district to take a nearby job. Another strings teacher who was struggling with enrollment numbers proposed a schedule to his principal that would allow him to keep the orchestra classes going. The principal, however, told him not to bother because the numbers were too low. As a result, there are currently no grades nine to 12 orchestra classes in LSD, and two of the high school buildings only have a semester-long strings exploration class for seventh and eighth grade students.

This practice of localized cuts within certain district schools was not only an issue for the orchestra program. A music teacher told me that “after about eight years, they started cutting my job” (interview transcript, February 13, 2015). This included slowly cutting the amount of choir classes at the high school level, which changed the teaching load and ended up forcing this

teacher into an elementary position. A former music teacher shared that talented secondary arts teachers had left the LSD because the district was assigning them to too many classes:

They're demanding so much ... You see these teachers, and now they're not just teaching just high school, they're teaching middle school and high school. And it's ridiculous. We have lost a lot of really good musicians, art teachers, phys ed teachers to different districts, and I've written a lot of recommendation letters for people. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

In some cases, arts teachers retired and were not replaced with strong educators. A former art teacher noted:

We had an amazing dance teacher there for 30 years at Everett High School Unbelievable. Nobody had a dance teacher, nobody had a dance program in an urban school district, or suburban, anywhere around us. When she left, did they replace her with somebody just as phenomenal? No. They kept having a revolving door and that whole program went down the tubes. (interview transcript, January 5, 2015)

### **Negative Perception of Elementary AMPE Teachers and Content Areas**

Participants in my study consistently voiced that the LSD did not value the arts except as a means of providing planning time to other teachers. As a former music teacher put it, "Lansing never took the idea 'art for art itself,' they always did it, 'Okay, this is just for planning time'" (interview transcript, January 20, 2015). This lack of value was reflected in the attention paid to arts classes. A former music teacher said she could not get LSD administrators to come to her classroom:

They never valued the art, music, and phys ed for itself. I mean, I would invite [the Superintendent], I don't know how many times to watch a music lesson. Other arts

specialists did too, but she never came, and you know—they were just—between the [Superintendent and the] board, they just didn't care. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

Participants discussed feeling as though they were regarded as less important than classroom teachers. They perceived this attitude from some classroom teachers who would bring their classes to appointed art or music time late. One former art teacher said the classroom teachers in her building, “Considered the art program to be nothing, so they didn't even bother to come if what they were doing was more important than anything we were doing” (interview transcript, December 16, 2014). When she challenged a teacher who kept bringing his students 20 minutes late to art class, he complained and they got into an argument. She remembered this as an ongoing source of stress: “That kind of thing wears you down.” This same teacher remembered walking into her art classroom only to find it had been converted into a studio where all the students would have their yearly pictures taken. She said:

Suddenly I felt completely useless and peripheral to any learning activities that were going on. To walk in and find my room just torn up—not torn up, but made into a studio and suddenly I'm on the cart, it sends a message to your teachers there. (interview transcript, December 16, 2014)

### **“Release/Planning Time Specialists”**

Former arts teachers said that the lack of value on the arts was especially obvious because of how administrators and union leaders referred to the teachers and the AMPE department. A former music teacher, when I used the term “AMPE” in our interview, laughed and said: “I think that is such a funny name, ‘AMPE.’ I mean, talk about demeaning, you know? ‘AMPE Staff.’” (interview transcript, January 20, 2015). I heard from several former teachers that they were

often referred to as “planning time specialists” or “release time teachers,” implying that their purpose was purely to provide a break for, as my participants said, the “real teachers.” One former teacher remembered being referred to as a “babysitter.” A former music teacher recalled a specific moment when the union president used this kind of language in a meeting with the AMPE teachers:

The union president of the Lansing School Education Association at the time was in a meeting with all of the AMPE people. And this was maybe 2007, I don’t know, maybe it was 2006. But he said to all of us, he called us “release time specialists.” And there was a big uprising. People were very angry of course because we’re educators, we’re educators, and for somebody to be referred to in that matter was very degrading. And that was the breakdown—part of the beginning of the breakdown between—the relationship between the AMPE staff and the union. (interview transcript, January 6, 2015)

Another former teacher remembered the comments similarly: “I can quote one of the union leaders who said, ‘You are just planning time. That’s all you are.’ This person never, ever got it” (interview transcript, January 5, 2015).

### **Scheduling Problems and Ineffective Oversight**

In addition to the perception of arts teachers as merely “filler” for teachers’ planning time needs, administrators had also voiced frustration at trying to schedule and assign AMPE teachers. In many settings, art, music, and physical education teachers at the elementary level often can have complicated and changing schedules. Two art teachers may end up sharing three schools, and it is not uncommon for classes to be combined, awkwardly split up among arts teachers, or for a class to see a different art teacher on different days of the week. A former music teacher explained the frustration over elementary AMPE teacher schedules: “When you’re

so itinerant and you're in so many different places, and you have a different number of contact minutes, people don't always appreciate it and understand it. And I think sometimes a lack of understanding breeds hostility and animosity at times" (interview transcript, January 6, 2015).

Amid the conversations about scheduling, this former employee often heard AMPE teachers described as "inconvenient" and a "pain in the ass." This teacher remembered:

Every year it was brought up that we were a pain in the ass. And everybody complained about us because nobody really understood what we did, nobody really understood scheduling and the different constraints that need to be put to be successful with it, and so because people didn't understand, we were just always kind of shoved to the side as inconvenient. (interview transcript, January 6, 2015)

This teacher noted that central office administrators in LSD "just flat out said 'They're a pain in my ass, I wish they were gone.'" The frustration went beyond inconvenience in scheduling to the belief that AMPE staff members were not teaching full loads: "Nobody thought that anybody worked. There was always this misconception that people were lazy, and they weren't really doing anything, and they weren't really pulling their weight" (interview transcript, January 6, 2015).

This assertion that some AMPE teachers were shirking responsibility may not have been entirely unfounded, and the issue is also wrapped up in details about oversight. Numerous participants told me that, because AMPE was seen as a "pain in the ass," no administrator wanted to oversee the teachers. Whenever an administrator oversaw the AMPE department for a time and became frustrated with the scheduling issues, they passed the responsibility off to another administrator. A former art teacher explained: "We never actually had a boss. We were bounced around from principal to principal, administrator to administrator. Nobody wanted us

and we all knew that. They just were like [grudgingly], ‘Oh, we’ll take on AMPE’” (interview transcript, January 16, 2015). This situation eventually progressed to the point where some AMPE teachers were tasked with making their own schedules with no oversight from an administrator. For some teachers, this “begged for people to screw around,” as a former art teacher explained:

I’ll just tell it like it was. There were some people who would scam the system. They would come up with little fake schedules and, you know, it was like maybe 2% of us ... You had to come up with your schedule. If you were assigned a building, you figured out what days you were there and you had people sign up, ideally five classes a day, of an hour, 60 minute classes, and then a little planning for yourself, hopefully. But some people if they were in a building that didn’t have as many classes, and they had like half a day or something that could have been all their planning or free, and they should have packed it in more or shared schools or whatever. There was a person who made fictitious names up and put it in. (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

This teacher was furious at this practice and commented on how it reflected poorly on the hardworking teachers:

And I’m telling you right now, there was just—you can’t do that ... People, if they find out, they’re going to think [AMPE teachers are] all that way. And I was aghast when I saw those things happening. I was just shocked. (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

### **AMPE “Offered Up” in Previous Negotiations**

Another marker of the negative perception of AMPE’s value among LSD leadership (i.e., administrators and union members) was that cutting the department had been an option discussed for some years. A number of informants, when asked what had recently happened in LSD to

make cutting the AMPE department, said discussing cuts to AMPE was a long-standing solution to budget problems. A former music teacher remembered: “I found out that whenever there was a question of budget, our former [union] president had always offered our heads up on a plate. ‘Well why not just take these guys? Just take them right here. Problem solved—this money goes back into the budget’” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015). When I asked interviewees when they first heard that AMPE might be cut in 2013, several could not remember, because it was a constant possibility in prior years. A former music teacher said: “I think why it’s probably insignificant in my memory is that there’d been rumblings for years that they were going to cut AMPE. I mean for the past—the last two or three years of my time there, it was always a possibility that they’re going to cut AMPE” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015).

### **Structural Weakening of Elementary AMPE Programs**

Aside from the seemingly prevailing belief that the arts and music teachers at the elementary level were dispensable or presented scheduling problems that needed to be solved, several district practices that directly weakened the AMPE department were discussed at length by my informants. I consider these, in combination, to be both a contributing cause to the negative perception of the AMPE department and a distinct parameter that enabled the cuts.

### **Non-Endorsed Teachers Placed in Specialist Roles**

By far, the most commonly discussed factor enabling the cuts to specialist positions was the district’s practice of putting non-endorsed teachers into art, music, and physical education positions at the elementary level. It was the one issue that came up in every single interview I conducted with current and past district employees, and it also came up in most of the interviews I conducted with community arts providers. This issue illustrates effectively how macro policies

interact with micro realities, and shows the confusion around policy issues such as certification vs. endorsement, compliance, guidance, and flexibility.

At the macro-level, states traditionally have been responsible for determining the way in which teachers are deemed eligible to teach (certification) and for determining which teachers may teach which grade levels and courses (endorsement). This changed with the passage of the *No Child Left Behind* act in 2002. As a result of NCLB's "highly qualified" teacher (HQT) provisions, the federal government tied funding to more strict rules about certification and endorsement (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Each state now had to confirm, by its own method, that every teacher in a core subject was highly qualified, and these methods differed for newly certified teachers and current educators. In Michigan, aside from provisions for alternative certification and other instances of flexibility, teachers had to have an academic major in the subject area, completed through a degree program at a state-approved teacher education program. They also had to pass a subject-matter certification test. Teachers already certified prior to NCLB could be grandfathered in by demonstrating subject-matter competency through a variety of methods that complied with the federal HQT rules.

The certification/endorsement situation has been fluid and developing in Michigan. The state changed its certificates in 1988, ushered in the new Basic Skills section of the Michigan Test of Teacher Certification (MTTC) in 1991, added subject-matter tests in 1992, dealt with NCLB compliance between 2001 and 2006, has continually changed and/or retired certain subject-matter specific certificates, and changed rules for issuance and renewal of entry level and continuing certificates (e.g., provisional, professional). Since the passage of the initial HQT provisions in NCLB, the federal government also has become increasingly flexible in its approval process for state compliance. Only nine states were fully compliant by the initial



deadline of July 2006, and all other states then applied for and received approval with various levels of flexibility (Learning Point Associates, 2007).

Michigan's elementary teachers are—in most situations—shown to be highly qualified by passing the MTTC Elementary Education Test (Test #103). Passing this test certifies the elementary teacher to teach “all subjects.” Teachers certified before September 1, 1988 can teach in all subjects K-8, while those certified after this date can teach all subjects in grades K-5, and in grade 6-8 for which they have an academic major/minor. This latter group can also teach all subjects up through grade 8 if they are in a “self-contained classroom” (i.e., students receive majority of instruction with a single teacher).

In 2008, the State Board of Education adopted new program standards for elementary education (Michigan Department of Education, 2008). One of the changes was that elementary educators were now required to take coursework in performing and visual arts as part of their degree program: “Elementary program standards will ensure that teachers are prepared with broad content knowledge in integrated science, language arts, social studies, mathematics, reading, visual and performing arts, physical education, and health” (Michigan Department of Education, 2008, p. 3). This document goes on to clarify that this preparation will include “some depth and breadth” across content areas (p. 4). At the 32 approved teacher preparation programs in Michigan, this seems to have been interpreted as including one or two courses focused on integrating arts into instruction.

Guidance from the Michigan Department of Education on appropriate course assignments for elementary educators has developed over time. Buried somewhat in the Certification Standards for Elementary Teachers (2008) is a clarification about teaching the arts:

The teacher generalist, who is prepared to teach in a **self-contained classroom**, is not prepared to teach and should not be assigned as a specialist in a program outside the self-contained classroom context (e.g., music, visual arts, physical education, health, reading, technology, library media). (emphasis original, p. 4)

This means that a teacher with all subjects certification (K-5 or K-8) should only teach music and visual arts if they administer instruction to the students in their classroom (i.e., not for an entire school). Further guidance to this effect is found in the MDE’s “Appropriate Instructional Assignments for Elementary Certified Teachers” (2015b). The language mirrors the “should not” assertion of the 2008 document:

- . These certificates have what is known as an “all subjects” designation. The all subjects designation authorizes the holder to teach all subjects under Michigan law, within the grade levels indicated. However, based on the 2008 Elementary Certificate Program Standards the MDE **recommends** that the holders of these certificates only be assigned to teach departmentalized courses (e.g., music, visual arts, physical education, health, Title I reading, Title I Mathematics, library media) if they hold those specific endorsements OR if they have had appropriate coursework or professional development in the relevant content. (emphasis original, p. 1)

In a phone conversation with MDE employee, Alex Clark, he discussed how the state had, until recently, interpreted the aforementioned “all subjects” certifications to be literal: “All means all, they can teach all subjects in those grades” (personal communication, March 31, 2015). However, the department issued the guidance (mentioned in the previous paragraph) because it strongly recommended that someone have specific endorsements (e.g., in art education, music education) to teach in the arts. A look at these two pieces of guidance shows

how the state has attempted to clarify its intent while still maintaining flexibility for school districts to assign generalist teachers to a variety of courses.

To refer back to the local situation in Lansing, interviewees described to me how the union had formally instituted the placement of classroom generalists in specialist positions in “layoff situations.” A former music teacher said, “In Lansing, there is contractual language that states that in a layoff situation, you don’t have to have a music certification to teach general music” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015). What started as a “letter of agreement” to this effect was later added as contractual language. This practice, which may have started out as a temporary way to avoid laying off all-subjects certified teachers, became common practice as the LSD was almost always in a “layoff situation.” Another former music teacher remembered:

Supposedly, there was an LOA, which is a letter of agreement, which allowed them for the purposes of avoiding layoffs, to put somebody who was all subjects in an [specialist] position without that endorsement. However, they did that even if it wasn’t to avoid layoffs. If it was to avoid layoffs, I can appreciate that and I’m sensitive to that, and I can deal with that. However, that’s not what happened. And when layoffs are over, and a position opens in an area they are highly qualified in, you need to pull them out and you need to put them in the job. And it never happened. (interview transcript, January 6, 2015)

The endorsed art and music teachers I spoke with were uniformly against this, both as a state policy and as a district policy. A former music teacher remembered finding out that she could be replaced with a generalist: “I was told that any K-5 all subjects could take my job, and I [thought], ‘That can’t be right, that can’t possibly be right, with all the training I went through.’ You have to be kidding me” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015). Teachers that I spoke with

were not entirely sure of whether the LSD was in violation of state rules or merely in violation of the guidance language on appropriate assignment. One former teacher understood the LSD's actions as illegal, saying: "According to the state, anybody who taught art, music, phys ed, had to be certified in that. But Lansing schools decided to ignore that and just put like classroom teachers in there" (interview transcript, January 20, 2015). Another echoed this sentiment, saying LSD was "out of compliance" and "violated certification guidelines." Others seemed to understand that the LSD was, in essence, exploiting a gray area. One former teacher had looked into the details: "I had begun that research in 2006 when I was told 'Joe Schmo' could take my job ... They had updated the regulations between 2006 and that time, but it was still the same language and it said, 'K-5 generalists are not prepared to and should not be assigned to teach in a specialist classroom'" (interview transcript, January 21, 2015).

Several endorsed arts teachers fought this policy and tried to raise awareness of the practice. A former art teacher discussed bringing it up at a school board meeting: "I went to many meetings, and I showed them the state laws. And the state law doesn't say you have to do it, but it says no one should be teaching art, music, or P.E. unless they have an endorsement" (interview transcript, January 5, 2015). Other art teachers raised the issue at a meeting that the union held to discuss the highly qualified provisions in NCLB, as one recalled:

Because we brought up that [issue]—we printed [the guidance language] off and we shared it. We got on the agenda, did everything legit. And it said something about "the specialist should be endorsed" something, something. "Regular classroom teachers should not be teaching," da da da. But it wasn't, "Not allowed to." It was, "This is our strong suggestion." So we showed that to them and said, "Why are we still doing this? You know, this is ridiculous. You have enough endorsed people, people have been laid

off who shouldn't have." And I remember [the union president's] face. She was mad that we did that. She looked like she wanted to just wring our necks ... We were just trying to make things fair and put an end to this ridiculous practice. (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

Several endorsed arts teachers fought the issue for the last time when the decision to cut the AMPE department was impending. The teachers attempted to assert, again, that Lansing should not be staffing all-subjects certified generalists in specialist positions. They were rebuffed, however, as one former music teacher discussed: "We were looking at it with colleagues and what not ... I remember that was the death knell—it said 'should not' not 'can't'" (interview transcript, January 21, 2015). In their minds, the teachers said the state policy language should not be allowed to apply to a district like Lansing. One educator explained:

The whole point of that wording is to allow Negaunee [rural district in the upper peninsula of Michigan], which has, like, 60 teachers, to have somebody who's not certified ... It's not meant for a large urban district like this in any way shape or form ... your mouth is just agape that that's actually allowed. And most districts use the discretion to hire people who are certified. Unless you're Lansing. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

Another former music teacher agreed: "K-8 [certification], which was intended initially to prepare teachers to provide [art and music] should they end up in a district where it's not there, unions around the state have used it as a means of replacement. 'You've got a K-8, so you can teach eighth grade band.'" (interview transcript, February 23, 2015).

Specialists and classroom teachers agreed that, as a result of this policy, the elementary arts instruction was uneven across the district. With around half of the AMPE department being

non-endorsed at the time of the cuts, there were some teachers who were highly respected and others who were regarded as incompetent, as a former music teacher explained: “Because of some of the folks in the district who were “K-5 all subjects” teaching music, we didn’t have a great reputation. There were probably half of them not doing a great job” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015). The incompetent teachers angered both specialists and classroom teachers, with specialists especially angry at how this poor instruction reflected on the AMPE department as a whole. One former music teacher remembered: “We had one music teacher in there who, for the first year, he taught the recorder the wrong way—he put the wrong hand in the wrong place, and whenever he wrote his [music] notes, he’d write ‘em backwards, you know, which just infuriated me” (interview transcript, January 20, 2015). Another participant echoed this same type of story: “God—there were people teaching music that could not even read music. Like, really?” And: “I saw people teaching music that had the music book upside down ... Your sheet music--upside down!” (interview transcript, January 5, 2015).

Arts teachers I spoke with were quick to point out that it was not only the “all subjects” generalists who reflected poorly on the department, but that a number of endorsed specialists were engaging in poor instruction as well. One music teacher said that there were two endorsed music specialists who covered the building—himself and one other teacher. The classroom teachers would routinely tell this teacher that students were begging to come to his class instead of the other teachers’ class: “The teachers that had the other music specialist would just come to me and go, ‘What is she doing? I don’t get it. My kids miss you’” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015). Other participants echoed this, saying some specialists were “phoning it in,” playing CDs instead of actively singing and moving with students.

The net effect of the bad teaching by some in the AMPE department was that classroom teachers began to resent and discredit the arts and music teachers, and some felt they could do better teaching these subjects than the AMPE teachers. One former teacher music noted:

You've got half of the elementary teachers in the district seeing that there's a piss-poor job being done of teaching these subjects. So yeah, 'I can do that better—absolutely. He leaves at 3:30 everyday—I can do that. He plays CDs all the time—I can do that.' So that killed us. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

Another music teacher agreed: “The people within the AMPE system screwed each other ... So the district and the union always had teachers that they could point to to say, ‘Well, he’s not doing anything. I can get a classroom teacher to do that’” (interview transcript, January 5, 2015)

In the same way that administrators seemed to pass oversight of the AMPE department around, I was told that administrators would, rather than deal with a teacher who was known to be giving poor instruction, instead send them to a different building: “Every year [AMPE teachers] had different schools because [principals] didn’t want bad ones—the principals would complain and say, ‘We need a different music teacher, we need a different art teacher—we don’t like this person.’ So they would switch them around” (interview transcript, January 20, 2015). A former art teacher relayed frustration that administrators did not take responsibility for evaluating and firing bad teachers: “Take care of those [bad teachers]. There were some administrators who could have just absolutely kicked their behinds and sent them packing. They had enough proof” (interview transcript, March 16, 2015). Instead, “It was just chess pieces.”

Participants told me that, in the end, enough elementary principals had complained about the poor AMPE teachers that the district leadership began to seriously consider cutting the department as the contract negotiations neared. In Fall 2012, one of these principals was

overseeing the AMPE department and told some of the AMPE teachers to “get things in order.”

He had been disgruntled over an unendorsed teacher, as a former art educator related:

There was a teacher who was under his supervision, who was teaching art and had no background in art, and [the principal] was disgusted. We all were disgusted. We explained this is not right, and we all volunteered in whatever ways to help this person. It had been going on for a year. (interview transcript, January 5, 2015)

A current classroom teacher echoed this, saying that, ultimately, it was “very adversarial, political, and somewhat vindictive to eliminate those positions” (interview transcript, March 14, 2015).

### **Moving Teachers in and Out of Roles/Schools**

Because of layoffs, arts teachers often taught in a number of buildings within LSD. One former teacher said: “In the eight years I was in Lansing, I taught in 20 different schools” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015). But several informants also told me that they felt AMPE teachers had been moved around and reassigned to buildings as part of an intentional effort to create instability. In the last year or two before the cuts occurred, some teachers’ schedules were revised, and this change took them out of buildings in which they had worked for years. A former art teacher remembered getting the revised schedules: “I was emailed a schedule for my year ... And it was just a ridiculous schedule, which had me going across town, and it didn’t make sense at all.” This teacher got together with another teacher who had been moved, and they found a way to redo the schedules to make more sense. This, however, was met with opposition: “[Our administrator] totally rejected it and she emailed us—the AMPE teachers—that she was livid with people responding to her about what they wanted and she wasn’t honoring any



choices. She didn't want to hear anything from anybody, she'd made her decisions, and that was that."

This teacher felt that the moves were made in order to "destroy" bonds between AMPE teachers and other building staff:

They mixed everybody's schedules up, they broke those bonds and now you've got [classroom] teachers who feel no remorse because they don't know that new arts teacher, so they don't feel bad about the loyalty that they would have had they worked with them for years and known their families. (interview transcript, December 16, 2014)

Another senior elementary art teacher was moved from a building in which he had taught for a long time. The suspicion among my participants was that there were politics involved and that district leadership "didn't want the building teachers to feel sorry for anybody, especially if they had a new AMPE person they didn't know" (interview transcript, December 16, 2014)

### **"Art on a Cart" and Negotiable Spaces**

In addition to feeling like specialists were moved haphazardly between buildings (either intentionally or only as a symptom of devaluing the arts), participants also spoke of how specialist teachers lost dedicated spaces. The phrase, "art on a cart" was used frequently to describe the feeling of operating without a classroom and, instead, traveling to teach in a variety of classrooms in a building. In the LSD, as in many districts, this situation arises when an influx of students creates the need to open up another class (e.g., another "section" of third grade), or when a principal decides to use a classroom for coaching, interventions, testing, or other purposes. A former art teacher explained how this made her feel:

We were on a cart, most of us, which meant we went into a classroom, not an ideal situation ... But that tells you right there the feeling about art and music. Most of us were

on a cart, most of us didn't have dedicated space. And that's not the way it happens in the suburban schools. Even in the rural school districts I taught in, I had my own space there. So we were always relegated to, "Oh we have too many classrooms this year, you're going to have to go around the building. (interview transcript, January 5, 2015)

Some art teachers said they had been "art on a cart" for so long that it did not bother them. Others remembered frustration at the way they often were displaced from a classroom without warning. A former art teacher said that when she was suddenly bumped from her room, it made her feel like her space was negotiable and that she did not have a place. A current classroom teacher said his colleagues started to feel like "vagabonds" as they went from classroom to classroom.

Displacing the art and music teachers from their classrooms also had a negative effect on their relationships with the classroom teachers. Art and music teachers, when they taught from a cart, had to deliver instruction in the classroom generalist's space. This created a number of issues. As a current classroom teacher suggested, it created animosity between teachers whenever student discipline problems arose. This teacher remembered:

It was a phasing of first pushing them into the classroom because there wasn't space ...

The art and the music was being done in the room the last couple years, and they—the [classroom] teachers were being expected to be on site and that became a major issue.

[Specialists] were coming into the classroom during planning time, and the teachers really weren't planning—they were being stuck with dealing with discipline. (interview transcript, March 14, 2015)

Thus, the classroom teachers were, in essence, losing their planning time, as they had to work through problems with which the specialist was dealing. The classroom teacher remembered that

this, “Created for a ripe environment for the teachers were coming back or staying in and dealing with problems” (interview transcript, March 14, 2015).

Another current classroom teacher with whom I spoke discussed her frustration at this problem. She noted that certain specialists just could not manage the classroom well: “There were some very qualified specialists, but there were some specialists that had a lot of struggles and spent a lot of time dealing with management, that couldn’t control classes” (interview transcript, March 5, 2015). For this teacher, who already felt confident teaching the arts to her students, losing planning time to a specialist’s classroom management problems caused her to question the value of the specialist: “I felt like I did just as good a job teaching music and songs to my kids, as the music specialist that came in, and did a better job managing my class than they did” (interview transcript, March 5, 2015). Participants also told me that, as the 2012-2013 school year wore on, and specialists had heard that they were like to be cut, some of the AMPE teachers took sick leave/personal days more often. When substitutes—who mostly had no music/art expertise—were in charge of these subjects, the discipline problems were even worse.

This discipline issue, caused by an instructional space problem, exacerbated tensions that already existed. A current classroom teacher remembered:

Watching this stuff going on, it just—it got to a point where, because the discipline was such a big issue, and it was not really being dealt with, and it was being always blamed on instruction, on the teachers—it became a real divisive issue when it came to eliminate these positions, because it’s like they were blaming the AMPE people for so long.

(interview transcript, March 14, 2015)

This same teacher felt that the district had purposefully allowed this situation to occur to foment anger:

It was a burden being put back on the teacher, to me, by design. So then when it came right to get rid of that versus taking a 15% cut, people were already worn out. And so, this was done by design over time. (interview transcript, March 14, 2015)

In addition to creating hostility over discipline issues, having the specialists teach in the classroom teachers' spaces amplified other interpersonal issues. Participants said that, if a classroom teacher already was inclined to think the specialists "just play" with kids, having the specialist teaching in his/her room brought this jealousy/frustration to the fore. Another former art teacher said that classroom teachers already were frustrated with some unendorsed AMPE teachers, and having them in their classrooms exacerbated this:

So these [unendorsed] people came in, weren't good in that area because they hadn't been trained in it. So a lot of [classroom] teachers I think voted for this because they ended up having these people in their classrooms and they were not—they didn't know their craft. (interview transcript, January 5, 2015)

## **Discussion**

In this chapter, I have reviewed a number of relatively stable parameters that frame the situation that the Lansing School District faced in 2013 when it eventually decided to cut its elementary art and music teachers. Understanding this backdrop is integral to contextualizing the external pressures that guided the district's decision-making process. The advocacy coalition framework also states, as one of its main hypotheses, that external factors such as the ones discussed are more important to the agenda setting/policy change process than activity that occurs within the policy subsystem (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Thus, when attempting to locate the conditions that enabled the March 2013 cuts, as I do in my first research question, it is crucial to define and study these factors.

I arrived at this list of factors through my analysis of interviews and relevant news stories. In several cases, including financial problems and accountability pressures, one can find both stable conditions at work and sudden shocks. In the case of finances, there had been a steady decline in available dollars (stable) and the threat of a takeover by an emergency financial manager to be appointed by the Governor (sudden). In terms of accountability, there had been persistent test score and graduation problems (stable), as well as the threat of being moved into the Education Achievement Authority (sudden). In some cases, the distinction between stable and sudden is unclear. For example, the negative perception of AMPE teachers and growing animosity between classroom generalists and arts specialists seems stable. But the more recent exacerbation of the problem brought on by forcing arts teachers to work in generalists' classrooms could be seen as a gradual crescendo of the stable parameter, or a sudden shock. I have chosen to interpret it as the former, but the classification is debatable. Of course, in all areas of this analysis, the ACF is best considered a heuristic, since this is one of the first known applications of the framework to a local education situation.

As seen in the ACF model (see Figure 1), one must consider several issues in analyzing how relatively stable parameters exert pressure on the policy subsystem. One “mediating factor” is the degree of consensus necessary for change to occur. In essence, this consensus mediates how a coalition is able to seize on a new opportunity created by an external pressure. This ability to mobilize also is affected by the short-term constraints and resources of coalitions (see Figure 1). Combined, these mediating factors suggest that the degree to which a coalition (or a full subsystem of several coalitions) is nimble and responsive is important for policy change.

As I discuss more in Chapter Five, the coalitions involved in the decision-making process were fluid in membership, overlapping, and varied greatly in their responsiveness. More

important, the negotiating process exemplified the distinct power imbalances of the coalitions involved, as the decision itself came down to conversations between only two groups: the central administrators and the union bargaining team. Moreover, these coalitions ultimately seemed to do little negotiating and reach a consensus with an alacrity that startled some. As I discuss more in Chapter Five, it was this quick consensus that led some to accuse the administration and the union of being “in cahoots” or to level complaints of corrupt union vote counting.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

### Introduction

In Chapter Four, I focused on describing relatively stable parameters—or policy conditions—that had been in place in the Lansing School District that seem to have enabled the 2013 cuts to elementary arts specialist positions. Understanding these parameters is important for contextualizing the policy decision that was made and is important for understanding the pressures on the policy subsystem. In this chapter, I focus on the decision-making process itself. I first extend Chapter Four’s discussion of financial and accountability pressures by explaining the sudden shocks that helped to force a decision. I then introduce the coalitions involved in the lead-up to the decision and in the immediate aftermath of the vote to approve the changes. In the discussion of coalitions, I also include sections addressing the relationships between the groups.

Per the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), I discuss other events and mechanisms that advanced the decision-making process. These include addressing policy-oriented learning, possible changes in belief systems, and policy imaging/framing efforts used to shape the conversation about the decision. Throughout the chapter, I draw on my analysis of interview data and on relevant documents (i.e., news stories, letters, policy whitepapers, speech transcripts) to frame the discussion of the decision-making process.

I spend a major part of this chapter examining the community arts providers who were drawn into the situation in the LSD after the Superintendent told the press the arts providers would provide instruction in place of the specialists. Following the twists and turns of this coalition’s actions, which happened after the decision occurred, is instructive for understanding how such groups function in a local arts education ecosystem, how beliefs and tensions change

coalition membership, and how communities deal with delivery of arts instruction in schools in times of lean budgets.

### **External Perturbations and “Shocks”**

As I discuss in Chapter Four, the ACF suggests that factors external to the policy subsystem are more likely to spur policy change than internal factors (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Certain external factors (shocks) have the power to cause sudden shifts in coalition actions or the perceived need for policy change. Examples from other contexts include a surprising election result or coup d’etat “shocking” a defense policy subsystem, and a major airline disaster spurring immediate changes to airline maintenance policy (Sabatier, 2007). Two shocks I discuss in this chapter are related to the financial and accountability parameters I discussed in Chapter Four, but are distinct in the terms of the pressure they applied to the subsystem. The third shock is a statutory change: the passage of the “Right to Work” act. This shock seems to especially have spurred the teachers union to act quickly.

#### **Financial Shock: Emergency Manager**

As discussed in Chapter Four, Lansing School District has been in a downward financial spiral for years as a result of declining student enrollment, the inability to raise funds to replace vacant or crumbling buildings, and declining per pupil funding from the state. The fund balance, which serves as a sort of “cushion,” had become dangerously low in the years preceding the cuts. This trajectory could have continued unabated, with the district possibly even operating with a deficit, were it not for the perceived threat of an emergency financial manager takeover imposed by the state. The possible threat of a takeover was, I contend, a precipitating factor that encouraged the district to make the staffing cuts in 2013.



The laws providing for emergency financial takeover of local municipalities and school districts were first put into place in 1988. Public Act 101 (1988) first created the emergency financial status to deal with a financial emergency in the Michigan city of Hamtramck. This act was then amended by Public Act 72 (1990), which broadened the powers of the emergency manager. Public Act 72 also specifically named school districts as susceptible to oversight. Under these statutes, a review would be conducted if a governmental unit failed to make payroll, pay debts, or at the request of a local or state official (Blitchok, 2012). Early on, several Michigan municipalities (Ecorse, River Rouge, Royal Oak Township) and one school district (Detroit Public Schools) came under emergency management from the state. Several other cities—Hamtramck, Highland Park, and Flint—also came under state management in the early 2000s (Blitchok, 2012).

A complicated series of events then changed the process between 2011 and the present.<sup>2</sup> In 2011, Public Act 4 amended the previous law. Under Public Act 4, Michigan’s Department of the Treasury would conduct a preliminary review of troubled municipalities and would order a review in instances of probable financial stress (Blitchok, 2012). Michigan’s Governor would then appoint a board to conduct the review, and could appoint an emergency manager in certain circumstances (Michigan Department of Treasury, 2015). This law eventually was suspended in 2012 after a successful petition campaign, at which point Public Act 72 was reinstated. Public Act 4 was repealed in the 2012 general election by Michigan voters, but the legislature then passed Public Act 436 shortly thereafter, which effectively continued the practice of appointing emergency managers (Michigan Department of Treasury, 2015).

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<sup>2</sup> In some versions of the law, the title, “emergency financial manager” is used; others use “emergency manager.” For the sake of readability, I use “emergency manager” or “EM.”

The new law brought more urgent treatment of financially unstable school districts. In addition to Detroit Public Schools (which emerged from the original PA 72 oversight, but reentered emergency management in 2009), school districts in Highland Park, Muskegon Heights, Pontiac, and Benton Harbor have had emergency managers appointed (Michigan Department of Treasury, 2015). Under this new law, public school districts could be dissolved by emergency managers (Michigan Department of Treasury, 2015). Two districts—Inkster Public Schools and Buena Vista Public Schools—have been dissolved under the dissolution rules put in place in 2013 (Michigan Department of Treasury, 2015). All of the school districts that have come under emergency management had experienced financial stress and were unable to meet certain obligations. The EM solution, however, has been highly controversial and criticized. Opponents note that the EM system usurps the authority of publicly-elected boards (Dawsey, 2014).

The threat of an emergency manager seemed to exert pressure on the Lansing School District leadership without any formal discussions necessarily taking place. Several news stories discussed the possibility of an EM assignment in a general sense. For example, a 2011 new story from Lansing’s local NBC affiliate, titled, “Could Lansing Schools Get An Emergency Financial Manager?” cited budget deficits and worried board members and parents (Goldsmith, 2011). Yet it also pointed out that, when asked about appointing an emergency manager for the LSD, Governor Rick Snyder said there had been no such discussions (Goldsmith, 2011). Another 2011 news story, again from Lansing’s NBC affiliate, (Norman, 2011) quoted Dr. T.C. Wallace, the LSD Superintendent at the time saying that the district did not need an emergency manager. Other news stories suggested the School Board and Lansing Mayor Virg Bernero were in support of appointing an emergency financial manager in 2011 (Lloyd, 2011) and that incoming

Superintendent Yvonne Caamal Canul was aware of the potential for an EM (Fox 47 News, 2012). Ultimately, it seems that the potential for emergency management was discussed by the Board, the Superintendent, and others, but may not have reached any level of specificity.

Participants raised this issue, however, as being an impending threat even in 2013 and beyond. A current classroom teacher said that the EM threat figured into the considerations about cuts: “We know the state’s kind of holding us against this whole, “If you don’t balance the budget, you’ll be taken over by a financial manager.” This teacher went on to say: “We did what had to do to keep the district moving forward and to avoid having a financial manager and going into a deficit” (interview transcript, March 5, 2015). Interestingly, a representative of a community arts group with whom I spoke interpreted the district’s reorganization in 2012 and cuts in 2013 as a kind of substitute for an emergency manager’s reorganization. This representative said:

[Superintendent Caamal Canul] was brought in as the—what do they call them? The “emergency manager.” Well, had they have not been able to cut, they would have been in emergency mode and they would have brought in a manager. The School Board said, “If you want an emergency manager, we don’t have to do anything. If you think you can do what that person would do” – and they gave her the wherewithal to make those cuts. So otherwise we would have been in a whole different situation. (interview transcript, January 7, 2015)

Again, support for an impending assignment of an EM to Lansing School District is not easily substantiated. Even operating with a deficit would not mean entering a management situation, since around 50 Michigan districts are currently operating with deficits (Carmody, 2014). What

is clear, however, is that the discussion over a possible emergency manager had been going on for several years as the district worked to shed liabilities and lower its deficit.

### **Accountability Shock: Educational Achievement Authority (EAA)**

Much like the way that the “emergency manager” laws applied sudden pressure to a long-standing financial issue in LSD, an accountability reform brought sudden pressure to the poor academic performance that LSD had long demonstrated. Governor Rick Snyder created the Educational Achievement Authority (EAA) in 2011, setting it up as a new public school district that is able to operate statewide (State of Michigan, 2015). Since its first semester began in August 2012, the EAA has enrolled 15 of the state’s lowest performing schools including nine elementary/middle schools and six high schools (three of the schools are charters). The schools are all located in Detroit, though the Governor has endorsed expanding the reach of the district to include more schools from districts around the state (MyFOXDetroit.com, 2014). In the same spirit as the emergency manager laws, the EAA is a takeover entity, which removes low-performing schools from the oversight of publicly elected school boards. In fact, there is some symbiosis, as emergency managers of school districts may place schools into the EAA, and the emergency manager of the Detroit Public Schools entered into an interlocal agreement with nearby Eastern Michigan University to create the EAA (Naughton, 2014).

The EAA presented a “scare” for Lansing School District as it related to the future of six of its low performing schools, especially Eastern High School (Balaskovitz, 2013). As I discussed in Chapter Four, Eastern had been on the persistently lowest achieving/priority school list for three years when Michigan legislators began considering a bill that would take the EAA statewide (Li, 2013). The bill, which ultimately passed the house and then failed to pass as amended by the senate, would have made it possible for Eastern High School to be transferred

immediately into the EAA (Li, 2013). In a news story from March 2013 (just before the cuts were announced), Superintendent Caamal Canul called the EAA expansion bill “blasphemous” (Balaskovitz, 2013).

The pressure created by the possible EAA expansion seems to have been a more sudden pressure related to the stable parameter of low academic performance. As some participants noted, pressures such as this forced the district to make short-term decisions like the cuts to specialist positions. This was often referred to as a “Band-Aid approach” that ignored the “big picture.” A former art teacher said:

In urban school districts, they don't look at the total picture of what is important. They're scrambling, they're scrambling. I mean you've got Eastern High School that's got the EAA breathing down. “Band-Aids” is all I can say. The Lansing School District has a “Band-Aid” strategy. We'll put a “Band-Aid” on it, we'll put a “Band-Aid” on it. They don't look at long-term. (interview transcript, January 5, 2015)

Participants said that, rather than immediately causing the district leadership to cut AMPE teachers, the potential loss of schools to the EAA prompted the district to divert its attention and resources away from non-tested subjects and staff, as part of the “Band-Aid” strategy. This seems supported by the Superintendent’s comments in a July 2014 report to the School Board, in which she described more changes being made at Eastern in an effort to avoid future EAA takeover. She noted that there would longer periods of study for English and math (Lavey, 2013).

### **Legal Shock: “Right to Work”**

Of the three “shocks” I discuss in this chapter, the passage of the “Right to Work” act in early 2013 seems most connected to the policy decision to cut elementary specialists. While participants discussed the emergency manager takeover and the EAA takeover of LSD schools as

bearing down on the district, the “Right to Work” legislation had already passed and had an immediate effect on the contract bargaining process. Participants discussed this issue differently and spoke of it more often than the other sudden shocks. As with other potential causes of this particular decision-making process, the extent to which it caused the actual cuts to specialists was debated by the teachers with whom I spoke.

Amid large-scale protests at the state capitol, Governor Rick Snyder signed Michigan’s “Right to Work” bill into law in December 2012. The law restricted the ways in which private-sector and most public-sector unions (exempting police and firefighter unions) could operate and collect dues (Hartfield, 2012). Under the law, teachers’ unions would no longer be able to compel educators to pay dues. It prohibited so-called “closed shops” or “agency shops” where employees had no choice but to join unions or pay union fees (Hartfield, 2012). This arrangement effectively meant there could be “free-riders”: teachers who benefit from union contracts but do not pay dues that fund the unions in their bargaining and other work (Hartfield, 2012). In an effort to avoid the deleterious effects of the law on union operations, numerous school district unions attempted to settle contracts quickly, since contracts signed before March 28 could ensure “agency shop” arrangements for the life of the contract (Spencer, 2013). Around 50 school districts settled contracts in this manner, and this included Lansing (Spencer, 2013).

In general, participants acknowledged that “Right to Work” had sped up the bargaining process, but suggested it had no other specific connection to the AMPE cuts. A current teacher who was involved closely with the contract negotiations said: “I mean you got the politics, with the “Right to Work” [law] that was coming in at that time—that just had passed—we had to do an expedited bargain before the deadline to get it through” (interview transcript, March 14, 2015). This teacher clarified that an expedited bargain meant a smaller team was involved in

bargaining than would have been in a more “normal” contract bargaining situation. Another current employee agreed: “This happened to all coincide with the ‘Right to Work’ law, and the union was under the pressure to get this contract set in stone before the deadline” (interview transcript, March 14, 2015).

Participants varied in their perspectives on whether the expedited contract bargaining was good for the district. A teacher who had been on the bargaining team at the time remembered misgivings at hurrying up the contract adoption in light of the cuts to the AMPE department. This teacher had protested the cuts in bargaining team meetings but ultimately supported securing “agency shop” status for the length of the five-year contract:

I personally made it known [to the bargaining team members] that I wouldn't sabotage what they were doing for the sake of the district ... I was in agreement with agency shop, to maintain that for 5 years with all that was going on politically and legislatively. (interview transcript, March 14, 2015)

A current teacher discussed being unhappy at how the union prioritized contract passage above a measured look at the terms of the contract. This teacher said:

It was the union. To get it through "Right to Work." And people that I know very well that were on the negotiating committee tried to stop it. That's exactly what [the union] tried to do—was to get it through. They didn't care how they got it through as long as they got their dues. (interview transcript, February 13, 2015)

Several teachers with whom I spoke were adamant that while “Right to Work” expedited the bargaining, it did not fundamentally change bargaining, as the financial stress on the district was still in place. They noted that offering up AMPE teachers would have been considered a viable solution no matter the exact timing of the bargaining. A former music teacher said:

The right to work decision was completely disconnected from this [solution] ... This had nothing to do with them cutting [AMPE]. [Right to Work] was the rush to hurry up and get ratified, so that was the urgency to ratify. And this was a convenient, quick, down and dirty [solution]—“These people have been a pain in our ass for all this time, here’s how we can do it. It’s a “win win,” right?” (interview transcript, January 6, 2015)

A current teacher echoed similar ideas about the inevitability of the decision-making process, saying that whether they contract had been settled in March or June, “the financial picture was going to be the same.” This teacher remarked:

The budget deficit was going to be there inevitably. So yes, did we want to get our contract signed so that we weren't affected by "Right to Work" right away? Absolutely, who wouldn't? Why would we want freeloaders in our organization? We don't. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

Whatever the exact effect of “Right to Work” on the bargaining process, the expedited bargaining and ratification spurred mistrust, as I discuss later in this chapter.

### **Understanding the Coalitions and Relationships**

In an attempt to explain the decision-making process in Lansing, I draw upon the ACF’s coalition ideas. The ACF predicts that coalitions form by the grouping of actors who share similar belief systems around a given policy issue (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Depending on the policy issue, this can mean coalition membership made up of potentially hundreds of policy actors, including politicians, media members, special interest group representatives, and others. The ACF suggests that actors in the coalitions desire to translate their belief systems into policy, and the framework makes distinctions between levels of belief (i.e., how deeply held the beliefs are). The deepest beliefs are referred to as deep core beliefs, which are individual,



normative, and resistant to change. The new level is policy core beliefs, which determine coalition membership. Policy core beliefs relate to the desired course of action on a specific policy issue. While also resistant to change, these beliefs are easier to change than deep core beliefs. Finally, the third level of belief is referred to as secondary beliefs, which are policy-focused but more narrow and easy to change based on new information (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

In this section, I describe the coalitions present before and immediately after the decision was made to cut the elementary arts specialists in 2013. These coalitions overlap in some interesting ways, since the teachers' union—the Lansing Schools Education Association—housed three separate coalitions (union leadership, AMPE teachers and non-AMPE teachers). While members of each group likely would not identify the “AMPE teachers” as formal coalition, I classify them this way based on their beliefs and the ways they functioned in relation to agenda setting. I also describe the relative “strength” of the coalitions, since some of the coalitions I describe, such as the community arts providers, only became involved after the union and administration successfully passed the contract that finalized the staffing decision. I also discuss how these coalitions negotiated with and related to one another to move the policy issue in desired ways.

### **The Union Leadership**

The union leadership included those in formal leadership positions within the union (e.g., the President and Vice President) and also included the members of the LSEA that were placed on the bargaining team. These teachers grouped together as a coalition because of policy core beliefs related to securing the best possible contract for the union. In correspondence between bargaining team members and an AMPE teacher who lost his/her job in the cuts, one can see this

policy core belief rising above the objections of the AMPE teacher. One bargaining team member responded to an email objecting to the cuts by saying: “The facts are we have a short window, need to help the district stay afloat.” The “short window” here refers to the need to ratify a contract before the “Right to Work” deadline. Another bargaining member told this AMPE teacher: “When a Team goes into Bargaining we don't go in as an interest group. We go in as doing what's right for all members.” In an interview I conducted with a bargaining team member, the teacher told me that members wrestled with options but moved along with the AMPE cuts to help secure “agency shop” (dues-paying provision in defiance of “Right to Work”).

One can see evidence of the policy core belief, here, that the chosen policy option should privilege the union. In other words, the union—or at least the majority of the union—should “do well” in terms of the eventual contract agreement. The ACF's distinctions between belief levels is helpful in illuminating how a policy core belief such as this can drive decision making. No doubt, the union power players, as I call them, held important deep core beliefs about the purpose of public schools, the right for all children to learn. They likely also held deep core beliefs that were even closer to the policy core belief, such as the importance of public sector unions. Also, it is likely true that secondary beliefs abounded that were negotiable (and likely the subject of actual bargaining negotiations). These secondary beliefs could have included prioritizing that union membership maintain salary in the new contract, or that union members maintain their current teaching hours (i.e., length of day and report times). The policy core belief, however, unites the members—here, the union leaders—into the coalition.

## **The District Leadership**

Because of the district's decision not to grant access to school buildings or to school administrators in this study, my ability to summarize the policy core beliefs of the district leadership—the administrators and school board members—is limited. Based on interview accounts, participants paint a mixed picture of the district leadership's goals and values in the bargaining process. Certain participants felt the Superintendent and school board did not value the AMPE department and therefore aggressively used the bargaining process to eliminate those teachers. Others suggested the Superintendent was a lover of fine arts and culture, and only begrudgingly supported the proposal to cut the elementary specialists. Without interviews with the district leadership, it is impossible to say how the goals and values surrounding AMPE functioned in negotiations.

It is likely that the policy core value that united the district leadership in its approach to negotiation was the desire to arrive at a financially advantageous union contract that would also stave off possible external pressures (e.g., emergency manager). Participant interviews seem to suggest a single-mindedness about this policy outcome on the part of the administration. For example, a current classroom teacher said that the district leadership focused on district finances to the detriment of other issues during negotiations:

The team from administration was going back 30-40 years, and it shows how disconnected they were from what was going on in the classroom. They were like, "Well we didn't have planning back then." Well, neither did you have accountability, these tests, common core, these expectations ... So they were looking at it—it was a money-saving deal—but it showed how disconnected they really were ... [They] didn't consult

the principals or the teachers on it—it was more of a money thing. (interview transcript, March 14, 2015)

### **The AMPE Teachers**

The elementary art, music, and physical education teachers were a diverse group at the time of the 2013 cuts. As discussed in Chapter Four, the district had, for years, allowed non-endorsed teachers with all-subjects certifications to teach these subjects. Exact staffing numbers were difficult to find, but at the time of the cuts, estimates from my participants place the total amount of elementary art, music, physical education, and library specialists at about 47 teachers. Of these, about 15 taught music and 12 taught art. Participants suggested that about half of these 27 art and music teachers were not endorsed. This diversity is important because it affected the cohesiveness of the coalition. The half of the AMPE staff that held all-subjects certifications could, depending on seniority and other factors, move back into classroom teaching positions after the cuts. Conversely, those with music education or art education certifications could not take classroom teaching positions. It is unclear, in fact, whether all 47 AMPE teachers voted for or against the planning time cuts given the split in certification/endorsement.

This diversity in the coalition likely translates to lack of a unified policy core belief. There was however, unity of belief among the endorsed AMPE teachers with whom I spoke. The policy core belief was quite clear: these educators desired that the art, music, and physical education programming remain present via sustained planning time for classroom teachers. These teachers understood that some cuts were inescapable, in the form of staffing cuts or an across-the-board salary cut. A former music teacher said he expected “maybe a downsizing of the [AMPE] department,” or a pay cut accepted by the membership. He said accepting small cuts was common in Lansing: “We—as a district—we’ve all taken pay cuts to save jobs. I mean I

don't know how many times we've taken little 2% pay cuts to save 36 people, or something like that" (interview transcript, February 23, 2015).

As I discuss later in this chapter, the AMPE coalition rarely framed the policy debate as being about their jobs, but rather lamented the policy change for its effect on the arts programming in the district. This focus on continuing the arts programming in its current form seems to be the policy core belief that united the endorsed AMPE teachers. One can see the opposing policy core beliefs between the union power players and the AMPE teachers in a series of email messages exchanged between a former AMPE teacher and bargaining team members. The AMPE teacher had sent an email to the bargaining team members, which focused in large part on the loss of programming:

If this [planning time cut] is presented and ratified, it will be a history-making decision that will change what it means to be a teacher and a student in the Lansing School District. Having no AMPE will rob our most vulnerable students of opportunities to excel in the subjects that make us human. (email correspondence, March 17, 2013)

The bargaining team members' responses stress that, while they care about the AMPE teachers, they must make tough decisions.

Though the AMPE teachers were members of the union, participant interviews revealed deep feelings of mistrust and negativity among these teachers toward the union leadership. Over and over, I heard participants say they felt as though they were misrepresented by the union leadership. A former music teacher said the actions were antithetical to the concept of a union:

I just couldn't believe they would consider it, and to me, it was—I thought we were a union. I thought that we are all in this together. So if the district is saying either a small

group of you has to hurt, or all of you have to hurt, I would have thought my union would choose for all of us to hurt. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

Another former music teacher remembered wondering, “Now if we're fellow union members, why is this even an option? ... If we're part of the union then we should be as worthy as the other teachers” (interview transcript, January 20, 2015). One former teacher went as far as to suggest that the AMPE teachers should have involved the Michigan Education Association, the state parent group of the LSEA:

I still don't know why they did not go forward with the MEA and you know, question [the representation]. Because how do you target one group of members who are paying dues and cut their jobs? If that's not discrimination and unfair representation, I don't know what is. (interview transcript, January 6, 2015)

### **Non-AMPE LSEA Members**

In the same sense that the AMPE teachers were gathered loosely into a coalition that lacked a unified policy core belief, the coalition of classroom teachers and other non-AMPE union members was ideologically diverse. With over 800 non-AMPE members in the union, such diversity of beliefs is inevitable. This diversity was exacerbated by who made up this pool of non-AMPE union members. As one participant explained to me, voting members who did not teach regularly in a classroom outnumbered those who did:

In Lansing, it's not just teachers [in the LSEA] ... So now, 400 of the 850 staff are now in the classroom in front of the kids all day, and 450 are not, and they're making the decisions ... So the major stakeholders who are suffering now are the ones who aren't the major population anymore making the decisions. (interview transcript, March 14, 2015)

This teacher explained that these 450 members who were not full-time teachers included teacher consultants, psychologists, and social workers. A former music teacher suggested the non-teaching membership was a factor in the vote:

[The] predominance of the people that voted for it were not impacted by this. So for example if you're a social worker, you don't get planning time anyway, but they're part of the LSEA. If you're a speech pathologist, if you're a physical therapist, people like that are in that same bargaining unit, and they voted for the raise and they didn't give a crap about the planning time because it didn't impact them. (interview transcript, January 6, 2015)

This diverse membership may have affected the vote, although it still does not account for the dramatic passage of the proposal to eliminate planning time. Reports of the vote noted that around 80% of the LSEA voting body approved the policy change. Thus, diversity aside, one can surmise that the policy core belief defining this coalition was the desire for a contract that did not dramatically cut pay. Based on interviews, it is unlikely that the non-AMPE member coalition wanted to eliminate planning time or the specialists. The refrain of “No one wanted this to happen” was mentioned frequently among classroom teachers. Given the two options, however, the 80% supporting the vote makes the policy core belief clear.

Some non-AMPE teachers were horrified by the idea of the union considering the option to cut the specialist teachers. As a current classroom teacher told me: “I can't believe our union threw those people under the bus ... I just can't—I still can't believe it.” A variety of former AMPE teachers shared stories of their close friends and colleagues expressing disgust at the AMPE cuts and voting against the proposal. Several participants also told stories of classroom

teachers coming to them after the vote to apologize. These teachers said they had been confused and had not fully thought through the impact of the loss of planning time.

### **Coalition-Building Processes and Interactions**

As the ACF hypothesizes, coalitions come into being through grouping processes based on belief systems (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). In the case of the Lansing coalitions, these belief systems centered around policy core beliefs on what should happen for the impending contract adoption. Arriving at these policy core beliefs occurred, I argue, through interactions between coalition members and between opposing coalitions. These interactions served to build the coalitions by clarifying policy core beliefs. In this section, I discuss three coalition-building processes: the “whisperings” about the possible cuts, the general membership meeting and its aftermath, and the union bargaining team’s process of choosing possible options.

#### **“Whisperings” and “Rumblings”: Hearing about Potential Cuts**

As I discussed in Chapter Four, cutting the elementary art, music, and physical education teachers had been discussed informally as an option for several years preceding the 2013 cuts. However, the “whisperings” about the coming cuts took on a different tenor in the fall of 2012. Former AMPE teachers with whom I spoke remembered how an elementary principal gave them a “heads up” that they would likely lose their jobs. The principal was upset with an AMPE teacher in his building who was delivering sub-par instruction, and was venting to the AMPE teachers at a steering committee meeting he was overseeing. He told the AMPE teachers that the administration had done an efficiency study to look at ways to save money, as a former teacher recalled:

He said, "You better be looking for something, some other job, because the district did a study and they found it was cheaper to pay teachers comp time than to pay your salaries.



They did the math." And that was—that sent shock waves. (interview transcript, December 16, 2014)

Another former teacher described the principal as saying the district “could save a bunch of money” if they “cut the elementary art, music, P.E, and library too, and give everybody a stipend for losing their planning time” (interview transcript, March 16, 2015).

A former music teacher remembered that a different principal with foreknowledge about the cuts tried to provide early information. This teacher said the principal was “trying to look out for me.” This principal let the teacher know that the AMPE department would likely be eliminated and replaced. As a result, the teacher said he had been “biting my nails since like November of that year” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015). In both cases of principals providing information about the potential cuts, it seems they spoke without specific permission from the administration. In fact, several participants said they had heard that the principal who alerted the steering committee in the fall of 2012 was later reprimanded. One teacher noted that this principal had “gotten into deep, deep consequences” for “letting the information slip” (interview transcript, December 16, 2014).

This process of hearing whisperings about the cuts directed the actions of the AMPE teachers’ coalition in interesting ways. Instead of compelling the coalition to mount some sort of public opposition to the impending cuts, it seemed to spur either insular conversation or resignation to the coming policy change. These actions may have occurred for several reasons. First, former AMPE teachers said they felt powerless. One said that when she heard from the principal at the steering committee meeting, it was clear the cuts would occur: “He told me and I could see the writing on the wall then, that this was going to be—this is going to happen. This is going to be a done deal” (interview transcript, January 5, 2015). Another did not join the

negotiating committee, because she said it would not “have made any difference for me to be there advocating” (interview transcript, January 20, 2015) Second, AMPE teachers may have been afraid to speak up between November and March because of fears related to job security and other forms of retaliation (as I discuss later in this chapter, there were widespread fears that the administration would punish those who spoke out). An AMPE teacher who retired just before the fall of 2012 told me that the teachers spoke only among themselves because they felt they would be punished if they went public with the district’s intentions. Because the retired teacher was no longer worried about her job, she took it upon herself to speak out as March neared:

I kind of elected to have the voice ... I started sending messages, mostly on Facebook, but I think once or twice to the state journal Facebook page as well ... I was pretty glad that I had spoken up because nobody knew--nobody else seemed to know that or was saying it. (interview transcript, December 16, 2014)

Hearing about the coming cuts seemed to push some AMPE teachers to look for other jobs or to retire. An art teacher remembered how the steering committee meeting made her reassess her retirement:

Seeing that flips my decision. [With] that said, I'm out. I might as well be the first one at the gate I figured, because I've got my 10+ years, I can retire. If I want to look around [for other jobs], there's going to be a whole slew of Lansing teachers looking for jobs [laughs]. So I pulled out. (interview transcript, December 16, 2014)

Four other teachers said they began looking for other jobs when they heard of the impending cuts. All four remembered this searching as upsetting because of their feelings of loyalty to the Lansing School District. Several interviewed and were offered jobs in other districts, but waited

as long as possible to see if the vote to ratify the contract might somehow fail and save their positions.

The coalition of community arts providers also seemed to have been affected by these early rumors of coming cuts. The leadership of the Arts Council of Great Lansing (ACGL) was first alerted to the possibility of cuts after speaking with AMPE teachers. A former leader of the ACGL noted that these rumors were too vague to spark action:

We kind of heard something might be going on, but we couldn't really get any—any sort of clarity on what that was going to be. We knew one teacher in particular that was a frequent visitor to the office and utilized our services. She indicated that she was going to retire at the end of the year, and we had heard another teacher, you know, come in and say, "You know, I've decided I'm going to retire at the end of the year." So we were sort of like, "Hmmm ... What's going on?" (interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

When the ACGL's leaders tried to probe into the situation, specifics were lacking. A teacher who indicated the intention to retire told the ACGL leader, "There's stuff that's coming down the pike, and it's not something that we can really talk about and it's not—it's not good" (interview transcript, December 10, 2014).

In addition to the vagueness of the details, ACGL leaders said they simply could not believe that LSD would cut the elementary arts programs. A former ACGL leader remembered:

One teacher said something at one point, but it was such—it sounded like a rumor that couldn't possibly be true, and I dismissed it. One of the teachers at one point in the fall of 2012 said something like, "Oh they're going to get rid of all the arts in the schools" or something [sighs]. But—I didn't even think about [that remark] again until after it happened. (interview transcript, December 15, 2014)

This inaction led to a later scramble in March when the decision was announced. As a former ACGL director noted:

We heard these rumblings here and there and knew that some of the teachers were making decisions to retire. And then it wasn't until March that it really just kind of hit us ... we really only had days to kind of take any action. (interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

Despite the inaction in the fall/winter of 2012, the rumors of the cuts began the early process of building the community arts provider coalition, which would become especially active in the immediate aftermath of the district's decision.

### **Beginning the Negotiation/Bargaining Process**

The coalitions most closely involved in the actual decision-making process were the union power players and the district leadership. These two groups decided on the proposal that would be voted on by the union's membership to ratify a 5-year contract. And while the membership could have voted against the staffing cuts, the terms of the two proposals made it almost impossible for planning time and AMPE specialists to be retained.

The eventual options voted on—a drastic pay cut or a loss of planning time—were not the only money-saving possibilities, however. Therefore, the processes by which the union power players and the district leadership arrived at the options solidified the coalition-defining set of policy core beliefs. The ACF classifies this process of acquiring new information on policy options as “policy-oriented learning” (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Policy-oriented learning can occur when a coalition attempts to “refine and adapt its belief system in order to realize its goals more efficiently” (Kübler, 2001, p. 624). Of the many possible means of spurring policy change, authors of the ACF have made it clear that policy-oriented learning lacks power in

comparison to external events (e.g., stable parameters and shocks). They also stress that policy-oriented learning has not been investigated as extensively as other aspects of the framework (Weible et al., 2011).

Caveats about policy-oriented learning aside, it seems clear that the coalitions involved closely with bargaining used policy-oriented learning as a means of clarifying policy core beliefs and the translation of these beliefs into contract options. For the union power players, this learning began with a bargaining survey sent out to the union membership. The survey was emailed to the membership and asked general questions about what they would like to see happen in the contract negotiations. As a former teacher explained to me in an email, “Bargaining surveys typically ask members to rank their feelings of importance on things such as insurance, compensation, and holidays, in order to give the bargaining team a direction for the negotiations.”

While surveys such as this are typically used to guide bargaining, they often do not reference the specifics of proposals. Teachers with whom I spoke, however, did recall that the survey hinted at the possibility of cuts to planning time and that it referenced a support time that could help the classroom teachers handle teaching art, music, and physical education. A former music teacher recalled:

I do remember in one of the questionnaires, or the clarification of the questionnaire, there was a very brief blurb about there being a—some kind of support team to continue to the [specials] in some way, shape, or form. It was very vague. So we knew that those positions were more than likely going to be there, we just didn’t know what they entailed whatsoever. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

This same teacher remembered that the union was frustrated with the responses to the bargaining survey questions. The teacher noted: “A lot of people didn’t even answer the questionnaire or a lot of people answered in a way that the union didn’t like, because [the union] tried to politely put it as an “either/or” and some people said “neither” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015). A bargaining team member with whom I spoke agreed, saying the survey responses revealed disagreements among the membership. This teacher said the proposed options “really divided the body” (interview transcript, March 14, 2015).

Because of the membership’s divided responses to the bargaining survey, and the deep budget cuts necessary, the union bargaining team experienced tension as they tried to decide on the options to bring to the membership. A bargaining team member recalled that, “It was very hard for the whole team, you could just see it sucking the life out of them” (interview transcript, March 14, 2015). Some of the AMPE teachers on the negotiating committee tried to appeal to the bargaining team. As one former music teacher told me: “I would beg them and say, ‘Please, please talk to [the other bargaining team members] and get them to understand what this is all about’” (interview transcript, January 20, 2015). The strife between members lasted until the last minute, as one bargaining team member recalled:

Several of the people around the table were very undecided, but when it came down, they point-blank asked me at a certain point, "Would you take a 15% cut?" And I said, "Yes!" (interview transcript, March 14, 2015)

### **The General Membership Meeting**

One of the most discussed interactions between coalitions occurred at the union’s general membership meeting in early March. This meeting occurred several times, with one main meeting and several repeat meetings at sites around the district to accommodate the large

membership. The meeting was pivotal because it was the site of the bargaining team's announcement of the two options it was bringing to its membership. At this meeting, the union power players told members that they would soon vote to either accept a five percent pay cut each year for three years or would vote to eliminate planning time. As I discuss later, framing the vote as a planning time issue rather than as a staffing cut was considered by some participants to be an important strategy, as well as potentially dishonest.

For a number of participants, this meeting brought shock and disbelief. The AMPE teachers remembered texting each other angrily about the options being presented. Emotions ran high, with some teachers crying and others arguing with the union leadership. One teacher got into a verbal altercation with the past union president:

It was awful. I was super angry and our former president was there. And I remember getting pretty up close and personal with him and kinda wagging my finger in his face and telling him, "This is a sure-fire way to lose families. You mark my words, you're going to lose—if you want to lose students, this is the way to do it." (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

A former art teacher discussed how, once the particulars of the proposal were clear, she stood up abruptly and left the meeting:

There was a lot of arguing going back and forth about, you know, how this is a bad thing. It pitted teachers against teachers, and once the union finally stopped beating around the bush and said "Yes, that's our plan" to dismantle us, I got up and walked out. I heard all I needed to hear [laughs]. (interview transcript, January 16, 2015).

As the proposal was presented at the meeting, lines between the coalitions (and their desired policy actions) were solidified. In essence, the membership meeting seemed to make several

AMPE teachers, who described themselves as “die-hard” union supporters, wish to remove themselves from the union. A former art teacher remarked: “What I said at that union meeting is, ‘OK, thanks. Can I have 20 years worth of dues back then please?’” (interview transcript, January 16, 2015).

Several participants remembered how an AMPE teacher stood up and pointedly questioned the union leadership. This teacher said the questioning was done in an effort to clarify the impact of the cuts and to make it clear “that cutting planning meant that there will be no more art, music, P.E. teachers” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015). This teacher also wanted the classroom teachers to realize they would be responsible for those subjects and that they would “have those dear children in [their] classroom 6 ½ hours a day with no breaks except for recess and lunch” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015). I spoke with this former AMPE teacher, who discussed the interaction. This teacher remembered asking the union president to say exactly who would lose jobs. The questioning invited a lot of “skirting” on the part of the president, so the teacher had to reformat her inquiry:

Definitely skirting of the questions. I had to format my questions in five or six different ways to get the president to say what I wanted her to say. And by the fifth meeting of course, I had it down pretty pat ... And she knew at what point in the presentation I was going to raise my hand, and she knew exactly what I was going to say, because no way in hell was I going to take this sitting down, for my colleagues or these kids. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

This teacher remembered standing up in the meetings as “nerve-wracking,” and noted that it was difficult to speak pointedly without making an overly-emotional appeal:



I tried to make it as not emotional as possible. I wanted to be very pragmatic about it. And I didn't want to incense anyone—that was not ever my goal nor did I want to be perceived that way, as a rebel-rouser. I just wanted my colleagues to see the face of a person who was going to lose their job, whose household income is going to be cut in half. And I said, “Yeah, \$5,000 for you guys is a cut, it's a lot of money. But \$57,000 for me is a lot more. So that's my job that's gone.” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

The teacher remembered that her protest at the meeting was met with “silence.” A lot of the non-AMPE teachers turned away to avoid eye contact.

Another interesting juxtaposition of the coalitions occurred at the general membership meeting. Normally, union meetings are open only to due-paying members and all other school personnel—including administrators, secretaries, and others—are not allowed to attend. But at the meeting in March 2013, the Superintendent attended the meeting and spoke to the membership. A former art teacher remembered how surprised she was at the Superintendent's presence:

Then I was absolutely astounded when the meeting started that the Superintendent was invited to a closed union meeting ... Oh my gosh, I was aghast and I was nudging people and saying, “Since when do we let people from—you don't have administrators or anybody who's not in the union. It's not allowed.” (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

One can see evidence of coalition membership in how different teachers described having the Superintendent present at the meeting. The Superintendent made a statement at the beginning of the meeting, during which she cried and expressed sadness at the situation. A current classroom teacher described this as evidence of the administration being sympathetic: “I remember the Superintendent cried when she came to our meeting and said, ‘I can't believe this is what we're

offering you guys” (interview transcript, March 5, 2015). A former art teacher was much more contemptuous: “She came up, gave her spiel, cried tears. I remember thinking to myself, ‘Yes, she is a theatre major” (interview transcript, March 16, 2015).

### **Tension between AMPE and Classroom Teachers**

As soon as the general membership meeting occurred, and the options—across the board pay cut or AMPE staffing cut—were made known, relationships soured between AMPE teachers and classroom teachers. This tension only increased after the vote occurred. The two coalitions largely were on opposite sides of the vote, though some classroom teachers did vote against the planning time elimination. AMPE teachers were upset that classroom teacher colleagues had voted them out of a job, and the classroom teachers tried to explain that they could not accept a large pay cut. A former art teacher recalled the interaction:

It was tense. There was a lot of, “But you don’t understand my situation. I’m a single female, I’m divorced, I’m this, I’m that,” or “Things are tough.” And what I kept saying is, “OK—you might take a 15% cut, but I doubt it.” I think it was just bluffing, myself. “The rest of us will take a 100% cut. And probably never teach again, so think about that.” It was terrible. It was so divisive. It was horrible. (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

A former music teacher remembered that, “It was very bitter those last few months ... It was very sad, it was very sad. We had teachers everyday crying” (interview transcript, January 20, 2015). AMPE teachers remembered classroom teacher colleagues who would not make eye contact after the vote because of feelings of guilt. A former music teacher summed up the situation:

We're talking about over 40 people, Ryan, who lost their jobs. They were cut—over 40. Who had homes, who had families, who had a long-time career, who were proud of what they did, who had relationships with kids and families. I mean—they lost—and because [classroom teachers] voted against them, they ended up losing their job. So every day people had to face each other ... I mean how awful must that feel for them looking at you, saying "Oh my God—I'm the reason why you're not going to have a job."

(interview transcript, January 6, 2015)

This tension also played out on social media sites. The union had an online forum, where members could post questions and discuss issues. A former art teacher recalled:

There's a LSEA forum. Man, people were duking it out. I was one of them because I wasn't going to listen to this crap. You know, all these [classroom] teachers saying, "Oh, we'll suck it up, we'll do just fine, we'll suck it up and be fine. And we'll do just as good a job." I was like, "No, you, won't!" ... It got really nasty. (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

Sometimes this tension translated into poor working relationships. A former music teacher recalled:

When a [classroom] teacher would say, "You know, I'm doing this unit. Can you help me?" The specialist would say, "No." Normally, they were willing to work extra. Now they were saying "No, you voted us out." (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

As the end of the school year neared, some of the AMPE teachers took sick days without notice in an effort to express their displeasure about the vote. A current classroom teacher said:

[Sometimes they] didn't show up. They didn't call for a sub. Especially after they felt like their positions were being cut, then they just stopped showing up and we didn't have anybody to teach art, music, and P.E. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

### **Discussion: Lack of Parental/Community Coalition**

In an effort to describe the landscape of coalitions and the ways in which they interacted to refine their policy core beliefs, one coalition that is notoriously missing is a parental/community coalition. The lack of such a coalition was likely of significant importance for the final decision, since vocal groups of parents and community members who rally behind school district causes can wield enormous influence. One need look no further than the dozens of school board meetings each year around the state and country during which parents and community leaders pack meeting rooms to protest changes. Championed causes include curricular changes, bond proposals, efforts to open new buildings or close/repurpose old buildings, or teachers' labor contracts.

There are numerous examples of how parental/community coalitions have risen up to delay, limit the damage to, or completely stave off the elimination of school district music programs. A recent search of news articles finds parents flooding into school board meetings to protest proposed cuts in places like Norristown, Pennsylvania (Wills, 2015). The Norristown district decided to put the music teaching positions (that had been considered for cuts) on a line item as part time, with the possibility of becoming full-time in the fall. In rural Line Mountain, Pennsylvania, a dozen parents spoke for two hours at a school board meeting when the board announced it may not fill a music teaching position left vacant by an exiting teacher (Desantis, 2015). The board decided to table the vote. At School 84 in Indianapolis, parents successfully overturned plans to cut instrumental music (Colombo, 2015). In East Grand Rapids—only an

hour from Lansing—parents who were upset about proposed cuts to elementary art, music, and physical education held yard sales and donated over \$250,000 to the district’s foundation. The cuts were eventually staved off by this show of community support (Moroney, 2015).

I also heard from several participants who noted that districts near Lansing brought similar proposals up in early contract discussions. A former music teacher said nearby Superintendents had started to refer to the Lansing cuts as the “Lansing solution.” While details are difficult to verify, participants told me similar cuts had been considered in Grand Ledge, Waverly, and Fowlerville (cities near Lansing), but that the proposals never made it far due to a feeling that the community would not support such cuts.

A parental/community coalition may not have become as involved in the debate as it would have had secondary music programs been considered for cuts. A look at recent news articles also demonstrates how strong the parental groups behind secondary music programs can be in organizing and mounting protests to proposed cuts. For example, when high school band programs are endangered, school board meetings are often filled with students in marching band uniforms and hundreds of parents who support the band. Potential cuts to secondary music programs can also spur petitions of opposition with thousands of signatures (Bolos, 2015; Phalon, 2015). Several participants agreed there was a relative lack of parental organization around elementary arts programs in Lansing as compared to the district’s high school band programs.

Several of the participants discussed how the absence of concerned citizens was a major problem. A former art teacher said:

Another issue is parents in the Lansing School District aren't as collective in terms of coming to a school board meeting. We did have a couple people then but, you know, their

concerns are greater than this. And they didn't come out in droves and say, "No, this is wrong. We can't give up art, we can't give up music, we can't do this." (interview transcript, January 5, 2015)

A former music teacher said that parents who were “left” in Lansing after years of declining enrollment did not care enough about the cuts (at the time) to mount a protest:

A big part of it is parents. Again, we've got the lowest common denominator left. The parents are not speaking up enough about this, because the parents who are left are, I perceive, the ones who don't really care that much about it. But think about any other district. If you get parents to a school board meeting who are absolutely saying this cannot happen, they're going to find a way to fix it. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

Another former music teacher agreed that a presence at the board meeting would have helped stop the cuts:

If people were as concerned then as they are now, it would not have happened. Don't think for a minute if people stormed that board meeting, those board members would not have stood for it, the Superintendent would not have allowed it to happen, and it would have been stopped. (interview transcript, January 6, 2015)

One former teacher in particular was incensed at the lack of community support, especially given the proximity of Michigan State University and the arts and cultural community. This teacher felt abandoned by the educational/cultural professionals in 2013 as no one came to the school board meetings to protest: “Nobody came to say anything. You've got people talking amongst themselves, but where were you? For God's sake, MSU is right there. You couldn't

come to a damn board meeting?” (interview transcript, January 6, 2015). This teacher could not understand the lack of support:

Educated people understood the impact if this went forward, and they still chose to do nothing ... If you work for a university, isn't that kind of your role? To make sure—if you're in music education, how hypocritical. Or if you're in arts education, how hypocritical for you to be growing people up to get these jobs, but yet when they're cutting 40 plus people's positions, that probably came through your program, aren't you involved? I mean, why wouldn't you come? Why wouldn't you come to the meeting? You're saying “Come to our university, come and get this degree, you can get a job, you can make money.” That's a disconnect for me. Where were you? Where WERE you? ... I don't fucking know. (interview transcript, January 6, 2015)

### **Discussion: Coalitions and Policy Beliefs**

As discussed, the coalitions involved with the decision-making process surrounding the 2013 cuts were defined by their policy core beliefs. Coalitions differed in terms of these beliefs, and the groups also varied in terms of the cohesiveness/unity of beliefs across the coalition. I also discussed how there was a notorious lack of coalition activity on the part of parents and community members. Because the coalition group that eventually did coalesce from the community arts providers in the Lansing area came together only after the decision-making process, I discuss this group separately later in the chapter.

As I also discussed, certain coalitions—the union leadership and the district leadership—engaged in policy-oriented learning to shape the particulars of the policy proposals they would ultimately advance. The district's cost study and the union's bargaining survey pointed them toward a planning time cut. This alignment of policy options is what the ACF would label an

example of coalition coordination (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Coalitions engage in frequent coordination in order to advance their agendas, and this coordination can come as a result of policy-oriented learning or because of purposeful efforts to seek out sympathetic coalitions (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Some researchers using the ACF have found that coordination is most likely when there is a reasonable belief on the part of one coalition that another coalition shares beliefs (Matti & Sandström, 2013).

Coordination also can result from the actions of specific individuals, termed policy brokers (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Policy brokers mediate between coalitions and seek compromise (Bratt, 2013). While these brokers can be independent of coalitions, they also are likely to be part of an advocacy group (Bratt, 2013). To achieve compromise, brokers use a variety of tools. One such tool can be policy-oriented learning processes, such as identifying outside aspirational models for policy, or consulting various experts. Another tool can be speeding up or slowing down negotiations (Bratt, 2013). As is the case with policy-oriented learning, details about policy brokers (e.g., who can be policy brokers, are policy brokers necessary, do policy brokers operate on material self-interest) are underdeveloped in the ACF literature (Bratt, 2013).

Participants seemed to agree that there was an unusually high degree of consensus and coordination between the two central coalitions in the Lansing decision (the union power players and the district leadership). This coordination seems to have been spurred by the intense external pressures on the subsystem: financial strain and possibility of takeover. It may also be the case that the long-lasting parameter of low esteem for the AMPE department was a significant belief held by both coalitions. The two sides at the bargaining table seem to have been so coordinated



that it ultimately became unclear who floated the proposal to cut planning time and the AMPE teachers. For example, one participant said the union first advanced the idea:

It was kind of a lot of back and forth and, you know, the union would say, “Well what if we cut this?” And the administration said, “Well you can’t cut that, what about this?” From what I—what I took from it was it wasn’t [that the] administration was quick to say, “Yeah, take music, take art, take gym—that’s not important.” In fact, if my memory—which fades in and out from all the junk we’ve had thrown at us—serves, supposedly someone in administration when it was presented from the union, by the union to cut us, the administration said something along the lines of, “Are you sure that this is where you want the cuts to be made?” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

But a former teacher with knowledge of the bargaining process disagreed. This teacher said the administration proposed the planning time cut: “There was much information that I knew that was never given to the general membership ... I stand by my statement that the first side that spoke of eliminating planning in negotiations was the District” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015).

Because the proposal to cut planning time (and AMPE teachers) seemed to have been a coordinated move between the union leadership and the district leadership, the quick adoption brought charges of “backdoor deals” and the two parties being “in cahoots.” I discuss more about this mistrust later in this chapter. The close coordination of the two coalitions also meant that different participants blamed different groups for the policy decision. Almost all participants were upset with the union for a lack of representation of the AMPE teachers, but varied in their blame for the district leadership. A former music teacher made it clear that she was only upset with the union:

I was so upset with the union. I mean they were the ones that caused this. Because the administration was willing to work with us so that we could keep some planning time and maybe cut some teachers which we all understand in this day and age. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

Teachers who had lost their jobs in the cuts argued among themselves on Facebook about whether the board was ultimately to blame, as one former art teacher recalled:

I [got online] and said, "You know, the board was responsible, the board and the union," and [posted] that board members needed to be voted out and held accountable, and would be held accountable by being voted out ... [A colleague] came on and said "It was the union," because she's really rallying against the union. I said, "No, it was the board too. It was all of them." (interview transcript, December 16, 2014)

Had the two central coalitions been less coordinated, it would have been simpler for teachers to blame one or the other in the aftermath.

### **Discussion: Separating Personal Beliefs from Professional Beliefs**

I noticed a theme related to beliefs that came up across multiple interviews with former teachers, current classroom teachers, current arts consultants in the "Department of Innovative Arts and Fitness," and community arts providers. These participants noted that, before and after the decision, they had to wrestle with holding conflicting personal beliefs and professional beliefs. The ACF is mute on this subject, treating belief systems as fluid but one-dimensional. In other words, at any given time, actors and their coalitions are expected to hold and operate on a given belief, not to hold a certain belief and act on another that is in opposition. Yet this concept came up frequently as participants told me that, while they did not prefer the result, they were in a "world of second best." Other participants, especially the AMPE teachers who lost their jobs,

were adamant about standing up for their principles throughout the decision-making process. Their position, however, as the “losing coalition” likely explains why they were not in a position to hold one personal belief and operate on a professional belief.

For example, a former AMPE teacher discussed the experience of being simultaneously angry at the union leadership, but needing to put it behind her: “I try really hard to keep the personal part out of it ... I have to try to look at it as objectively as possible” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015) A bargaining team member who is still employed as a classroom teacher in LSD echoed the same sentiments, explaining that it was difficult to disagree with the proposal and still agree not to “sabotage” the decision. I also heard from a current member of the Department of Innovative Arts and Fitness Team who did not know how to react to the outcry that occurred after the decision was announced. Mitchell Robinson, Professor of Music Education at Michigan State had publicly stated that the LSD’s decision was wrong because it meant having non-endorsed educators in charge of the arts. The teacher said:

As an educator who’s [endorsed] and believes that is important, I respect and support his view 100%. But not 100% of me supports that 100%. The other part of me is given the challenge of picking up what scraps we have to provide something for the kids. That’s my job and that’s my belief as—not as an arts educator, but as a teacher in general. So I mean, it’s like, “Yay Mitch! Damn you Mitch!” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

Other participants stressed that, since the end product of the decision—non-endorsed teachers responsible for the arts, without any planning time—was so undesirable, it clearly meant that the Superintendent did not believe in or want that option. Multiple participants said the Superintendent believes in having endorsed specialists, but is in a tough budget situation. Others,

like a current classroom teacher, stressed that beliefs about the importance of specialists did not weigh heavily in the decision to make the cuts:

Nobody voted and was like, "Yes! We're losing art, music, and PE." Nobody thought that way ... I didn't vote saying, "Oh this person's not going to get a job." I voted—this is what, for me, I can stomach this rather than this. I think that's what most people did.

(interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

In the aftermath of unpalatable decisions such as the one in LSD, it is interesting to consider whether policy core beliefs directed coalition behavior or whether decisions are reflections of choosing from among undesirable options. Such decisions also may be reflections of actors attempting to operate on “professional beliefs” or obligations rather than personal beliefs.

### **Post-Decision Policy Framing/Imaging**

The ACF predicts that coalitions will seek to influence the public, the media, and other groups by intentionally manipulating the policy image. Authors of the ACF refer to this as a framing tactic (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Coalitions attempt to frame the policy issue in the way that is most advantageous to their desired outcome. This framing can occur in the build up to policy change and may be a significant factor in moving a policy proposal to become noticed. Framing also may function as a strategy after a policy change has occurred, as coalitions seek to shape subsequent action and debate. In addition to being featured in the ACF, framing/imaging has been widely discussed in other policy analysis frameworks (Kingdon, 1995; Stone, 1989). In this section, I examine how different coalitions attempted to frame the proposal to cut planning time and the AMPE teachers.

## **Union Leadership Framing Tactics**

The union leadership seemed to use several framing tactics as it brought the proposal options to its general membership. The first of these was to frame the decision as taking a pay cut or losing planning time. This is how a current classroom teacher explained the options:

[Cutting planning] would save the district \$8 million dollars. Or we would be prepared to take a large pay cut—I think it was 15% or something over three years. And so, I mean, you know, the general sentiment was “neither one.” I don't want either one. I don't want a pay cut and I don't want to lose my planning time, but that wasn't an option. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

This classroom teacher was adamant that, though the staffing cuts occurred, it was a vote to cut planning time:

They brought in the negotiations committee prior to that meeting and told us that ... basically either we vote to eliminate planning time—which is what we did. We didn't vote to eliminate positions. We voted to eliminate planning time. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

While not characterizing the options presented as “dishonest,” participants felt the framing was used to intentionally obscure the resulting AMPE staffing cuts. Numerous participants expressed frustration at this “euphemistic” framing, with a former music teacher discussing the framing strategy:

The funny thing was they actually just talked about it as eliminating planning time. They rarely came out and said we're cutting art, music, and P.E. “This is reduction of planning time.” That pissed me off. You can't put that in there. That pissed me off to no other, because they weren't actually talking about what it was, what the programmatic change

was going to be here. They were trying to make it as euphemistic as possible. “We’re just going to give you some money to teach on your planning. That’s all it is.” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

This teacher expressed her feelings in an email to the bargaining team, writing, “The ‘planning’ option is indeed a veiled offer to completely eliminate the AMPE classes from our elementary schools” (email correspondence, March 17, 2013).

Another former music teacher felt this framing was especially misleading for those in the district who were not elementary teachers. The teacher said:

[Eliminating planning time] was written in writing. That’s what was told to everybody, including the Board of Education. And then when people are making decisions—if I’m a high school teacher, I don’t understand how elementary works because it’s a different animal. Either you’re elementary or you’re secondary, and most people don’t understand the other one. So when people voted, that was the information that they voted with. Take a pay cut or get a raise, and I just don’t have any planning time. (interview transcript, January 6, 2015)

This music teacher called the union’s action a “complete and total lack of disclosure” on the reality of the cuts. As discussed earlier, when a former AMPE teacher questioned the union leadership during the general membership meeting, there was also a perceived lack of transparency about what the planning time cut would mean for staffing.

Participants felt that the union leadership also used framing tactics in how it presented the financial impact of the cuts. A former music teacher recalled that the union had not only said there would be a five percent cut each year for three years, but had presented the total amount of money that teachers would lose if they accepted the pay cut:

So we had the meetings, and they presented basically, “Here’s the planning cut option, and then here’s how much money you’ll lose over three years if you don’t take this option.” So it wasn’t even, “Here’s a yearly amount, here’s a percent reduction.” It is quite literally, “If you make \$60,000, here’s the amount of money over 3 years you’re going to lose if you don’t take this option.” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

In tandem with this description of the financial impact was the emphasis on receiving a \$5,000 stipend for giving up planning time. Participants felt like this combination of described loss and gain framed the choice as a “no-brainer.” A former music teacher remembered:

[They said], “Okay, you’re all going to take a 15% cut if we keep your planning time and the specialists. But if we get rid of the specialists, you don’t have to take your cut and you’ll get a \$5,000 stipend.” Well given that choice, what are you going to do? (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

Some said that the framing was dramatic enough that teachers felt bullied into supporting the planning time cut. A former art teacher said:

[Teachers] were threatened, they were bullied. The offer on the table was “Your insurance is going to cost you a gazillion dollars unless you vote yes on this.” And then they dangled that \$5,000 stipend over their heads, and they were—a lot of my friends felt they had to vote for it, because they couldn’t afford a cut. (interview transcript, January 16, 2015).

### **AMPE Teachers’ Framing Tactics**

Analysis of how the AMPE teacher coalition framed the policy issue reveals several approaches. These teachers generally relied on the strategy of framing the issue in terms of opportunities for students and in terms of the long-term health of the district. This approach came

through in the story of a former art teacher who brought an art student to speak out against the cuts at a school board meeting immediately before the cuts occurred. The student expressed sadness at the loss of arts programming, as the teacher explained:

I brought [the student] to the board meeting to speak to the board. And ooh, that didn't go over very well [laughs]. He stood up in front of the board. His parents brought him because they were very active about it. His parents brought him, and he got up to podium and bawled and bawled and said, "Please don't cut these art programs. I don't know what I would do without art on a weekly basis." And he cried. (interview transcript, January 16, 2015).

AMPE teachers used this framing in their appeals to union leadership and to the non-AMPE teachers ahead of the membership vote. They discussed the cuts as taking away “life possibilities” from students, and a former art teacher recalled telling other teachers that, “This isn't about people, it's about the students. It's the program loss and what that means for these kids long-term, over time” (interview transcript, January 5, 2015).

The AMPE teachers also extended their framing to emphasize equity and justice. A former music teacher said Lansing kids “are the ones that really need” the arts, and another educator explained:

Research shows that urban kids and struggling kids need art music and P.E. They need their gross motor skills developed, they need hands on, they need differentiation, they need project-based learning, they need it more than anyone else. (interview transcript, January 6, 2015)

These teachers brought up stories detailing the impact that arts classes had on certain students for whom the arts were the only avenue for success in school. A former art teacher said:



I am also extremely aware of the impact of a good arts program—an excellent arts program—on an at-risk student ... So I know what that will do. In fact, when I left, kids were crying. I had a boy [who] couldn't read, but he could [do art]. And this is so common. You know, your LD kids and your ADD kids. So when he heard I was leaving, here I had been building him up and all this stuff, and he just wept. I know that is not going to be replicated and it makes me sick to my stomach. (interview transcript, December 16, 2015).

They argued further that the “at-risk” kids in Lansing needed the arts provided by endorsed teachers in school because these students were not likely to receive extra-curricular arts experiences. A former art teacher said: “They don’t have all these opportunities to go to a museum, or have extra music lessons, or dance” (interview transcript, January 6, 2015). A community arts provider representative agreed, saying:

They’re not going down the street to get their trumpet lesson. They’re just not ... This is a very poor district. It’s poverty, there’s a lot of poverty. If it’s not being provided within the school, Mom and Dad aren’t taking them down to the local music store to get them trumpet lessons at \$50 a half hour pop. (interview transcript, January 7, 2015)

In the same way that correspondence between a former AMPE teacher and the Superintendent revealed competing discourses, framing debates around in-school versus out-of-school arts experiences occurred. In several instances, the Superintendent publicly stated that she was a lover of the arts, and cited formative cultural experiences, all of which occurred in extra-curricular contexts. Former AMPE teachers with whom I spoke cited this as an example of the Superintendent misunderstanding the opportunities available to Lansing students.

Former AMPE teachers discussed how they faced dilemmas in terms of messaging and framing. While their strategy of emphasizing the downside the cuts would have for students and the district as a whole, other coalitions—including the union leadership, the district leadership, and the non-AMPE union members—ultimately cared about money. A former art teacher expressed frustration:

I cared that they knew this wasn't about me, this was about kids ... [but] the teachers never, ever, ever looked at what that meant. They just saw numbers ... People base personal decisions on people's livelihoods, not on programming. (interview transcript, January 5, 2015)

A former music teacher remembered attempting to purposefully change the framing to appeal to this sensibility:

I did push upon all the kid aspect and all of that, too, but when you're talking with your union brothers and sisters, you gotta talk to them about the money. Because they're presenting the argument that this is how much money you're going to lose if you take a 15% cut, so I have to talk about it in money terms, too. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

This realization led the teacher to tell the other teachers that a 15% cut paled in comparison to the AMPE teachers losing their entire salaries.

A former music teacher recalled frustration at the failure of the “kid/programming” framing. This teacher emailed the Superintendent and emphasized the loss of arts programming for students. The email also included references to the cognitive and social benefits of studying the arts, but the Superintendent responded by framing the issue in terms of budgets and

certification policy. The teacher included in the letter a story about a student who only seemed to have success in music, as the teacher related to me:

I put him as an example on the letter I sent to the Super, and I said, “There are children like him who will not be reached any other way than through quality music instruction.” Her response to me was a pat on the head, essentially. “Well, you have a very limited certification, so that might hurt you in terms of having a job with us. And either you’re with us or you’re not, so hopefully you’ll decide to stay on board.” It didn’t address—she talked all about me and my job, which I didn’t talk about at all. [My email] was all about the kids and the programming and all of these things, and hers was “Yeah, you’re worried about your job.” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

This exchange exemplifies the competing framing of the issue between coalitions.

### **District Leadership’s Public Rhetoric**

The district leadership used framing tactics in several ways as it publicly discussed the policy decision. To analyze the district’s approach, I gathered every article that was published on the decision and then listed every quotation from a district leader. I present these quotations along with supporting interview content. Analysis shows that the district attempted to frame the issue as a problem of poor AMPE teaching that needed to be solved. The district leadership then framed their proposed solution as superior and innovative. As they detailed how community arts providers would step in to fill the void left by the departing specialists, their public rhetoric drew the community arts provider coalition into the public debate over the issue (as I discuss later in this chapter). In sum, the cuts were framed as a win for the district.

The district leadership focused on several “broken” aspects of the AMPE department in its public comments. First, they called into question the AMPE teachers’ qualifications, noting

that there were non-endorsed educators teaching these subjects. A news story from March 26, 2013 quotes district spokesperson Bob Kolt (*italics mine*):

“We’re going to take some of these community arts programs and put them in schools, *rather than have a lot of uncertified art, music, and P.E. teachers,*” he says. *Right now, only half the current art, music, and gym teachers are certified in those subjects, says Kolt.* (Wells, 2013)

Other quotations discuss the AMPE program as being in need of redesign and students being in need of better teaching. Spokesperson Bob Kolt was quoted as saying (*italics mine*):

“I think it’s an opportunity *to reshape and enhance the arts,*” Kolt said. “That’s how the Superintendent and the teachers looked at it.” ... “The experience will not be replaced, it will just be *a better product and learning opportunity,*” he said. (Wittrock, 2013)

Another quotation from Bob Kolt suggested that parents were upset with the AMPE: “Parents weren’t happy with the system the way it was” (Kolt in Ross, 2013). Framing the decision in terms of a need to replace a bad product upset a number of my participants. These teachers were upset that the district cited non-endorsed teachers as a problem, when district decisions had allowed that staffing practice to flourish. Former AMPE teachers also felt that parents were not unhappy. A former art teacher referenced this statement by Bob Kolt:

I invited him to come into my school and dare tell me that any of my parents are unhappy. That's what he said in the article, something like, “Parents aren't happy.” ... And I invited him to come to [school name]. I said, “You take a look around, walk around, and you tell me my parents are unhappy.” (interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

In other public commentary, the district's leadership argued against assertions that the arts were being cut. In a news article, district spokesperson Bob Kolt said, "The Superintendent is receiving calls from arts groups all over the state saying, 'Why are you cutting the arts?'" ... "But it's just not true" (Kolt in Wells, 2013). The Superintendent publicly stated, "We have no intention of eliminating the arts from our curriculum" (Caamal Canul in Ross, 2013). The Superintendent also referenced the secondary music programs in an effort to rebut the outcry about cuts, saying, "There's still going to be a band at Eastern. There are still going to be performing arts at Everett" (Caamal Canul in Lavey, 2013).

Third, the district leadership framed the new approach—several consultants, community arts providers, and classroom teachers handling arts instruction—as innovative. A news article quoted spokesperson Bob Kolt as saying, "What we're doing is very exciting — there's not a model that we're looking at" (Kolt in Lavey, 2013). The district followed this framing in its naming of the team of consultants who were hired to write lesson plans for elementary art, music, and physical education, calling it the "Department of Innovative Arts and Fitness." Several participants expressed disgust at the district's attempt to frame the new approach as positive. A former music teacher recalled:

I think it was a memo that came out from the Superintendent's office around that time. Oh, and Bob Kolt was the district's communications guy, [he] spoke about how we're going to have "New, innovative, integrated arts—da da da da da." And I blew a gasket. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

When I asked participants about the comments suggesting the new arrangement would be innovative, several made comments such as, "That's insane," or, "Are you kidding me?" Several outsiders to the district, namely some of the representative from community arts groups talked

about how convincing the district's rhetoric was on this topic. One representative said: "Their message was so well crafted, that, had I not understood how incorrect some of the rhetoric was, I would have believed it was just as well for the students" (interview transcript, December 15, 2014).

While less framing addressed the ability of the classroom teachers to teach art, music, and physical education, several public comments did address the feasibility of this arrangement. Assertions from the Superintendent seemed to suggest that arts integration was planned, rather than sequential arts instruction. In a news story, the Superintendent said, "Many classroom teachers also work art and music into the curriculum as part of reading, social studies or science" (Lavey, 2013). The union President discussed how teachers would likely "team teach" and take on the new subjects according to their strengths: "Maybe I'm better at art, but you're better at music and you're better at P.E." (Seidl in Wittrock, 2013).

The most controversial framing employed by the district leadership related to the involvement of community arts providers. Although the district did not contact these groups in any formal way, the district confidently stated that new partnerships would be a feature of the district's elementary arts instruction. In a "Monday Morning Memo" to district staff, the Superintendent explained that the district would "Begin redesigning our arts and physical education programming efforts in grades K-5 so that there are high levels of inclusivity with the community in the greater Lansing area" (Lavey, 2013). In a news story days after the contract was approved, spokesperson Bob Kolt said, "We're contracting out those services to community artists" (Kolt in Wells, 2013). The Superintendent named specific groups in another news story:

"We kind of wanted to redesign the art, music, and P.E. program to bring in community expertise. There are relationships with Wharton, Michigan State University and the arts

community which is very vibrant here in Lansing," said Lansing School District Superintendent Yvonne Caamal Canul.” (Li, 2013)

As I discuss in the next section, this “calling out” of the community arts providers jump-started the community arts provider coalition and started a tense series of conversations between this coalition and the district leadership.

### **Interactions between the CAP Coalition and District Leadership**

I now turn to describing the interactions between the community arts provider (CAP) coalition and the district leadership. Even though the CAP coalition only became active in the aftermath of the union vote, I spend significant time detailing how the coalition attempted to respond to being “called out” by the district. I do this for several reasons. First, this interaction raises many issues related to who is (and should be) responsible for providing arts education to school-aged children. Second, this interaction demonstrates how two coalitions—the CAP group and the district leadership—work with and against each other as time progresses. As I discuss, there was a distinct stage of “early CAP strategy” followed by a shift in tactics—what I refer to as “second stage CAP strategy.” I also detail how and why the CAP coalition eventually fractured.

### **The Immediate Reaction: CAP Groups’ Attempt to Respond**

After the union vote occurred, local reporters quoted the Superintendent and district spokesperson discussing the future involvement of the community arts providers. The Arts Council of Greater Lansing (ACGL), an organization that represented local artists and community arts providers, became the flashpoint for the debate over the involvement of these groups. Because the ACGL acted as a “convener” of many arts groups and had access to the leaders of a number of local agencies, it functioned as a microphone for the CAP coalition.

I spoke with former leaders of the ACGL who discussed how they were caught off guard by the district leadership's comments. These leaders talked about how quickly the decision seemed to have been made and how this had left them with little time to respond. A former employee said:

When the decision was made, it was kind of—it all happened within a week. I mean, I felt like we were sort of bombarded at the last minute and didn't have a clear sense of what was going on. (interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

This employee continued, discussing how surprised the arts groups were at being mentioned by the district:

[ACGL] hadn't been talked to. And to our knowledge, none of the arts groups—the major arts groups in the community—had been talked to ... There were a couple organizations that were sort of called out, as well as just in general saying "Well, the arts and cultural community will step in and handle all of this." (interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

Early on, the ACGL leadership attempted to understand the details of the cuts but had difficulty obtaining accurate information. An ACGL employee discussed how some reports said that 87 art and music teachers had been eliminated, while the actual number was lower (27 teachers). It was similarly difficult to ascertain a reliable number representing what the district's deficit was and what the AMPE cuts would amount to in terms of savings.

A number of CAP representatives said that having foreknowledge of the cuts and being able to respond to being "called out" was hindered by the lack of organized relationships between the district and the CAP groups. While some CAP groups had isolated partnerships with LSD teachers, there was almost no communication between CAP representatives and the district leadership. The ACGL did host an annual student art show that featured LSD student artwork,



but there was no organized communication between the ACGL and the district. As a result, a former ACGL employee said the issue “wasn’t on our radar.” Other representatives echoed the sentiments, such as an employee of the Lansing Symphony Orchestra:

It’s very telling as to where the relationship was before this even happened: there wasn’t one between the Superintendent and any representative from the arts community. There was no pre-existing relationship whatsoever. (interview transcript, January 14, 2015)

In addition to the initial surprise, a number of the groups were very angry. Representatives from these groups resented being made to look as though they were going to replace the AMPE teachers. A former music teacher discussed the reaction from a local arts group, which was operated by an acquaintance:

[The Superintendent] took it upon herself to say, "Yeah, this person's gonna help and this person's gonna help." ... And [the arts groups] finally said, "We're not working with them. Shoot! They cut all the programs. Why should we work with them?" So there was a lot of anger ... Oh were they mad! (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

A representative from an arts agency agreed that the Superintendent’s statement “set some folks off.” This representative said she felt someone needed to publicly say, “Pssh—hold on! Let’s make it clear what our limits are here” (interview transcript, January 14, 2015).

### **CAP Groups Look for Guidance**

In the immediate aftermath of the district’s statements, the ACGL had begun to field concerned phone calls and emails from many of its constituent artists and member groups. The group felt it needed to release a public statement to make it clear that they had not agreed to any relationship with the district. Before releasing the statement, the ACGL met with several groups for advice. The first was a local group that included several professors from Michigan State

University, a representative from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, and several other people with expertise on state arts policy. As a former ACGL employee remembered, this meeting highlighted the lack of clarity around the decision:

We called in people that we knew might know better than we did how to handle such a challenging situation. And then they were also asking a lot of questions because no one was really sure exactly what was happening at that point and it sounded like, if I remember right, no one was able to reach the district to find out what had happened or what were the steps that had taken place that led to that decision. (interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

The small advisory group then held a second meeting and decided to ask also for advice from Americans for the Arts. Americans for the Arts (AFTA) is the national parent group for ACGL, and the AFTA employees who oversee the group's arts education and policy work had already heard of the Lansing decision, as a former ACGL employee recalled: "[AFTA] wanted to know what was going on. They had heard what had happened in Lansing and wanted to know more details and how they could help" (interview transcript, December 10, 2014). The AFTA employees urged the ACGL leaders to release a statement sooner rather than later. An ACGL employee remembered the drafting of this statement to be difficult:

[Our director] worked for about two weeks on the letter to the community, just day and night. And it had to be perfect, and it had to clarify that the arts council had not been aware of the situation prior to the announcement. (interview transcript, December 15, 2014)

AFTA personnel also referred the CAP representatives to a white paper published by the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education (SEADAE). The paper, titled, "Roles of Certified

Arts Educators, Certified Non-Arts Educators, & Providers of Supplemental Arts Instruction” (SEADAE, 2012), recommends how certified arts educators, classroom teachers, and community artists can best work together to provide a well-rounded arts education. The letter from the ACGL, written in early April 2013, appears in appendix E.

As is evident from reading the statement, the ACGL took a hard line in its reaction to the cuts and to any potential educational role for local arts groups. In addition to pointing out that the arts council was “never contacted,” the letter condemns the idea of community arts-provided instruction as a replacement for endorsed specialists:

It is careless to think that these community programs could supplant arts and music curricula in the Lansing elementary schools. We believe the elimination of any highly qualified art and music educators to be unacceptable and the lack of a transparent and democratic process leading to such an important curriculum decision to be irresponsible. (ACGL, 2013)

Referencing the SEADAE paper, the letter continues to explain the roles that various groups can play in delivering arts education and refers to certified arts teachers as the “cornerstones” of this collaboration.

In drafting their statement, the ACGL leaders also were able to reference a similar letter released almost immediately after the decision by faculty members at Michigan State University (see appendix F). One of these faculty member authors had also been part of the small advisory group convened by the ACGL. Released just days after the contract vote, the letter condemned Lansing’s decision as “disappointing” and suggested that students in Lansing would lose “competitive ground” making Lansing “a less desirable place for families with children to live.” The letter also questions the logic behind the plan to bring in community artists:

While we understand the budget constraints faced by all of the state's educational institutions, the decision to bring in musicians from the community occasionally to engage with students is no more a substitute for a comprehensive music education than bringing in mathematicians periodically would be considered an appropriate math education. (letter from MSU College of Music, 2013)

One can see, from studying both statements, that the public response to Lansing's decision—and to its “calling out” of community arts providers—was met with a strongly negative rebuttal. There also is clear evidence that the groups who issued the statements were hopeful that the decision might change. The MSU letter urges the Superintendent to reconsider the policy, and the ACGL letter seems to suggest circumstances could change, noting: “We don't yet know what the next steps of the Lansing School District will be.”

As the ACGL leadership planned its next steps, they began to hear national reaction to the Lansing decision. A former ACGL employee recalled that a colleague had attended the Arts Education Partnership national conference in April and reported that Lansing was a topic of conversation:

[My colleague] had gone to a conference in April, I'm trying to remember what it was—early April. And she said, "Lansing was the topic of the entire conference, to all of these people, nationally." Newspaper articles from the [Lansing newspapers] were all sort of distributed and shared, so [she] sort of felt like, not bombarded, but she was like, "I can't believe this is going on." She had emailed me and said, "You just need to know this is way beyond our community.” (interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

## **Convening the Full CAP Coalition**

The ACGL next decided to convene a meeting with all the “major players” in the Lansing area arts world. This full coalition would meet off and on from May 2013 until the fall. At the first meeting, the small advisory group addressed the full coalition meeting with a description of what had transpired and told them they hoped to have more guidance after the upcoming national meeting hosted by Americans for the Arts. A former ACGL employee said:

We brought everybody together ... We said, "Here's what we've done so far, here are the talking points that we need to use, here's the line that you need to draw in the sand in case you're contacted individually, which you will be. And give us some time to talk to our colleagues in June. We're hoping that we'll come back with some recommendations and a process for us to move forward." So that's what we ended up doing. We related the information back to the group and said we wanted to convene the group on a fairly regular basis, and we wanted to develop plans going forward. (interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

## **AFTA Guidance**

At the June AFTA conference, CAP representatives met with several AFTA personnel, who both gave specific advice on the Lansing situation and tried to supply the ACGL leaders with resources. An AFTA employee who advised the ACGL leaders discussed her approach: “We just really talked to the arts council folks one, to understand what was happening, and two, to give them some advice from examples that we had seen nationally” (interview transcript, January 20, 2015) The AFTA representative told ACGL leaders to be careful to not be “adversarial” but to act as a partner with the district:

[I told them that] you need to talk to the Superintendent as a partner, like "Here's what we believe, but we want to hear what you also believe," and then work together. It's just kind of an advocacy best principles. So we did caution them in trying to do it in a very friendly way and in a way that would be solution-oriented. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

The AFTA representative again mentioned the SEADAE white paper and suggested the ACGL leaders use the Venn diagram (i.e., endorsed arts specialists, classroom teachers, and community artists, with students in the center) to discuss possible solutions:

The Venn diagram doesn't work without all the other players—then it really isn't a Venn diagram. If you're going to tell the Superintendent in Lansing, like, "Sure, it takes a village." But then you do away with your certified teachers, it's not really a village anymore. You've done away with a really important piece of it. So we told that message to the folks in Lansing, to keep bringing that up to the Superintendent. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

The AFTA representatives also provided resources related to the successful examples of partnerships. In these partnerships, school districts partnered with community arts providers to develop collaborative arts education plans. Examples included “Big Thought” in Dallas, Texas, “Arts for All” in Los Angeles, “Arts Rising” in Philadelphia, “The Right Brain Initiative” in the Portland Tri-County area (Oregon), and a number of communities that have participated in the Kennedy Center’s “Any Given Child” program. A former ACGL leader remembered these examples as reassuring: “We felt like, ‘Okay--well there's at least somebody out here who we can at least talk to and learn from’” (interview transcript, December 10, 2014). Another ACGL leader called the examples “inspiring and wonderful” (interview transcript, December 15, 2014).

## Early CAP Strategy

After returning from the AFTA conference in June, leaders of the ACGL began to craft a strategy for working with the CAP coalition and the district leadership. A former ACGL leader said the focus turned to, with the full coalition, talking “about shared goals, shared outcomes,” and to engage in thinking “strategically about what was the mission for those organizations and what wasn’t” (interview transcript, December 10, 2014). The ACGL leaders, in these early meetings, distributed/discussed resources such as the SEADAE “Roles” paper, an AFTA “Field Guide” provided at the June conference and also clarified talking points. In general, the initial strategy pursued by the ACGL was two-pronged. First, the ACGL leaders hoped to use the community arts providers’ services as leverage for the district agreeing to reinstate the AMPE teachers. Second, the CAP coalition hoped to bolster communication with the district.

A former leader of the ACGL described the “leverage” strategy as capitalizing on the district’s assertion that the CAP groups had an important role to play in Lansing:

If the school district believes that the arts community is the answer, is able to step up and provide some kind of arts programming, then you need to convene the art community together, so that you're all on the same page to say, "Okay—well, we will do this for X period of time, say 2 years, with the understanding that you're going to sign an agreement that’s going to say that you're going to restore the teachers.” (interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

The conversation in these early meetings included this leverage concept and specified that the CAP coalition would provide some kind of programming for two years (the length of the current LSD/LSEA agreement on financial terms of the contract), contingent on agreeing to restore the positions that were cut. The ACGL leaders acknowledged that obtaining a written agreement

from the district to restore the specialists was somewhat unlikely, but that the coalition's options were limited:

We were feeling like our only shot at trying to restore the teachers, is to really put pressure on the district ... They obviously want to have a solution to, you know, whatever their decisions were to eliminate these teachers, they wanted to still have a way to provide arts education by working with the community. So we felt like we, in that regard, had some opportunity to sort of leverage. "Okay—you want us? Well then here's what we can do, but it's got to be for this period of time and with these limitations."  
(interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

Following the lead of the models presented by AFTA, the ACGL began to look for charitable foundations that might be able to facilitate a partnership based on this leverage strategy. The backing of a large foundation, the ACGL leaders hoped, would provide even more leverage in their dealings with the district, as a former employee discussed:

[We hoped] to potentially go to a foundation and say, "We have this situation and we would work in conjunction with the school district and the eventual outcome is to restore these teachers, but in the interim this is what we need your support on." So if it meant writing a grant for two years for supplies or resources or whatever it may be to provide at least interim support and then also use the foundation as leverage to say, "Well this foundation is also expecting that the teachers are going to be restored in two years."  
(interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

The ACGL leaders described the leverage strategy to the CAP representatives at a coalition meeting and urged them not to enter into any partnerships with the district until the plan had been discussed with the district.



The second piece of the early strategy—starting a dialogue with the district—proved difficult. While the leverage strategy was internal and could be cultivated and planned among CAP groups, a dialogue required the Superintendent’s participation. This participation was far from assured, since the relationship between the two sides had become adversarial. The district’s assertion that CAP groups would provide services sparked an uproar, and the district leadership also resented the public statements made by both the district and the ACGL/MSU faculty. For a time, the Superintendent would not return phone calls from the ACGL, and there were “hard feelings” all around, as an ACGL leader recalled: “I think the Superintendent felt attacked and that she felt that—and then she just closed down communication totally. So she wasn’t going to talk to anybody who’s gonna kind of scream in her face” (interview transcript, January 7, 2015).

As the CAP coalition was forming its strategy, the district began to move ahead in June/July with its hiring of the Department of Innovative Arts and Fitness (DIAF). These consultants/coordinators—originally seven teachers, later six—began, in turn, to contact CAP groups directly. An ACGL leader remembered:

As a team, they started reaching out to the [art museum] and to the symphony ... The arts organizations kind of said [to us], "Well we're getting these calls from these people and we don't really know what to do." So as kind of the next step for us to work with the district, we said, "Well, we'll have a meeting. We'll convene a meeting with them."

(interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

The first contact between the CAP coalition and the district occurred at a small meeting between the ACGL leaders and the new DIAF coordinators (the Superintendent did not attend). An ACGL leader said that, early on, the conversations about the “leverage” concept were positive: “Our meeting with them was actually good. They sounded very interested in the plan that we

were beginning to formulate in terms of ‘We'll provide the support on an interim basis and we need to restore the teachers.’” (interview transcript, December 15, 2014).

### **The NAMM Forum: Making the Dialogue Public**

As mentioned, the DIAF coordinators had begun to meet with ACGL leaders to explore the details of a partnership, and these conversations continued throughout the summer. But the dialogue about how the community arts providers could partner with the district to provide arts education programming also took a decidedly public turn in September, 2013. The CAP coalition worked with the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) to plan a forum at Everett High School, as part of its John Lennon Educational Tour Bus program. The community forum would only be part of the overall event, which also included interactive music technology labs and performances by middle/high school musicians from LSD. ACGL Leaders had been put in touch with NAMM by the AFTA representatives, as an AFTA representative discussed:

We paired them with the folks that we know at NAMM ... because it was very clear that the community needed to have a conversation and come to kind of a shared sense of value and vision for arts education but then also talk about what the plan of action would be. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

The forum occurred at an interesting time for the CAP coalition. The ACGL leader who had spearheaded much of the coalition’s efforts had left the ACGL to take a new job, leaving the organization without a director. Also, even though the event would occur on district property and with a planned speech from the Superintendent, contact between the ACGL and the Superintendent had yet to occur. An ACGL leader recalled that the panel discussion about the Lansing cuts went well, although the event seemed to cement the sense that the cuts were not going to be reversed and the leverage strategy was to be discarded:

I thought it was a good conversation ... Forward looking, very positive and as NAMM does, they guided us through that process with a lot of grace. Because at that point, I think everyone recognized there was no recourse. We weren't going to be able to change the decision that was made. It stood. (interview transcript, December 15, 2014)

Actual conversation between the Superintendent and the CAP coalition was still elusive. While the Superintendent delivered a speech at the beginning of the panel discussion, she then left and did not hear any of the comments from the panel. She did, however, approach the interim director of the ACGL to ask for a future meeting.

Framing tactics (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993) are evident in the Superintendent's speech (a full transcript of the Superintendent's remarks are found in appendix G). The Superintendent's speech can be analyzed as such: paragraph one frames the cuts as a product of decreasing enrollment and policy ("the core curriculum mandated through testing"); paragraphs two and three position the Superintendent as a lover of the arts; and paragraph four frames the district's new method of elementary arts instruction as an innovative model. Interestingly, paragraph four seems to reference the very Venn diagram of shared delivery that the CAP coalition had used in its response to the district's cuts. The Superintendent said, "We feel very confident that the program will support our efforts and join us in designing a model program *that involves professional artists, classroom teachers, and specialists*" (italics mine). Finally, in a rhetorical flourish that seemed to hint at the adversarial discourse around the cuts, the speech ends by saying, "Let's give peace a chance."

The subsequent panel discussion featured a professor from Michigan State University, the interim director of the ACGL, representatives from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and ArtServe Michigan (now called Creative Many), a teacher from Everett High School,

and the president of the Everett Parent Teacher Student Association. The discussion lasted one hour and was moderated by a NAMM representative. While much of the discussion was oriented toward finding a new solution, panelists did suggest that, without specialists, any collective efforts would be lacking. In a telling example of framing, the district's "The Bright Side" newsletter detailed the panelists' comments as "echoing" the Superintendent's message. The newsletter also positively frames the panelists' comments as suggesting that crises (described as externally imposed and purely financial) can engender positive changes.

### **CAP Coalition Fractures: "Not on the Same Page"**

Participants said that the CAP coalition began to fracture and wane in its advocacy efforts as the fall of 2013 came and the district leadership showed little or no sign of responding to the CAP coalition's leverage strategy or calls for dialogue. In truth, however, the coalition was somewhat fractured from the start. The CAP coalition's early strategy of leverage required that all local arts agencies be "on the same page." If an agency were to partner with the district to provide arts programming, as the district hoped, the coalition's strength would have been diluted. Representatives from a local arts agency recalled thinking this aligning of different organizations was a formidable task:

I don't envy the arts council for trying to bring those groups together, because there are different groups around that table with very different missions ... We come at it from different points of view, and what we see as our role in the community in this larger conversation is really different. (interview transcript, January 14, 2015)

Getting everyone on the same page in agreeing to draw a hard line was difficult for a number of reasons. First, a number of these organizations had pre-existing relationships with LSD. A local art studio had set up an after-school program for LSD students, a local gallery

sponsored summer programming, and the symphony held a yearly concert for area schools. The former leader of the ACGL remembered this process as challenging:

We had to get everybody on the same page first. And I did have an arts organization that was sort of an outlier and not necessarily so into wanting to sort of toe the line. So essentially I had this rogue organization that I was dealing with on the side (laughs).

(interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

This organization, a local art studio, had the most extensive prior relationship with LSD of any of the CAP groups. Likely because of the early issues with the ACGL, the Superintendent had also begun to reach out to this art studio, inviting the director for meetings and offering to have her serve on the DIAF hiring committee. A former ACGL leader remembered trying to persuade this studio director to adopt the CAP strategy:

I had a couple of private conversations with [her] to explain, you know, while I understand how passionate she is and we all are about making sure that the kids have access to arts and music, that she had to really be careful. (interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

The ACGL's director was worried about the art studio's capacity to provide programming for the entire district:

I had to explain that, from best practices and national partners, really [the studio] cannot be the agency or the end-all, be-all to providing arts education throughout the entire district for the kids. There's just no way. The training isn't there, the capacity isn't there. (interview transcript, December 10, 2014)

A common refrain expressed in interviews related to access to arts education in light of the cuts. Numerous representatives from community arts groups worried that if they did not step

up and provide instruction (either by maintaining or expanding their roles in LSD), kids “would not get anything.” This was particularly challenging, participants said, because the missions of these community arts organizations are to provide arts experiences for children. Therefore, drawing a line in the sand to not provide services was counter-intuitive, as two representatives from an agency recalled:

The whole idea that all of a sudden we’re just going to pull back and not do anything and not do anything to promote arts education and not be there for the kids was just, just so hard to swallow. It was very hard to swallow. Just really goes kind of against everything that we feel that we should be as a community arts organization. (interview transcript, January 14, 2015)

For some who disagreed with the hard line, the issue was personal. The aforementioned director of the local art studio had deep ties to the Lansing schools, because her own children had graduated from LSD and she had been a long-time presence in the district, first as a parent volunteer, and later as the director of the community-friendly studio. This director said that she was not sure the rest of the arts community “understood entirely what the situation was with the Lansing School District.” She was upset with being asked to stop programming:

I felt like we had to be cautious about not heading in a direction that would penalize the children from accessing art, you know, because we wanted to hold up a certain standard with the school district on what would make it—a standard that they had to comply with in order for us to be able to supply art. And maybe, you know, a standard that might not be reasonable because we're unwilling to negotiate or talk to each other. (interview transcript, January 9, 2015)

For this director, she said she felt “conflicted” because she wanted to support the teachers who had lost their jobs, but felt that access to arts was “the bottom line”:

I have mixed feelings ... I wanted to be in solidarity with the endorsed arts specialists, and I think that they need to be valued more. At the same time, we want our kids in our district to have access to art. I mean, that's to me, that's the bottom line. There can be a lot of politics around it, but the bottom line is the kids in our district need to have access to art. (interview transcript, January 9, 2015)

A former ACGL leader also suggested that differences in mission between CAP groups and some coalition leaders led to disagreements. This leader said that not all the agency representatives felt as strongly about supporting teachers as one of the coalition leaders, an MSU professor:

I think there were a lot of different opinions, especially initially. Because, as you know, [the MSU professor] comes from a perspective that is “staunch support of arts educators, specialists in the classroom, sequential learning and sort of the gold star standard.” We have though, also—we were interfacing with arts agencies that just wanted to provide exposure to youth and didn’t have the same mission as an organization to support the teachers in the classrooms. (interview transcript, December 15, 2014)

This leader went on to say that certain agencies might have seen the cuts as a fortuitous opportunity to expand their programming:

There were some disagreements certainly, and there were some arts agencies in particular that were really interested in working with the schools and saw it as an opportunity to expand their reach because they would want to expose those students. (interview transcript, December 15, 2014)

As I discuss later in this chapter, this desire to “capitalize” on the cuts led some to charge the CAP groups with “wanting to make money” in the district.

However, many representatives echoed the message of the SEADAE white paper, saying that community arts groups could “supplement but not supplant” sequential instruction by specialist teachers. Several organizations had worried it would appear as though they were trying to replace the teachers if they worked with the district. For example, one agency had just received a two-year grant to work with LSD students, but then had to reconsider. A representative recalled:

We got all these great [curricular] materials, but it was right on the eve of this—the teachers getting cut out of Lansing schools. So our biggest concern was—“Crap! Well does this look like curriculum replacement?” The timing of it was kind of bad. Because all this happened, we freaked out ... This [grant] was already in motion, but it definitely could look like we brought this on as supplement. (interview transcript, January 14, 2015)

For this organization, the leaders had to discuss what their limits would be. They decided to continue allowing LSD teachers and students to come to events that were open to other school districts, and possibly to work in after-school contexts. Going into LSD schools during the school day, however, was seen as problematic:

Should we replace teachers? Absolutely not. No way are we going to send our [artists] in to teach a free class three times a week ... We wouldn’t send [an artist] in to teach a fourth grade class [a lesson] or something like that ... I would be really hesitant because it would be seen as replacement. (interview transcript, January 14, 2015)



## **“Bless and Release”**

The CAP coalition that had been convened during the summer months began to fracture as tensions and disagreements rose in the meetings. Some CAP representatives said that, because some CAP representative felt conflicted about the strategy, coalition meetings were confusing, tense, and frustrating at times. Some said there was a “you’re with us or you’re against us” feeling. One explained: “I think there was a lot of confusion, a lot of fear ... ‘Am I going to be ostracized from the arts community if I do this?’” (interview transcript, January 14, 2015). Some participants said it felt like they were being encouraged to draw such a hard line with the district, that by the time the DIAF coordinators were hired, there was already animosity toward them:

The cut happened and then hiring of the coordinators came. And that was a big, you know, what is this all about? Who are these people? And I’ll never forget, somebody asked, “So I don’t get it, are [the coordinators] friends? Are they enemies? Are they frenemies?” And [to one another] we’re like, “Oh my goodness, should we not call them? Should we be mean when we see them at things.” It was like, “Oh my gosh, I’m at the mean girl table, I gotta get out of here.” (interview transcript, January 14, 2015)

CAP representatives who disagreed with the hard line taken by the ACGL leaders said they did not understand or agree with the goals. One representative in particular felt unsure whether to be upset with specific Lansing administrators, or with the union, or whether the goal should be to lobby for better state education policy:

What are we asking for? If we all went and advocated and I used my board, which is a really well connected board, to call their legislators and say here’s what we want, or to call Lansing School Board and see here’s what you need to do. What is that? (interview transcript, January 14, 2015)

This representative was frustrated because the response from the CAP coalition leaders was, as she said, “We’re working on that.” This lack of a specific lobbying goal was frustrating. At the same time, CAP representatives who looked into the decision began to doubt that anything could be done to reinstate the teachers, since the cuts were tied into the teachers’ contract for several years at minimum. One remarked:

I just kind of kept saying in those conversations, “Okay, so we’ve got it—now what? What are we tasking for?” [They’d answer] “Well we’re asking for these teachers to be reinstated.” [I’d say] “Well that’s not going to happen? Do we understand how long the union contract is? That’s not the reality of this.” (interview transcript, January 14, 2015)

The representative felt that, because of the union contract being in place, the leverage strategy was fundamentally flawed. She said that to deny services to kids and hope the union would reopen their contract somehow was “never never land” (interview transcript, January 14, 2015).

Others felt that the hard line taken by the CAP coalition seemed disingenuous given the lack of relationship with LSD. The art studio director with long-time experience in the district said:

I think what was frustrating to me when all this happened in the spring of 2013 was that suddenly this decision is made by the school district, which is a very newsworthy kind of thing, and suddenly the arts community is up in arms about that. Where my sense was, “Where were we several years ago when the arts programming already started going downhill?” (interview transcript, January 9, 2015)

A current classroom teacher expressed the same feeling, saying that the CAP coalition’s “outrage” felt condescending given the tone of the coalition’s statements:

I'm a little bit offended that they—all these people—had all these opinions about how Lansing is running their art, music programs, when where they hell have they been for all these years? You know what I mean? Like how dare you say, "Oh you're going to cut art and music!" when you haven't been involved in the schools until now. We say we're going to cut it and now you want to be—stand up and get on your high horse and look down at us? We're just trying to survive. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

Eventually, the disagreements within the coalition combined with the lack of discernible progress and the changes in ACGL leadership resulted in a fracturing/dissolving of the full CAP coalition. Those who left the coalition (stopped showing up to meetings) did, however, agree that the ACGL had reacted appropriately at first, given the district's actions. Several representatives said the hard line reaction was the "right strategy at the right time." The fracturing occurred, however, as different CAP groups balked at the leverage strategy, which both seemed futile to some and misguided to others. A former ACGL leader admitted with a sense of resignation, "It may be that the dream of a programmatic coalition and leverage for the district toward reinstating specialists—that may have just been a pipe dream" (interview transcript, December 15, 2014).

The leaders of the coalition—the ACGL director and advisors from MSU—worried that this fracturing would mean that the issue would fade from the public's eye. A former ACGL leader said:

[It's surprising] that something like this could happen in a community and the outrage could wane. I know initially, as we saw, there were a lot of people that were very angry, and a lot of people willing to give guidance, and a lot of people really engaged. But as I

remember some of my colleagues stating they were fearful of, I think, it has gone off the radar for many people. (interview transcript, December 15, 2014)

Several of the early ACGL leaders drew on a “mantra” of sorts that they learned from sessions at the June 2013 AFTA conference. A speaker had mentioned that, when building a coalition, one can try to persuade member groups to act a certain way, but that ultimately one has to “bless and release” those who disagree with the coalition’s direction.

### **Second Stage CAP Strategy**

There was a period of turnover at the top of the ACGL during the fall and winter of 2013, as one leader left, an interim leader briefly took over, a new leader started, and the interim leader left the group to take a new job. The frustration of trying to lead a fracturing coalition seemed to have played a role in this churn. The outgoing director and the interim director had both invested themselves deeply into the process of drafting a public statement, convening the coalition for meetings throughout the summer, playing a role in the NAMM forum, and making initial contacts with the DIAF coordinators. The departing leaders said they began to feel that the Lansing situation was stalled and that their involvement may not have been appreciated any longer.

As the new director began her tenure at the ACGL in November 2013, the LSD issue was still looming large. She recalled being asked about how she might handle the situation during her interviews for the position, and had to immediately determine how to interact with the CAP coalition and the district leadership during her first week of work. To get a sense of the state of the coalition, the new director invited all the groups that had previously attended coalition meetings. The low turnout was indicative of the fracturing, and those who did come expressed their frustration about the early strategy, as she recalled:

We invited a very large group, and a very small group showed up and I got their input in terms of what they felt had happened, and there was dissent ... There was dissent in terms of those who felt that we had made the advocacy push. To some of those providers, [that] was not the right way to do this. (interview transcript, January 7, 2015)

Some of the early advisory group also brought the new director up to speed, and there was also firm direction from the ACGL board, as she recalled: “When I came on, though, my board instructed me that I was there to help build a new model and [to operate on] the concept of, “It ain’t ever going back to what it was” (interview transcript, January 7, 2015).

The second stage of the CAP coalition’s strategy represents a major change from early strategy. The realization that the money and AMPE positions would likely not return anytime soon formed the backdrop of the new strategy. Instead of looking for leverage and dialogue, the coalition now began to try to form a relationship with the Superintendent and DIAF coordinators. This relationship, the new ACGL director told me, would form a foundation for mutual actions. The actions would be “baby steps” for both sides, with the ultimate goal being some kind of “new model” of collective arts education. The new director of the ACGL explained:

The message now is different than it was when it first happened. And the message now really is how do we work to create a model that’s going to work in Lansing? The dollars are never going to come back in the same way that they used to be there. (interview transcript, January 7, 2015)

As the new director noted, not all players in the CAP coalition agreed with this new strategy. Some, especially those who had fought for the leverage strategy at the outset, voiced their opposition:

[Some on] our advocacy team wants everybody to “Stop everything!” “Don’t give up a step unless they give up a step.” ... My job right now is if there’s a new model and I can be a part of the solution for it, that’s my role ... Some of them want to go backwards and say, “We gotta have 27 [teachers replaced].” Well that’s not going to happen. So in moving forward, you gotta give a little and I gotta give a little. (interview transcript, January 7, 2015)

The Director, however, felt that this new strategy of purposeful relationship building was the only way to achieve long-term results that were beneficial for students. She noted that unless there was a good relationship with the Superintendent and the School Board, no one would take the CAP coalition seriously:

If we don’t have a relationship with them, I have no credibility ... This is now development of relationship time, and then I think I can go back and go to the School Board meetings and be a credible witness about what really is taking place. I don’t think, had we shown up at any of those meetings prior to that with no relationship—[they would have thought] “Who the hell are you?” You know? (interview transcript, January 7, 2015)

Ultimately, the ACGL director felt that someone needed to break the impasse between the CAP coalition and the district leadership:

I’m sorry, at some point in time we have to stop saying, “I can’t do anything for you because you haven’t done anything for me.” Someone has to give first and if that’s us, I think I’m okay with that. Somebody has to say, “Truce!” (interview transcript, January 7, 2015)

As part of this relationship building, the ACGL director and former Interim Director met with the Superintendent in the winter of 2013. This was the first meeting between leaders of the

coalitions since tempers had flared in the spring. The ACGL leaders recalled the meeting as “illuminating, surprising”:

We were invited to her office and we just opened communication. It was probably more of a “let’s get to know each other” a little bit ... That first meeting was, I’m going to say, two or three hours in her office. It was a great meeting and we all got—we aired everything. Everything came out on the table. (interview transcript, January 7, 2015)

The Superintendent told the ACGL leaders how upset she was at the CAP coalition’s negative reaction and expressed frustration that no one had asked her why the cuts were made. The ACGL leaders also expressed frustration at being “called out” by the district:

[She said] how disappointed she was in what we said, and we said, “Well, we were kind of disappointed in what you said.” So it came out and she said after that meeting, she said “You know, you were the only ones who ever came and asked me what had happened.” (interview transcript, January 7, 2015)

This first meeting led to two more meetings with the Superintendent. Eventually, the Superintendent turned over the talks about projects to the DIAF team, although the ACGL director continued to correspond sporadically with the Superintendent over email.

In order to “give a little” and work collaboratively with the district to find a “new model,” the ACGL began to be a point person for joint projects. Instead of convening large CAP coalition meetings, the ACGL director began to meet with the DIAF team and magnet school principals and with individual CAP representatives with the goal of slotting CAP groups into projects. The ACGL used its list of individual members and groups to provide the DIAF with a “directory” of possible visiting artists. The ACGL offered to play a role in “vetting” these potential artists, as the Director explained: “My job is to figure out who those people might be,

how to maybe—not certify them, but how to qualify them. And then how do I get them into the classroom?” (interview transcript, January 7, 2015). As part of this placement of artists and development of joint projects, the ACGL director also felt her group could aid in finding grant monies, explaining: “Are there grants available that we could partner with that we could go after additional dollars? Then that starts to create that new model” (interview transcript, January 7, 2015).

The ACGL director also hoped to eventually channel the new model through a more established organization. The nearby Wharton Center for the Performing Arts (located on the campus of Michigan State University) already operated an Institute for Arts and Creativity with funding from the Michigan State University Federal Credit Union. This institute regularly partnered with the Kennedy Center to provide professional development for area teachers, to bring teaching artists into schools, and to offer other “interactive programs that integrate performing arts into K-12 curriculum for almost 29,000 children each year and touch the lives of countless adults” (Wharton Center, 2015). The ACGL director felt this institute could provide the infrastructure for the new model of arts education in Lansing schools:

I met with [the director of] the Institute for Art and Creativity, and we started talking about a bigger project. I think he is going to be a key to some of this. I think he understands what an artist-in-residence—the quality of a qualified artist in residence—could provide within an elementary school setting. (interview transcript, January 7, 2015)

The ACGL director was particularly encouraged by the district returning the DIAF coordinators to the classroom in their second year. As I discuss more in the next chapter, the first year after the cuts (2013-2014 school year) featured DIAF coordinators writing lesson plans for use by classroom teachers, but did not involve any instruction by these coordinators. In the



second year, the DIAF team was put into the schools on a rotating basis, providing four 45-minute lessons throughout the school year. The ACGL director saw this move as an important “baby step”:

We were really excited when we heard they were going to go back into the classroom. And like I said, it’s a baby step for us, but it’s a step in the right direction ... They’re actually in the classroom teaching. They’re going to the 21 elementary schools. It’s four people versus 27 people, but there’s four that are now in the classroom actually doing some of the teaching. So total baby step, but it was a step in the right direction. (interview transcript, January 7, 2015)

As I discuss in the next chapter, moving the DIAF team into the classroom seems to have been motivated more by a desire to provide common planning time for classroom teachers than by a desire to change the model of arts instruction.

### **Discussion: How Shared is the Endeavor?**

Interviews seemed to suggest that different actors and coalitions involved in the delivery of arts education in a district like Lansing may not share the same goals. This lack of shared vision belies the idealistic rhetoric around shared delivery between groups of stakeholders. These groups—including endorsed arts teachers, generalist classroom teachers, and community arts providers—are shown in the SEADAE paper’s Venn diagram as, at least ideally, complementing one another in educating children (SEADAE, 2012, 2014). In the 2012 draft, these groups are referred to as “key partners” (p. 1). In the 2014 paper, the title, “A Shared Endeavor,” suggests a collaborative and collegial relationship. But as my analysis of coalition’s policy core beliefs and self-interested actions shows, the endeavor can often be anything but shared.

A representative from Americans for the Arts (AFTA) discussed how local realities often can be at odds with ideal working relationships espoused by groups such as SEADAE and AFTA. This representative said she often sees the different groups fighting over their “slice of the pie”:

There are groups who, I think, like I said, are there to support certified teachers, and there's groups that are out there that support only community programs, and there are groups out there that support music, and there are groups out there that only support dance. And I think where everyone decides, "I'm putting a stake in the ground to protect this one little area that I work in." (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

As a result of the perceived “turf war,” AFTA had taken the position of being “agnostic”:

That's something that AFTA realized about ourselves in counseling Lansing, is we are really the only national association that advocates for quality arts education in a very agnostic way. We don't care if it's happening in the home, the school, or the community. We think it's all three. We don't care if it's dance or theater or music, or visual arts, or media arts, we think it's all five. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

This representative felt that, in Lansing, there were not enough people advocating for a shared approach. She noticed groups “looking after their own interests.”

The AFTA representative went on to state that she had seen tensions and “turf wars” increase in situations of scarcity. She suggested that when coalitions are forced to operate on a “mentality of scarcity” for a long time, they begin to worry and become self-focused:

It's just this mentality of, “There's only so much, so many resources in this resource pie, so I want to fight for my little one resource,” versus, “How can we all work together and

contribute our own resources?” So that mentality of scarcity is really hard to shake.

(interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

The representative used terms like “collective impact” and “shared delivery” to stress that the ideal situation flips coalitions’ mindsets from one of scarcity to one of abundance:

Let's shift to this mentality of abundance. We all have these resources, we all have our own strengths, we all want to the same things for the kids, how can we all offer it and align it together, and be all better for it. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

This representative acknowledged the difficulty of shifting mindsets and mentioned that even when collaboration reaches a healthy point, sustainability is a challenge. As leaders of different organizations come and go, visions change and coalitions can crumble or shift.

This lack of collaboration seems to characterize the way that the CAP and district leadership coalitions acted in the initial months after the decision. The district leadership expressed hopes of partnerships with community arts providers, but initial CAP coalition strategy focused on leveraging the group’s services on a rethinking of the staffing cuts, which was essentially a non-starter for the district. Second-stage CAP coalition strategy began focusing on more collaboration, although even this form of working together was (and is) somewhat one-sided. While the CAP strategy is to “give a little” and take “baby steps” toward collaboration, the district cannot (or will not) “give” in terms of returning endorsed arts specialists who were cut. As the new ACGL director acknowledged, advocacy with the district toward reinstating specialists is “on hold” while the terms of the LSEA contract are operating.

### **Discussion: Mistrust, Blaming and the “Devil Shift”**

In this chapter, I have focused on the coalitions and their relationships with one another during the negotiation phase and the post-decision “fallout.” Throughout the discussion, I have drawn upon the hypotheses of the advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). The ACF predicts that coalitions attempt to turn belief systems into policy, and these attempts often involve competition between groups with fundamentally different beliefs (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). When a coalition loses to another in some competitive situation, the ACF predicts, the losing coalition will vilify the winning coalition. The ACF refers to this as the “devil shift” (Sabatier, Hunter, & McLaughlin, 1987). The authors explain that the devil shift “explains how coalition members exaggerate the negative motives, behavior, and influence of opponents” (Weible, Sabatier, & McQueen, 2009, p. 132). The devil shift hypothesis predicts that actors will exaggerate the maliciousness of a competing coalition’s “motives, behaviors, and influence” (Weible, Sabatier, & McQueen, 2009, p. 132). The severity of this blame depends on the distance between the competing coalitions’ belief systems, and on the degree of loss experienced by the losing group (Weible, Sabatier, & McQueen, 2009).

In this section, I discuss the instances of the devil shift in coalition relationships in Lansing. The devil shift was pronounced among the AMPE teachers as they expressed feelings of mistrust and betrayal. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, the AMPE teachers felt misrepresented by the union leadership and felt that the negotiation process was unfair since both the union leadership and the district leadership seemed aligned against the AMPE department. In this section, I focus on mistrust about the union vote, about how the DIAF coordinators were chosen, and about the district leadership’s treatment of employees.

## **Mistrust over the Contract Ratification Vote**

Several participants discussed how the vote to approve the planning time cut seemed “rigged.” For some, it was the overwhelming percentage (around 80%) of the union that approved the cut that triggered doubts. A current classroom teacher who sympathized with the AMPE teachers said:

I feel in many ways that it was rigged, because I really know a couple people only that voted it down, to get rid of the arts like that. And—and when they say it was 20% to 80%, I have a hard time believing it. And so do many other people. (interview transcript, February 13, 2015)

For other teachers, it was the quickness with which the votes were tallied and announced that caused mistrust. A former art teacher said: “Honestly, I even question the vote because it came in so fast. And they have to hand-count [some of the] ballots, too. I mean most of it was electronic, and it came in quick” (interview transcript, March 16, 2015).

Several participants stopped short of suggesting that the votes were miscounted or falsely counted but felt that union leadership were inappropriately involved in the voting process. These kinds of charges included the union leadership not putting AMPE teachers on the bargaining team and pressuring members to vote for the cuts to avoid “Right to Work” rules. A teacher with whom I spoke noted that the union President meddled in the voting process by suggesting that the members vote a certain way. This former art teacher said:

One thing that struck me, too, is that [the president] said, and put out in emails, urging you to vote, “Yes.” Urging members to vote, “Yes.” And to me, it’s like—that seems like a “no-no” to say, “You’ve got to vote this way or that way,” or strongly suggest that you

vote [a certain way]. But he kind of walks that little tight-rope where he's just barely skating—just sliding under what's allowed. (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

Several former AMPE teachers said the pressure to get the contract approved quickly had resulted in confusion about the impact of the vote. They discussed this confusion as a reason to mistrust the union leadership's role in the process:

I would go into my schools and finish up the year teaching, and the teachers that I would talk to [would say], "Oh I didn't know that was going to happen!" Well, they just bamboozled the rest of the union, and nobody was smart enough to listen. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

### **DIAF Chosen Politically**

One of the district leadership's decisions that most caused a devil shift was its staffing of the Department of Innovative Arts and Fitness (DIAF). Once the cuts were approved by union vote, the district announced that it would have a team of educators who would provide support to classroom teachers in their arts and physical education instruction. The hiring process took place "in a vacuum" and revealed troubling "politics" in the eyes of my participants. The district held interviews for these positions, and several of the most senior teachers applied. Of these, some were not interviewed, and those that were did not get the positions. One of these applicants, a former art teacher, described the process:

I'm just going to throw it out there: it was fixed. It was very fixed. There was nobody better for that position than me, and anybody will tell you that. Anybody will tell you that. (interview transcript, January 16, 2015).

Numerous retired art teachers echoed this, noting that the most senior and qualified people did not get the job. One educator remembered the senior art teachers telling her they had not gotten

the DIAF jobs, and explaining that they felt they didn't interview well: "I'm thinking your interviews had absolutely nothing to do with this! This is all--I mean, this is all figured out" (interview transcript, December 16, 2014).

Former AMPE teachers and several current classroom teachers said that the qualified arts teachers who applied but were not chosen to be DIAF coordinators were being punished for speaking up prior to the vote. These teachers had been vocal in trying to fight the cuts. They had attended school board meetings and had spoken to the media about the issue. An art teacher who applied but was not chosen for the DIAF team recalled:

I am not one to sit down and be quiet, and I was very vocal with the media, with the newspaper, with anybody that would listen to me about what was going on. And I'm gonna tell you right now, that's the only reason I didn't get that job. There is no doubt.

(interview transcript, January 16, 2015)

This was not just speculation, the teacher explained. She had been told by the union president and another person familiar with the contract bargaining that her pre-vote activism was a problem: "[The union President] said, 'Off the record, I'm just going to tell you right now, sometimes people who go to the podium don't get the job'" (interview transcript, January 16, 2015).

Participants told me that the people who were chosen for the DIAF were not the most qualified or effective but were considered "yes people." Interviewees who were showed initiative were ignored, a former music teacher said:

They wanted people who were "yes people" who would not buck the district ... If you went into the interview—and I talked to several specialists about this—if you went into the interview and you gave them an idea of what you were going to do, and how you

were going to do this, they didn't hire you for it. They didn't want you to have any ideas.

They wanted you just to do what they wanted you to do. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

Participants said “favoritism” was at work and that one of the DIAF coordinators in particular was “in” with the administrators. A former music teacher said: “The favorites got it. Yeah, it wasn’t about who was effective, who was highly qualified, nope. It was about who kissed whose ass” (interview transcript, January 6, 2015).

Probably the most cited element of the DIAF hiring process that invited mistrust was that several people who were chosen for positions were not endorsed. One of the two art coordinators was not endorsed, and two of the three physical education coordinators initially hired (there are now only two) were not endorsed. This move was upsetting to former AMPE teachers, current classroom teachers, and to several representatives of the CAP groups with whom I spoke. Not only was it was upsetting to have a non-endorsed teacher in charge of elementary school programming for the whole district, but these educators had been chosen over the most senior endorsed specialists.

A former music teacher discussed frustration at having a non-endorsed teacher on the DIAF team: “You know that innovative department? They’re not even certified, some of them. People teaching art that are not art certified. Are you kidding me? So that’s the ‘high quality’?” (interview transcript, January 6, 2015). The non-endorsed art teacher on the DIAF team was considered to be a poor teacher by some of my participants. A current classroom teacher said this art teacher did not understand how to design instruction and would “do the same thing with kindergartners that she would do with sixth graders!” (interview transcript, February 13, 2015). Participants also discussed how the hiring of a non-endorsed teacher belied the district’s rhetoric



after the vote. While the district spokesperson had noted that arts instruction was poor because the department contained many non-endorsed teachers, now LSD had hired a non-endorsed teacher to oversee art instruction. In sum, ignoring the most senior art teachers in favor of non-endorsed educators with reputation issues caused massive mistrust and resentment among a number of teachers. Teachers who supported the AMPE department cited these issues over and over, epitomizing a devil shift among an unsuccessful coalition.

### **District Leadership Seen as “Punishers”**

Though the devil shift I witnessed among the AMPE teachers was applied to both the union leadership and the district leadership, characterizations varied. Former AMPE teachers characterized the union leaders as being untrustworthy and framed their lack of representation as malicious. The district leadership, on the other hand, was characterized more as being insular, ego-driven, and being prone to punishment. Several participants referred to the administrators, including the Superintendent, as “punishers.” They noted that the district had a number of problems, but that those who held any power to fundamentally change or improve the problems were driven by a desire to protect friends and to exact revenge on people who were critical of the district’s actions. Overall, it was clear that, for many of the former and current teachers, this post-decision devil shift applied to the district leadership equaled a high level of mistrust and fear.

Several participants suggested the administration had brought a “dysfunctional culture” to the school district. A current classroom teacher said this dysfunction included mismanagement of funds, interpersonal politics (such as favoritism in hiring), “bad leadership decisions,” and a lack of support for teachers on issues such as classroom discipline and performance evaluations. While some of the blame for dysfunction was leveled at the Superintendent, much scorn was

reserved for the principals. One current classroom teacher called the principals “derelict,” and another said:

The principals are awful. I just feel a lot that starting from Yvonne all the way down, that they [must have] put on an application, "Do you suck as an administrator?" And they put, "Yes." They must hire them. I don't know how they could get any worse than they have! I don't know how you could find that many bad principals and administrators in one district. And everyone feels that way. (interview transcript, February 13, 2015)

The devil shift went beyond complaints over incompetence and dysfunction to feeling that administrators would punish anyone who publicly complained about the district's actions. As mentioned, teachers who spoke out about the cuts were said to be “blacklisted,” “dead meat,” and “persona non grata.” A current classroom teacher said that teachers are still frightened to speak out about complaints:

Right now people are too scared to talk. They're just too scared to talk because of, you know, what happened and just too scared to talk, that's all. Because now they can get rid of you if they want to. So everyone just shuts up. (interview transcript, February 13, 2015)

A former teacher explained that administrators often would act to make sure employees with whom they disagreed would be penalized: “[Anger and bitterness]—that’s the tenor of the district right now. It’s, ‘Well we’ll get you. We’ll show you. We’ll make this up about you.’ I mean they told so many lies and fabricated things to hurt good people” (interview transcript, January 6, 2015). The teacher explained further that administrators would block teachers from getting jobs to make a point: “[They would say] ‘Watch what I’m going to do. They think they’re

going to have this position? Hah! Watch this.’ It’s sickening. It is sickening” (interview transcript, January 6, 2015).

Several participants, when discussing whether the district would ever restore the positions that were cut, brought up the Superintendent’s ego. A former art teacher said she doubted the positions would ever come back, because it would mean an admission of failure for the Superintendent:

I think for them to bring it back to what it was, that’s not going to happen anytime soon. Because that’s admitting, “Oops! We were wrong. This really is the way to do it.” I think there’s some egos involved downtown with that. I don’t see that happening ... It’s kind of admitting defeat [laughs], admitting you might have been wrong. And yeah—I don’t think that’s going to happen. (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

Another former art teacher echoed these sentiments:

Personally I think Yvonne will be the last person on the face of this earth to admit she was wrong. She won’t do it. She will not admit she’s wrong, no doubt in my mind [laughs] ... what Yvonne wants, Yvonne does. (interview transcript, January 16, 2015).

The devil shift is clear in these comments from “losing” coalition actors. They illustrate the ACF’s prediction that those with losses tend to emphasize the malicious intent behind undesirable actions.

## CHAPTER SIX: THE IMPACTS OF THE CUTS AND THE “NEW NORMAL”

### **Introduction**

In Chapter Four, I presented findings that addressed the policy conditions that were in place in LSD to enable the 2013 cuts. In Chapter Five I illustrated the external shocks that moved the district to make its decisions, and discussed the various coalitions involved in the lead up to the decision and the immediate aftermath. In this chapter, I focus on the third and final research question—what is the current state of the elementary arts programs in the Lansing School District? To answer this question, I present findings on classroom teachers handling instruction in art and music. I also discuss the work of the coordinators in the Department of Innovative Arts and Fitness (DIAF), and give examples of how the community arts provider (CAP) groups have partnered with the district to deliver supplementary arts experiences. Finally, I review the impacts of the 2013 cuts on the current teachers, the AMPE teachers who were cut, and the district overall. Because the district did not agree to allow in-school observations, I largely draw upon participant interviews to portray the current situation in the district. Supplementing these interviews are DIAF documents obtained through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, the Superintendent’s Monday morning memos to staff, and social media posts.

I do not, in this chapter, use the advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993) to analyze or organize findings. This is because the ACF is, at its roots, explanatory of coalition activity within policy subsystems. It does not attempt to explain or predict why specific outcomes occur, but rather illuminates how belief systems, policy-oriented learning, and external perturbations can spur coalition activity (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

## **Classroom Generalists Teaching Art and Music**

As the 2013-2014 school year began, classroom teachers prepared to, for the first time, be solely responsible for delivering instruction in art, music, and physical education. Before the cuts occurred, students were going to music class twice a week for 30 minutes each and were engaging in visual arts instruction once per week for 60 minutes. Participants told me this schedule, while shifting slightly, had been in place since around 2005. With the classroom teachers now responsible for instruction in these areas, this frequency and constancy of instruction were now negotiable. As current employees related, the extent to which students received art or music instruction after the cuts depended on both their teacher's preferences and on the principal's enforcement. In this section, I discuss what the classroom teachers have attempted to do and their feelings on being responsible for arts instruction.

### **A Continuum of Implementation**

As mentioned, there does not seem to be any uniformity in how the elementary teachers in Lansing are implementing art and music instruction. Of the hundreds of teachers spread across 20-plus elementary schools, some seem to do almost no instruction; some are rotating kids so that one teacher in each grade level is responsible for an area of instruction (i.e., one teacher becomes the grade level's art teacher, one become the music teacher, etc.); some are doing a lot of music and art instruction. My interviews with three current classroom teachers exemplify this range of outcomes. One teacher was doing almost nothing in terms of art and music instruction, and said all the teachers in her building were acting similarly. The second teacher felt comfortable with physical education, but only attempted some art projects, and no music projects. The third teacher felt very confident and was adamant that she and her colleagues were consistently delivering high-quality instruction in the arts. All participants agreed that shifting

the instruction to the classroom teachers, while simultaneously removing any planning time, has been incredibly difficult. Though the resulting experience for kids differs, participants agreed that teachers were “doing their best” with what they had to work with.

On one end of the spectrum, a classroom teacher said educators in her building were doing little to no instruction in the AMPE subjects. This teacher tried, when possible, to frequently incorporate visual art projects into the week’s work, but rarely engaged students in music or physical education. She said:

At my building this year, I mean me and my two colleagues have been literally to the gym two times to get with all three classes and play—what did we play? I don't know, "Sharks" or something. That's all we've done. They go outside, [but] they're not getting the gym. Or the music. I mean—you know you might sing your “come to the carpet song,” or do this or that, but they're not getting it. No. (interview transcript, February 13, 2015)

This teacher said that, from what she hears, this same situation was common in other elementary schools. Teachers would take kids to the gym to “run around or play a game,” but were likely not engaging in skill building. It was difficult to know the extent to which teachers in her building were doing anything organized, she noted, because, “With no planning time we can't get out of classrooms to see what anyone does” (interview transcript, February 13, 2015).

Rotating students to a certain classroom teacher for an arts experience, also called departmentalizing, was a common solution among teachers. This approach, however, still depended on at least one teacher per grade level being confident enough to deliver instruction in art or music. A current classroom teacher said that, in her K-3 building, only the first grade

teachers had attempted to departmentalize. Being willing to teach music or art resulted from prior experience, said a CAP representative who worked with classroom teachers:

A lot of the classroom teachers are getting innovative in the sense that one of them does read music in a building, so they'll rotate. You know, [one will handle] all the music, because they're like, "I sing in my church choir, I was raised playing music, I took piano as a kid, I can kinda do this." And then someone else will take rotations of P.E., someone else for visual arts. (interview transcript, January 14, 2015)

A DIAF team member had seen the same approach be implemented and was optimistic about its prospects:

There's one building on the North side that took that approach. Very systematic about it. They have 3 third grade teachers. One spearheaded music, one spearheaded art, one spearheaded phys ed. The one who spearheaded music at this particular building had, like, 12 years of piano lessons, so at least she's familiar with it. So the buildings that use their teachers to the best of their abilities to try and cover these subjects, I think the kids have a fair shot of coming away with something. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

The DIAF team members said they appreciated the departmentalization approach, because those teachers "try to make an effort to at least bring it to these kids" (interview transcript, February 23, 2015).

Participants agreed that music was the most difficult subject for them to teach. This was likely the biggest impediment for individual teachers implementing music lessons and was a roadblock to uniformly implementing a departmentalized approach among grade levels. A retired music teacher remembered classroom teachers worrying about this when they heard about the

cuts: “[They felt] music was the hardest, because everybody says, ‘Well, we can draw, or we can take them out and play.’” (interview transcript, January 20, 2015). Whereas art and physical education lessons seemed possible for any teacher to implement, one classroom educator said music was different: “Phys ed and art are easier than the music per se, because [with music] some do, some don't” (interview transcript, March 14, 2015). In other words, this teacher felt that some people are musical and some are not, echoing previous literature on generalists’ lack of self-efficacy for teaching music (Byo, 1999; Colwell, 2008; de Vries, 2013; Garvis, 2013; Oreck, 2004; Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008).

Former music teachers said that their friends who were still teaching in elementary classrooms regularly lamented their frustrations with trying to teach music. These lamentations bothered the former AMPE teachers, because they brought up hard feelings about being considered expendable. For example, a former music teacher shared:

I’ve had many teachers that come right up to us [saying], “I can do art, I can do P.E. I cannot do music. I do not know my way around this at all.” ... [I say] “You’re damn right you can’t!” [laughs]. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

A former music teacher said that it is difficult to not react angrily when hearing that music is harder to teach:

[I say] “Yeah, you’re right. It is one of the harder of the three for most to teach.” And I often get, “Well, that’s why we need you back in the classroom.” “Well yes, that’s true, too. You should have thought about that before you voted.” It’s hard. It’s hard to not be snarky and negative just because you’re looking at somebody who possibly was one who voted you, I mean, out. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)



Even in situations in which a classroom teacher had some music experiences in their background, stumbling blocks existed, such as the inability to deal with and teach musical notation. Several former music teachers said that they knew of some classroom teachers who played in local rock bands and could sing and play guitar with kids. However, they insisted that the teachers could not teach notation, perform on a variety of instruments, or teach a wide repertoire.

In instances in which classroom teachers attempted to personally deliver art and music instruction, a variety of strategies were used in deciding what to teach. As I discuss later, the district intended that the Department of Innovative Arts and Fitness (DIAF) would create binders of lesson plans and that the classroom teachers would use these curricular materials as a basis for arts instruction. In reality, these binders/notebooks seem to mostly have been ignored by the classroom teachers. One classroom teacher said, “The notebooks sit. I’ve never seen anybody use ‘em. We all do our own art” (interview transcript, February 13, 2015). Instead, some teachers found ideas for arts and crafts lessons on websites like Pinterest, as this educator recalled: “They just take Pinterest things, or you know, put—make a turkey out of your hand, or cut out valentines and put some tape on it” (interview transcript, February 13, 2015).

A number of teachers relied upon former AMPE teachers for ideas for lessons. These generalists said they frequently called former art and music teachers they worked with to get advice because they trusted these specialists’ years of experience. They also sought out former art teachers because they felt the DIAF art binders were poor quality. A former music teacher said that teachers regularly contacted her to ask for help:

I help the teachers. I go there and if they call me at home, or text me, or email me or whatever, and say, "I'm doing this unit, do you have something?" I labeled all of my

music resources, and I'll go and find it for them and give it to them and occasionally I'll go and help them teach it. March is reading month, and I went in and read to a class, and then they have a day where I did music centers for them. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

When I expressed surprise at former AMPE teachers offering help, a retired art teacher said she did not mind helping the classroom teachers who had been long-time friends and supporters:

Some of my close friends at the schools I was at, they come to me for lessons. I have one teacher in particular who I have coached how to do a lot of my lessons. I'm going to help the people who have been good to me. (interview transcript, January 16, 2015).

Former art teachers discussed how upset they were at the “cookie cutter” projects that were happening in their absence. They disparagingly called this approach the “hand turkey” approach, the “make and take” approach, or “recipe art.” In order to have something be finished in a short amount of time, certain projects they had seen included pre-cut paper or aspects that were “half done” for the kids. The teachers said that they were frustrated when they saw or heard about products that all looked the same or looked “pretty”:

Product over process is the big thing that I'm seeing. You know, make something look all spiffy and perfect, which is ridiculous, especially when you look at a piece of kindergarten art. You [shouldn't] see perfect lines and shapes—give me a break. So that bothers me because why even have it? I mean the kids have got to make the mistakes and grow and have things look a little bit off. That's part of the charm of elementary art is to see those interesting little portions that don't quite match up the way an adult piece would. (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

A former art teacher said the projects were not representative of any culture or movement in art, but were “bastardized”:

[No one understands] the role of art history or culture in a piece. Not having that basic understanding. I took so many art history classes for my BFA, and you sure can tell the difference between the people who have none, or worse—they’ll have something but they’ll do it all wrong [laughs]. They won’t even understand a certain culture and how that affects the work. It’s like bastardized. It’s not good. (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

The teachers made the distinction between art and craft. One noted that, when all products look alike, it is not art:

There's a big difference between art and craft, and what a classroom teacher can do is craft. What an art teacher does is art. And when you hang something up on the wall and all things look alike, you know, that's not art. That's "cut, paste, trace." (interview transcript, January 16, 2015)

Former music teachers discussed a musical analog to “hand turkey” art. They lamented whose lessons involved “pressing play” on the CD player. They said that while they respected and valued having kids listen to music, there was no substitute for active music making. Even when the CD player was used as background to singing, these former music teachers noted that there was an obvious lack of skill building. A teacher recalled seeing an after-school choir, organized by classroom teachers at one of the elementary schools, perform at the 2015 district showcase:

There were different groups that got up to perform ... [The teachers] put that CD in, and all you hear—they use the track singers, and that’s all you really heard. I mean you could

hear the kids a little bit, but without having that—I mean it was cute and the parents loved it. But it was unfortunate because I think if they had one of us, that it would have been just a different ball game. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

The former music teacher “despised” teachers having students sing along to “other people’s singing”:

I can’t stand it. I find it insulting that it happens, because if we were in there, [students would] be using their own voices, perfect or not. Anytime I did a performance, it was me and music, or piano player—but it was not an accompaniment track. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

### **Classroom Teachers’ Reasons for Struggling with Arts Instruction**

As discussed, classroom teachers noted that music instruction was rare, and art occurred as much as individual teachers were able or willing to engage in instruction. The classroom teachers said that the lack of regular instruction was explained by several factors. First, they said there simply is “no time” for arts instruction. By this, they seemed to mean that amid the competing concerns spurred by test-based accountability in math and reading, and the myriad district initiatives governing this work, they found it impossible to prioritize art and music. A current classroom teacher said that, even with the DIAF providing curricular materials in notebooks, regular arts instruction just was not feasible: “Implementing that full notebook was just ludicrous ... Things just weren't practical with you being full-time in charge of it” (interview transcript, March 16, 2015). DIAF coordinators said they heard this refrain from classroom teachers and agreed that teaching the arts is “daunting.” One coordinator said, “We’ve certainly run into those teachers that [say], ‘We just can’t fit it all in’” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015).

One classroom teacher taught in a magnet school that also was designated as a priority school (i.e., increased scrutiny from the state resulting in a reorganization/redesign plan). These designations necessitated initiatives, which when combined with adjusting to the new Common Core State Standards, overtook any focus on arts instruction. The teacher explained:

The way [the district wanted the arts] implemented and all the lessons and the planning, and the time, okay—are you going to give up the Common Core or are you going to give up some of that? Well, it was kind of a no-brainer to most of us ... We are under the pressure to do a magnet focus on top of the core, on top of the priority school expectations from the state and the ISD. That's kind of taken a bigger precedent.

(interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

This teacher went on to explain that the burden associated with teaching these subjects amid competing interests was an obvious outcome:

Now you have the added stress of evaluation, time, curriculum, new testing procedures, all of the baloney going on. And then on top of it you're supposed to teach all of these subjects ... I knew what the end result would be. It was already an unhealthy environment with discipline and politics, and then “Right to Work” and “No Child Left Behind” and all this other baloney. Now to put that burden on the teachers—we knew it was going to fall by the wayside. (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

Second, the classroom teachers cited the lack of planning time as damaging to their arts instruction. Because the subject matter was new for most classroom teachers, teaching the arts would require intensive planning. But with daily planning time cut, the teachers already had to push their planning of all the other subject material outside of the school day. Planning for the arts then competed with this other planning, as a current classroom teacher stated: “What's hard

is taking on [the AMPE instruction] and having absolutely not a minute of the day to plan for anything” (interview transcript, March 5, 2015). Even with the DIAF’s rearranged schedule (during school year 2014-2015), which placed them in the classroom to provide sporadic planning time for classroom teachers, the teachers felt unable to plan for arts instruction. This common planning time required teachers to work together on prescribed topics, which were not arts-related.

Third, many classroom teachers seemed to lack the confidence to attempt arts instruction. Echoing the extant literature (e.g., Byo, 1999; Colwell, 2008; de Vries, 2013; Garvis, 2013; Oreck, 2004; Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008), participants said that most classroom teachers simply did not feel equipped with the necessary skill, creativity, or artistic sensibility. A former LSD grants department employee remembered classroom teachers balking at past arts integration initiatives: “Most teachers were intimidated by the prospects of it, because they didn’t view themselves as necessarily creative enough or artistic enough to be leading their students” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015). With some training, the employee noted, the teachers gained some confidence, but were often overwhelmed without constant support. A current classroom teacher expressed feelings of inadequacy to teach visual arts:

I can't draw a stick person to save my life. How am I going to teach these kids art? And I mean it, too. I can't come up with anything. I have a real spatial problem, I can't see art at all... Supposedly we're certified in that area, but you know how it goes—we're certified everything, but that doesn't mean I can do everything. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

Even when support was provided in the form of professional development, participants agreed that it often was less than successful. Both DIAF coordinators and CAP representatives

who had participated in training for classroom teachers said that classroom teachers were overwhelmed by arts instruction. Several CAP representatives said that the Lansing teachers, who took part in a professional development day focused on teaching recorder, expressed frustration. The representatives said the teachers may have underestimated the difficulty of teaching music:

Maybe they thought it was easy, “We’ll just play a CD or whatever.” And then when [as a teacher], you’re sitting down and [hearing], “Okay, we’re going to teach kids about melody and here’s what it means.” And [as a teacher] you’re sitting there going, “Wow, this is overload. Let me get my head around this. I don’t know how to teach this.”

(interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

The CAP representatives said that the professional development session they led was not long enough to provide confidence for the classroom teachers:

[The classroom teachers were] just overwhelmed, especially with the recorder ... It wasn’t something they could read through at the PD session, it’s something they’ll have to go home and really hack it out before they bring it to the kids. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

However, professional development led by the DIAF was infrequent. The DIAF was allowed to lead a training session during one half day of LSD’s beginning of the year teacher professional development days. Because this was voluntary, only some teachers attended. A DIAF coordinator explained:

Our first year, we had one [training session] on day one, and another one. And then all their PD was aimed at core stuff. So I’m sure they looked at some of these lessons, a lot of these activities, [and] if they didn’t get a chance to talk to one of us for just a minute to

explain it, they would probably look at it and go, “I don’t get this.” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

### **A Counter Example: “Kids are Getting More Now”**

Two of the three classroom teachers I interviewed painted a bleak picture of classroom teachers’ efforts to implement arts instruction. However, the third teacher told a completely different story, illustrating the role that personal efficacy can play in generalists’ experience with arts instruction. This teacher, like the other classroom generalists, acknowledged the difficulty presented by teaching art and music without planning time. However, she said that teaching these subjects was enjoyable and not difficult: “To me, the sentiment is not, “Oh we’re struggling teaching these subjects.” I really like teaching those subjects. It’s we’re struggling with no planning time” (interview transcript, March 5, 2015). Implementing arts instruction involved less pressure, she said:

There’s so much pressure on the core curriculum, on teaching kids to read and they have to be at this level, and teaching kids at math, they have to be at this. The sentiment I hear from my colleagues is, “I like taking my kids to gym, I like teaching my kids music, because nobody’s breathing down my neck and telling my kids they have to be here or I’m doing it wrong.” There’s so much less pressure. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

In particular, this classroom teacher felt confident teaching music. She discussed how her background contributed to her confidence:

[I feel confident] because I personally—I like music. I was in choir my whole life. I actually started out as a music minor at Michigan State ... I’ve always believed in the power of using music in my classroom. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)



In fact, she felt that students were now getting a better arts experience than they had with the AMPE teachers: “Not to sound—I don't know—but I felt like I did just as good a job teaching music, and songs to my kids, as the music specialist that came in” (interview transcript, March 5, 2015). Because this teacher already did “a ton” of art and music, taking on the instruction was not difficult, she related.

The teacher was aghast when I mentioned that other classroom teachers said they were not teaching the arts. She said, “I am shocked to hear you say that people are saying they're not teaching art, music, and P.E. in their building because we are definitely doing that in our building” (interview transcript, March 5, 2015). Teachers were not, she shared, following the DIAF’s lesson plans, but were individually designing instruction. From what she knew of her colleagues, teachers were “stepping up” so that students were getting art and music instruction:

There's this misconception that Lansing kids aren't getting art, music, and P.E. Yes they are! They're getting it from their highly-qualified, certified in all subjects, classroom teacher. And classroom teachers, yes, are stepping up, doing things they haven't done before because that's what we do. That's what was asked of us. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

Overall, the teacher felt confident in teaching the arts and suggested that other teachers were doing their best to provide instruction. As I discuss later, she also did not feel that the DIAF coordinators were needed.

### **Discussion: Teacher Confidence**

A look at three classroom teachers in the LSD shows that implementation of arts instruction varies widely among generalists. In agreement with previous literature (e.g., Byo, 1999; Colwell, 2008; de Vries, 2013; Garvis, 2013; Oreck, 2004; Wiggins & Wiggins, 2008),

this implementation seems to depend on competing pressures, support and training, and—especially—on teachers’ confidence and self-efficacy. It is also important to note, however, that endorsed arts specialists do not seem to feel that generalists are capable of providing adequate instruction, even those who are confident, like the third teacher I discuss.

While the specialists’ lack of confidence in generalists’ arts teaching could be a reflection of the “devil shift” (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993) in the aftermath of the AMPE coalition’s losses, it seemed to be a more fundamentally held belief based on the differences in teacher preparation. Because I am a musician and endorsed music teacher, specialists would often bring up the college coursework we had in common, saying: “You’re from the same department, in the school that I graduated from ... [being an okay musician] doesn’t make you a teacher necessarily” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015). Another participant said, “You know what you’ve gone through in your educational process,” and noted that her preparation was different than someone with a science endorsement:

I’ve gone through a hell of a lot. And I learned something totally different than the guy over there who wanted to do science. I learned something different, I can teach something different. (interview transcript, January 7, 2015)

Endorsed specialists uniformly were pessimistic about non-endorsed classroom teachers engaging in arts instruction, no matter their background. They agreed that teachers could look things up online, follow the DIAF lesson plans, or consult retired AMPE teachers, but that the result would still be “different.”

### **Discussion: Is This Arts Integration?**

As I discuss in Chapters One and Two, definitions of arts integration often differ. In some instances, the bar is set quite high. For example, the Kennedy Center’s definition involves

meeting “evolving objectives” in both “an art form and another subject area” (Kennedy Center, n.d.). This is distinguished from “arts enhanced” curriculum, for which teachers “need little or no training in the art form” (Kennedy Center, n.d.). Bresler (1995) makes similar distinctions through the illustration of a continuum of integration. Bresler notes that when an art form is used only as a “hook” to approach other content, the arts are “subservient.” When both the art form and the other subject area are pursued equally, Bresler calls the integration “co-equal.” In both frameworks, the authors make distinctions between enhanced/integrated instruction in the arts and “arts as instruction”—that is, sequential, standards-based arts instruction by a specialist.

Whether or not arts integration has been occurring in the LSD is unclear but generally doubtful. While accounts from participants suggest a variety of practices (e.g., some classroom teachers doing no arts, some engaging in frequent projects), it seems more correct to classify the majority of efforts as “arts enhanced” instruction. As I discuss in the next section, even the DIAF’s approach is less focused on integrating the arts with other subject matter than doing artistic projects based around the calendar/holidays. Support—at a district level—for arts integration also is unclear. A CAP representative suggested that the Superintendent had indicated a desire to pursuing arts integration: “She’s concentrating most of her energy [on the] classroom teacher and the integration of arts” (interview transcript, January 7, 2015). A former employee said she had heard from a contact who still works in the district that, “Now the Superintendent is starting to think arts integration is kind of an important thing” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015). However, the district had allowed the various grant-funded arts integration initiatives of the past to expire, and the 2013 cuts meant few people in the district had the arts subject matter knowledge to support integration.

## **Discussion: STEAM Schools**

As part of Lansing's magnet school expansion in 2013 that was funded by a federal MSAP grant, two STEAM schools were set up at Cavanaugh Elementary (K-3) and Mt. Hope Elementary (4-6) schools. The stated goal of the STEAM focus was to integrate science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics. As part of each grant, the district hired a focus teacher (for temporary 2-year contracts) in each of the STEAM schools. These teachers were tasked with leading the transition from "typical school" to "STEAM school" by developing curricula and coordinating theme-specific activities. An LSD employee familiar with the STEAM focus positions explained:

[The focus teacher's] main responsibility is to lead the transition from a traditional school to a STEAM school ... That means working with business partners in the community, setting up partnership with places like the Broad [art] Museum, we have a partnership with them, we have partnership with Impressions 5 Science Center, working along with the symphony, so sort of networking and building, you know, a database almost of resources and partners to support the school. (interview transcript, April 29, 2015)

The focus teachers also model integrated lessons for teachers, oversee grant expenditures, and handle marketing and communication, "making sure that potential families are able to access information about [the STEAM] school" (interview transcript, April 29, 2015).

In terms of curricular content, STEAM-focused lessons mirror arts integration lessons but with a specific focus on areas like robotics and engineering. The approach is project-based, and an employee familiar with the STEAM curriculum said these projects often imitate "engineering design" challenges, where students must work within hypothetical "constraints of materials and

time” to create a solution for some problem. In one class, students read *How The Grinch Stole Christmas!* and attempted to design a better sled for the main character:

[We] looked at some images of the Grinch’s sled as well and determined what the problem and where was it. And then our students were—their design challenge was to create a more efficient sled for The Grinch. And they had to build those out of [materials]—we’re a green school on top of other things, so [there is a] big emphasis on recycling materials and upcycling for us though. They have to build new sleds for The Grinch out of recycled materials. It was valuable. It did take a lot of creativity and that was neat for them to sort of tinker and be artistic. (interview transcript, April 29, 2015)

Much like the classroom teachers in non-STEAM schools, the employee mentioned that teachers in the STEAM schools were most comfortable attempting to integrate visual art media rather than music:

They are [doing] more visual arts than they are music, and I think that's primarily because it's what teachers are more comfortable with. You know, if you ask an elementary teacher to create some kind of visual representations with the kids, no problem. They got it, that's simple for them. But if you ask them to—I mean if you're really being musically technical, asking them to compose something or—a lot of them just don't have that skill set. It's just they're not familiar with. (interview transcript, April 29, 2015)

In fact, the employee could not think of a STEAM project that had included a music focus. Students had seen a one-hour presentation about sound waves at one point, but had not engaged in any music-centered projects: “I don't know exactly what [a music lesson] would look like because I don't have a—I haven't seen a great example, you know?” (interview transcript, April 29, 2015).

The employee noted that, for several reasons, teachers at the STEAM schools were not “on board” with the STEAM curriculum. For one, the teachers had a number of competing initiatives on which to focus. Cavanaugh Elementary was, in addition to being a newly-minted STEAM school, also a priority school. Because the school was in the bottom five percent of schools in the state in terms of test score performance, teachers had to focus on district initiatives intended to improve tests scores. The employee I spoke with agreed that competing initiatives were a challenge to STEAM implementation:

It's the biggest hurdle that we face ... We are at the same time starved for resources and inundated with resources. if that makes sense. We don't have an arts teacher or a music teacher. Those things that we really want and need to have, we don't have, but yet we have nine different software licenses for different types of mass intervention, you know?

(interview transcript, April 29, 2015)

Teachers also resisted the STEAM concept because many were experienced educators made jaded by experienced with “new” concepts like STEAM. The employee explained:

The school [staff] is very senior. We have many people who have been in the district, or maybe a few, who've been in the district for 30 years. So there's sort of this feeling of having been around long enough to know that these things come as quickly as they will be forgotten, and it feels like another initiative for them and they haven't seen—[haven't] been proved how this is going to work, that it will do what it's supposed to do. (interview transcript, April 29, 2015)

This attitude was made clear when speaking with classroom teachers in one of the STEAM schools. These teachers knew—and cared—very little about the STEAM focus and suggested

that the only arts-focused activity students had done involved painting a mural for the school's entryway.

The point of the new magnet schools was to stabilize the district's declining enrollment and to improve non-white student isolation in the district (Lansing School District, 2013). I asked the employee if the STEAM schools were meeting their objectives. The employee said that while it was probably too early to tell if the strategy was working, the other problems at the STEAM schools and the district in general obscured the magnet focus to some degree:

I can only speak for our school, but I'm thinking—if I were a parent, it would be very hard for me to choose to send my child to any type of school, no matter what the magnet theme, if they were also a failing school, you know? STEAM doesn't drop being a priority school, so I don't know. (interview transcript, April 29, 2015)

### **The Department of Innovative Arts and Fitness (DIAF)**

In this section, I profile and discuss the Department of Innovative Arts and Fitness. This is the name the district gave to its group of coordinators hired to support the classroom teachers in their AMPE instruction. Access to the DIAF team was limited, as the administrator who oversees the department made them available for interviews, but only two of the four arts coordinators agreed to be interviewed. I also include commentary from former AMPE teachers, current classroom teachers, and community arts providers, in order to provide others' perspectives on the DIAF. I also obtained district documents about the DIAF, including job postings, interview schedules, meetings agendas/minutes, and lesson plans. These were obtained via a FOIA request by a local journalist, given to a professor at MSU, and then offered to me. I first reviewed these documents in summer 2014 and created an analytic memo based on my analysis.

## Hiring and Early History

Plans for the DIAF seemed to be in the works as early as late 2012 or early 2013, as a coordinator related. The coordinator's principal mentioned that some people would be retained if the AMPE department were cut:

She let me know of the possibility of the department downsizing if not being eliminated.

But if that were the case, there was going to be something in place, in replacement of it.

[We] just were not sure what that was going to be. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

Having a support staff of some kind also was mentioned by district spokesperson Bob Kolt in comments to the media immediately after the cuts were announced. In an *Mlive* story from March 26, 2013, Kolt was discussed as saying "some teachers who are slated to be cut could end up back in the classroom as consultants" (Kolt, in Wittrock, 2013). At the time of the announced changes, Kolt said there could be 10-20 consultants, though this number would later change.

Studying the district's documents reveals considerable confusion/indecision around the DIAF. First, the district seems to have been unsure of what to call the teachers who would be hired. The job posting advertises openings for "Fine Arts/Physical Education Program Specialists." In later documents, the terms "coordinator" and "consultant" are used. In a meeting agenda from June 10, 2013, one bullet point reads: "Name the project." The first time one sees the name, "Department of Innovative Arts and Fitness" is in the meeting notes from July 9, 2013. Desired qualifications also may have changed. A former art teacher said the first job posting required that applicants be endorsed in art, music, or physical education, but this initial posting was removed and replaced with one requiring "Valid Michigan elementary teaching certificate and/or specialists Fine/Visual Arts, Music, or Physical Education endorsement/certification."



The district documentation does not corroborate this assertion, however, and only the latter requirement is listed in the job posting I obtained.

As discussed in Chapter Five, several senior arts teachers had applied for the positions but were not selected. District documents show that the first round of interviews included 22 teachers. A second round whittled this down, listing interviews with nine teachers, although two teachers who ultimately were hired are not listed on this second round. As one of the coordinators I spoke with discussed, the hiring proceeded over the course of several months and did not necessarily match the posting. The job posting was for two music, two art, and two physical education specialists, but initial hiring included one music, two art, and three physical education teachers. A coordinator I spoke with said motivations for applying for a DIAF job included personal financial concerns and the desire to make sure the new programs would be good for students:

Myself, I didn't see getting the position as being this wonderful, amazing—you know, “Yay! I'm head of the ‘blah.’” No. It was, “I can keep paying my mortgage, I'm still doing something hopefully related to elementary [arts], and if there's any restructuring going on, I'll be here to be part of it, to make sure it doesn't go in a direction that it shouldn't be going in. That was my reasoning for even applying for this job. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

Several areas of focus are listed in the job description, interview questions, and early meeting agendas. Common to all three documents are three major job duties: (a) helping classroom teachers integrate the arts into their curriculum, (b) engaging the community arts (or fitness) providers, and (c) leading professional development for classroom teachers. As the first meetings occurred, these job duties began to be fleshed out and clarified. The DIAF team would

“write lesson plans for teachers to use” (meeting notes from June 10, 2013). These lesson plans would integrate with the curriculum, and likely follow “monthly themes that relate to core subjects” (meeting notes from June 10, 2013). One can see evidence of the many questions this group tackled in early meetings: where would they be located, how would they organize materials, which buildings would they visit, what would their schedule be, would they be paid for work over the summer, and what would their long-term goals be, among other issues raised. As a DIAF coordinator explained, “A lot of those first meetings dealt with what—how the team is—kind of how the team’s going to present itself” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015).

By the meeting on July 9, 2013, the DIAF had a draft of a vision statement, which read: Our vision is to create a Culture of Caring by developing lessons that promote a positive environment of mutual respect; a Culture of Collaboration where extensive partnership with a wide variety of stakeholders invigorate and energize our school community; and a Culture of Excellence where each students is provided innovative Arts and Fitness learning experiences that advocate for 21<sup>st</sup> century readiness. (meeting notes from July 9, 2013)

These capitalized terms (e.g., Culture of Collaboration) are taken from the LSD’s school improvement plan. On a DIAF flyer, produced later in the summer to advertise the department, the vision statement is also accompanied by a version of the SEADAE Venn diagram, which details how classroom teachers, certified arts/fitness educators, and community groups should work together (see flyer in appendix H). It is interesting to note that this diagram was used by the Arts Council of Greater Lansing (ACGL) in a meeting with the DIAF team in July as a means of arguing for the reinstatement of the AMPE teachers. As the flyer indicates, it was then co-opted as a way to support the district’s intended arts education scheme.

One of the coordinators explained that, in these early meetings, a retired principal guided them: “We had a consultant, retired principal, who came in at first, and she kind of led us. We met with her on a monthly basis. She kind of guided us through how we would do things” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015). After the guided meetings in the early summer, a period of inactivity followed because of hiccups related to funding and to staffing. The DIAF had hoped to meet more frequently over the summer, but the funds were not available. As a coordinator explained: “We were told we’d be given some extra hours over the summer to try to get things in order. It turned out the budget did not allow those extra hours” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015) In addition, the team members were not cemented until near the beginning of the 2013-2014 school year, making organization a challenge. Initially, the district only hired one music coordinator, but then called an applicant at the end of the summer to offer the job.

Other district documents show that the DIAF was officially “rolled out” at a succession of meetings. The DIAF introduced itself at meetings with the CAP coalition in late July (held at the ACGL office) and at a principals’ meeting in late August. The DIAF also organized a steering committee with a representative from each K-3 and 4-6 building. This steering committee met in October and November to discuss logistics, ideas for projects, and to notify each building representative of future events. At the October meeting, the building representatives were asked to take surveys back to teachers to get feedback on how and when the DIAF should interact with educators. At the November meeting, one can see the evidence of nascent partnerships with community arts/fitness providers. The minutes list “out of district” guests from several community foundations.

## **Challenges of the DIAF's Job**

DIAF coordinators discussed a number of challenging aspects of their jobs. Most challenging, they noted, was the creation of lesson plans. This was dually challenging because of both the restraints on curriculum, and because of the cognitive dissonance experienced during the writing process. First, DIAF coordinators had difficulty with the sheer number of lesson plans they needed to produce. One coordinator said, “The number of lessons we had to write was just so ridiculous. An entire school year’s worth of lessons twice a week” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015). The coordinators were tasked with creating two lessons per week (30 minutes each), for every week of the school year. With around 30 weeks and seven grade levels (K-6), this amounted to just under 500 individual lessons. At the same time as the lessons were being created, the coordinators had to visit 21 elementary schools (each school was visited twice for art, twice for music, twice for physical education) to model lessons for teachers.

Determining the content, scope, and sequence of the lesson plans also was incredibly challenging. The coordinators explained that, because they were creating instructional materials for people without content expertise, it was hard to know what the classroom teachers were capable of, and what to prioritize for the students:

We had to assume [classroom teachers knew nothing]. We knew that there were teachers in the district with some skill, but this is going out to every teacher in the district, K-6. And it had to be something that supposedly every teacher in the district could manage. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

The coordinators said they often would look at each other and bemoan the task of lesson plan creation:

Well, it was hard. I'll be honest with you. We would look at each other daily and go, "Oh my God. I've got to finish this lesson." It is a daunting task—you're right, to put it out there for somebody that doesn't know anything about [the arts]. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

A former music teacher said she could not imagine the difficulty the DIAF coordinators faced, because of her experience trying to write lessons plans for substitute teachers:

The problem is if you're designing a music lesson for a non-music [teacher]—you're killing most of what's important about the music part of it. When I left sub plans, I had to know whether the sub was a musician or a non-musician. And I knew if it was a non-musician, there was only so much I could do to get my kids having a musical experience on that day. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

This former music teacher remembered that this aspect of the DIAF coordinators' job had been a deciding factor in not applying for one of the positions:

[I thought about] the option of me staying on to be one of those [coordinators] and applying for those positions, and I said, "I would rather cut my eyeballs out [than] to design lesson plans for a non-music teacher. No. I don't want to dumb down what I do, absolutely not." (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

Other restraints governed the work. The coordinators had decided to structure the lessons around the year's calendar rather than integrating with specific content from curricular subjects. Thus, lessons had to relate to holidays and themed-months (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month). The coordinators also wanted the lessons to progress in terms of sophistication, but they could not be sure that teachers would follow the schedule, as a team member related:

Of course, a big issue with our lessons is because they are directly related to certain events on the calendar, if they don't start—if they start at lesson one, week one but they didn't do it until November, everything is completely off. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

Second, the lessons had to fit the district's elementary art/music textbook series, which the coordinators disliked: “[We tried to find] activities that anyone could teach or lead ... within the confines of the less than wonderful [textbook] series that we have” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015).

For a variety of reasons, the coordinators experienced personal discomfort during the lesson plan creation process. Not only was it difficult to write the plans, for the aforementioned reasons, it was upsetting at times. A coordinator recalled the cognitive dissonance of lowering standards to write a lesson plan:

It was so daunting to write a lesson that a layperson could follow, that wasn't complete crap. We have very high standards for ourselves as educators ... Everything I teach, there's a process, there's a commonsense way of approaching everything. You start with this before you move to this. And to try and have that mindset while writing these lessons—we tried. It's not realistic, but you know, we did the best we could. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

In addition, coordinators worried that by creating the binders of lesson plans, they may have been unintentionally making their positions unnecessary. At the end of the first year of work, they worried that, with the lesson plans in circulation, they could be laid off more easily:

We were just waiting to find out if we had a job for another year or not, basically. We had delivered them a year's worth of sub plans. In someone's eyes, maybe our services

were no longer needed because they got the plans. [Worrying about that] made it really difficult to write a lesson that, in your head, might replace you at the end of the year. Do I really want to make them that good? [laughs]. [I wanted to write] “Some instruction required—see me. Don’t try this at home on your own, kids.” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

The DIAF coordinators also struggled with not being able to interact with students on a regular basis. Because the job descriptions and duties were ambiguous at the outset, the coordinators had held some hope they would have instructional responsibilities. They recalled being upset when it became clear this was not part of the job:

We were pushing from the day of our interview onward to—how can we get back in the classrooms? How can we get back in the classrooms? How often are we going to get to see the kids? Are—we can still do this job, we just won’t get to see kids as often. At one point we were told, flat out, “That’s not what this job is. This job is going to entail other things.” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

The coordinators were frustrated with this but were told by an administrator that it was important that they follow what the union had voted for: “[The administrator said], ‘This is what the union voted for, this is what the teachers voted for. Let them have what they’re going to vote for.’” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015). A classroom teacher who worked with the DIAF coordinators said they often lamented not being with kids: “They hate their jobs the way it is. They want to teach children all the time, is what they want to do. They want to use their skills that they trained all these years for” (interview transcript, February 13, 2015).

In the second year, as the DIAF team was tasked with doing more instruction (each school saw the coordinators four times in 45 minute sessions), the challenge shifted to

determining what to prioritize. Coordinators said they had begun to prioritize active learning focused on “doing” and “making” rather than art appreciation:

I’m given 45 minutes four times a year? We hit the ground running ... It’s not just, “Let’s discuss this.” Like I said, there’s nothing wrong with that, but it can’t be only that ... There’s such a sense of urgency now, because it’s not like, “Well, we’ll get to it on Thursday.” It’s Thursday eight weeks from now. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

In certain cases, the length of time and the infrequency of visits excluded certain possibilities. A former art teacher noted:

We’ve got kilns almost in every building. They probably haven’t been fired in 2 years. They’re not doing clay with the kids, they’re not doing anything. Because I would know, the teachers would talk about it. And how could you with two people and what, 24 elementary schools? No way. (interview transcript, January 5, 2015)

Another challenge of the DIAF coordinators’ job description was to form partnerships with community arts providers. As discussed in Chapter Five, this collaboration was framed by a public and often vitriolic debate about AMPE teachers being supplanted. When I asked the DIAF coordinators what it was like to be in the middle of the debate, one said, “It was hell” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015). The coordinators sympathized with the AMPE teachers who were cut but also had to remain neutral and quiet about the situation. The logistics of recruiting community artists and organizations for partnerships was also challenging, as a coordinator recalled: “[We were] just trying to get these connections, you know. Trying to work with people and it was pretty difficult. Some were willing to work with us, some weren’t” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015). The coordinator listed a couple successful partnerships, but said:



I think just finding more than that has been the difficult thing. We've certainly hit roadblocks. Certainly financial roadblocks as well, because you know, it costs money.

People don't want to come in and do it for free. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

### **Tensions between the DIAF and Classroom Teachers**

Another challenging part of the DIAF coordinators' job was working with classroom teachers. Many teachers appreciated and liked the DIAF team, as a coordinator recalled: When we would go in, most really were very glad, very happy to have our help, to kind of understand what we do" (interview transcript, February 23, 2015). However, a number of generalists did not follow the DIAF lesson plans. One classroom teacher I spoke with even said she did not think the lesson plan binders were supposed to be followed: "Those binders were never meant to be something to stick to. Those binders were so that you have a guide for what to do. But they were never meant for to follow this lesson by lesson" (interview transcript, March 5, 2015). As a DIAF coordinator recalled, teachers who did not implement the lesson plans fell into one of two categories:

There were basically two kinds of teachers that don't follow the lessons or would not follow the lessons. I can't speak whether they actually are or not because I'm not in the classroom 5 days a week. But there's the ones that think they know everything because they have a K-8 cert. And then there's the ones that are loud enough to admit they don't know [the arts], they can't do our job, so they're just not going to try. And while that's rude, at least it's honest. And with that kind of a response, there's a little validation that someone knew that we were doing something that was important and special and unique. That not anyone can just pick up and do it. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

Both types of teachers were frustrating to work with, the coordinators said. It was frustrating to work with the teachers who would say they already knew how to do everything detailed on the lesson plans, and it was difficult to help those who felt helpless. Some of the “helpless” teachers did not read the lessons closely but still complained. These generalists would follow the first step and then give up:

[They would say] “Okay—now what?” And we’re like, “We actually did put some ideas down, if you take the time.” ... At the beginning [they would say], “You have nothing in these lessons, there’s nothing.” ... There’s four or five activities here, I’m pretty sure.  
(interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

One of the classroom teachers I interviewed talked about her refusal to work with the art coordinators. Because she was frustrated with the AMPE teachers being cut, and because she disliked the art coordinators, she resisted collaboration. This teacher called the art coordinators “a joke” and called their notebooks of lesson plans “dumb.” She was especially frustrated when the coordinators would come in to model lessons during the first year (school year 2013-2014) and during the second year when the coordinators would come in to do art projects with the students. The projects often were left unfinished, she noted, and she refused to allot time for completion:

My two other colleagues and I, we don't hang [the coordinators'] stuff up when they leave. We just tell the kids to take [the project] home and they'll have to finish it at home, because [the coordinators] never finish anything either, and I'm not going to finish it for them. (interview transcript, February 13, 2015)

As an act of protest, this teacher had begun hanging up artwork in the classroom and hallway, along with a banner that read, “Inspired by” with a former art teacher’s name. This upset the art

coordinators, and they began to write, “inspired by” along with their names, on a sign near the completed DIAF project artwork. The classroom teacher said she would pull this off the wall and put it in the trashcan:

[The coordinators] expected us to hang this sign next to the work in the hallway. And it's like—I took a picture of it in the trash and sent it to [a former art teacher]. That's what I do [laughs]. I'm not going to—I refuse to. I'm just going to be a little rebel. (interview transcript, February 13, 2015)

I spoke with three classroom teachers about their perceptions of the DIAF coordinators. One teacher (discussed in the paragraph above) was negative about the art coordinators but respected the music coordinators. Another generalist had known the coordinators for years and said he felt bad for them, since he had seen the “frustration on their faces” from what was “dumped” on them (interview transcript, March 14, 2015). The third classroom teacher, whom I discussed earlier in this chapter as being very confident in her ability to teach the arts, respected the consultants but felt they were unnecessary. When she heard of the DIAF team, she remembered feeling “indifferent”:

I guess my feeling was, "Okay—that's nice to have some binders." I'm certified, K-5 all subjects, so I'm fully capable of looking at the curriculum and creating lessons for art, music, and P.E. just like I do for literacy, math, science, and social studies. So it wasn't really that necessary. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

In 2014-2015, the DIAF coordinators came in to teach four times a year, which provided collaborative planning time for classroom teachers. The teacher, however, questioned the expense to the district:

Is it worth the \$600,000 that we're paying for that? Um, probably not because I think we could have subs do the same thing with the right lesson plans. But, you know, it's better than not having them, I guess. But I don't think it's worth the money that we're spending on them. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

The general sentiment seemed to be that the DIAF approach itself was too infrequent to make an impact. Even though the second year of the DIAF had brought the coordinators back into the classroom four times a year, classroom teachers frowned on the particulars of the scheduling/logistics. Teachers said that while kids enjoyed the visits from the DIAF team, four times a year was too little. It also frustrated teachers (and the DIAF team) that all the coordinators were scheduled to come to a given building on the same day. Instead of spreading out the visits to a specific school, the DIAF team “converged” on a school and provided back to back instruction: 45 minutes of music, 45 minutes of art, and 45 minutes of physical education. This approach made a current classroom teacher feel like the district was just “covering the bases” rather than finding the best schedule for kids. A DIAF coordinator noted that it was particularly difficult to teach in the third “block,” since kids were disoriented by the experience:

Believe me, if that class you’ve got is the third rotation, the last rotation of the morning or the day, and it’s the younger kids—God save you. Because they’ve had a break from routine an hour and a half long, and you’re asking them for 45 more minutes of break from routine. I mean, it works. It just works roughly. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

One classroom teacher bemoaned the fact that the coordinators’ schedule was inflexible. She remembered asking the coordinators to switch visit days and come to her school on a Monday, in order to avoid another commitment:

We had something going on, and we said, "Can you change your schedule?" [They said] "Oh no. Our schedule's set." Where they could have said, "Oh yeah," [instead they said] "We don't go into schools on Mondays and Fridays. Oh no." They won't change their schedule at all. It's basically if you miss your time, too bad so sad. (interview transcript, February 13, 2015)

The tightly-scheduled arrangement also meant that if DIAF coordinators were absent on a given day, kids still were sent to work on art, music, and physical education activities, but instruction was done by a substitute teacher. A classroom teacher complained: "[Three coordinators] were all gone on the same day. So that really messes things up because then you just get some old sub in there that—and that's it" (interview transcript, February 13, 2015). On this particular day, the classroom teacher noted, the art coordinators had left a blank sunflower cut-out for the kids to color:

We get [the coordinators] like, four times a year, and then the one time so far we had a sub. They brought up a sub in. They had a coloring page of a sunflower. I mean, it was like, "Oh my God." Its like, "Really? We get you four times a year and you leave a sunflower?" And so that took the [substitute], I don't know, 10-15 minutes. So she was completely [wondering], "Okay—now what do I do for the rest of the time?" It caused nothing but problems. (interview transcript, February 13, 2015)

Two of the three classroom teachers also said that they felt the lesson plans designed by the DIAF asked too much of them. The teachers said that, when there were AMPE specialists, the instructional activities they witnessed were not nearly as complex as what they were being asked to do in the provided lesson plans. One teacher said:

[Looking at the lesson plans] it's like, "Oh my God. You've got to be kidding me."

Especially with a lot of the gym-type stuff, and all that kind of crap. [Colleagues of mine are] like, "Oh my God, they expect us to do that—they never did any of that stuff."

(interview transcript, February 13, 2015)

Another classroom teacher said it was clear that the DIAF created the lesson plans to demonstrate legitimacy to outside parties:

They had to create [binders], design it based on grade level content expectations and the common core. And they gave us all these binders that they threw at us, and then we were supposed to implement them ... Implementing that full notebook was just ludicrous, because what you were being told to do in that, you didn't even see the [former] art, music, P.E. teachers doing. (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

Based on the lesson plans included in the district documents I received, there is a clear attempt to align lessons with state grade-level content expectations. It is unclear, however, whether individual lessons were unreasonably complex or whether implementing the full binder of lessons would be unreasonable. Undoubtedly, this perception depends on the teacher's confidence, as well as what the teacher's former arts specialists had done.

### **Discussion: Future of the DIAF Uncertain**

The Lansing School District's solution to continuing elementary arts education in the wake of the 2013 cuts hinged on the DIAF team supporting classroom teachers. This arrangement, in turn, hinged on the particulars of the union contract, which specified that classroom teachers would operate without planning time for at least two years. After two years, aspects of the contract would be renegotiated. As a result, the status of the DIAF coordinators has been and continues to be uncertain. Both the renegotiation and the potential for further cuts

based on declining district enrollment have threatened the coordinators' positions. As mentioned, the coordinators had feared that the job they did in years one and two may have made it easy to cut their positions: once the lesson plans and community arts partnerships were cemented, would there still be a need for the DIAF?

Coordinators discussed their frustration at not knowing whether they would continue to have jobs. As the renegotiation period neared, in January – April of 2015, coordinators said they heard constant rumors about their fate, many of which were conflicting:

We get conflicting information about the future like on a weekly basis. And it's always by people that really don't have a clue themselves, and they either give us false hope or false doom. "Oh I heard you guys are gone next year." This is coming from one of our former co-workers ... And then we hear from someone else and they're on some kind of union committee, "Oh get ready for next year, there's going to be more of you!" ... I've gotten to the point where I just tune out all of it. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

The coordinators said that, whatever eventually happens with their positions, they felt the district valued the DIAF and would like to keep it intact. They noted that administrators had assured them of this: "About the only thing we've gotten solid is, if the money was there, there would be no question that our team would be reinstated in some state, in some form" (interview transcript, February 23, 2015). The uncertainty from year to year made reflection and planning difficult. I asked if there had been a lot of discussion after the first year related to what had gone well and what needed improvement. Coordinators said:

I don't know if the reflection came to us, because I don't think it was us reflecting. I think it was our administrators reflecting whether we're going to have [the DIAF] next year ...

We were just waiting to find out if we had a job for another year or not, basically.

(interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

In May and June, as I was writing this chapter, I began to hear of the district's plans for the following school year. The contract renegotiations had not been formally announced, but another round of layoffs and deficit battling was surfacing in conversations. The Superintendent's Monday Morning Memo to staff, written on May 11, addressed this:

You might have read in today's Lansing State Journal the news about our district needing to cut \$2.7 million in order to have a balanced budget next year. Yes, I was kind of surprised to see it in the newspaper too since the ink isn't even dry on the white board where we do our calculations! But, it's true that we are having to make several cuts and at Thursday's Board Meeting, we'll be recommending lay-offs for LSEA and other bargaining groups. (Monday Morning Memo, May 11, 2015)

I contacted one of the current classroom teachers to ask about the details of the layoffs. In an email, this teacher said: "The prospect is 50 [layoffs] which equates to around 5 million savings if none return. That is all I know so far and is not set in stone but was sent out to us via email" (email correspondence, May 28, 2015). I asked a former employee if these details might include the DIAF coordinators. After speaking with a union leader, the former employee emailed, saying: "The integrated arts positions are NOT slated for elimination, but the funding will move so that they are grant funded next year, rather than from the general fund" (email correspondence, May 28, 2015).

It seems likely that moving the DIAF coordinators' positions off the general fund payroll seems to be a first step in eliminating these positions. While it is unclear which grant funding sources will support these positions, grants run out after a specific time period. Unless the district



restores the positions to the general fund after the grant sources run out, or unless the district finds another source of outside funding (e.g., other grants, outside foundation/community monies), it seems likely that the DIAF positions are not likely to exist in several years. This likelihood is compounded by the trajectory of enrollment in the district, which as I discuss later in this chapter, continues downward.

### **CAP Groups Partner with the Lansing School District**

As discussed in Chapter Five, there was considerable tension around community arts providers' partnerships with the Lansing School District in the wake of the 2013 cuts. Early CAP coalition strategy attempted to withhold services unless the district agreed to return the AMPE teacher positions—what I have called the “leverage” strategy. Even in these early meetings, where representatives from the CAP groups discussed the leverage strategy and talking points, there were dissenters. Several CAP groups had been working with the LSD for years, providing in-school and after-school enrichment, and were unwilling to stop these partnerships. As discussed, for a number of these representatives, the cuts only inspired them to work more with Lansing. They felt that they were needed urgently in the absence of regular instruction.

The CAP coalition strategy shifted toward forming deeper relationships with the LSD administration. The new ACGL director hoped that by being part of a new model of arts education in Lansing, the group could become a trusted partner in the eyes of the Superintendent. Besides, as the ACGL Director told me, the leverage strategy was not plausible because CAP groups had been unwilling to stop their work. The Director emphasized that CAP groups' work in the district after the cuts represented a continuation of prior projects, rather than a dramatic increase in involvement: “Most of our arts educators had never given up what they were already doing, so even in the face of the changes, they're still in the schools. They're still artists-in-

residence, they're still people providing work to our kids" (interview transcript, January 7, 2015). The Director also said that, because the arts council represented constituent groups who were interested in working with the LSD, she had to follow their desires:

[The CAP groups are] my constituents, and that's my membership. Those are the people that pay me to do the work that I do. So I have to listen to them, and if they're continuing to provide work within the Lansing School District, I have to support that. I can't just say, "No." I can't [say], "You're not a part of my group anymore because you're doing that." They believe in that and it's a part of their work. (interview transcript, January 7, 2015)

Representatives of CAP groups echoed these sentiments, saying that after early conversations about withholding their programming, they just kept "going about their business." One representative said that very little had changed: "People have just kinda settled in. The [art museum is] doing what the [art museum's] doing. We're doing what we're doing. [The art studio] is doing what they're doing. Has a ton changed? No. I don't think so" (interview transcript, January 14, 2015).

A local art studio had, however, specifically partnered with the district to provide more programming in the wake of the cuts. As discussed in Chapter Five, the Director of this art studio had been a long-time Lansing resident, and was close with the LSD administration before the cuts. In addition to furthering the after-school programs already initiated, the art studio met with the DIAF team in July 2013 to propose new projects. In the district documents I obtained via a local journalist's FOIA request, there were meeting minutes and an informational flyer (provided by the studio) from the art studio's presentation to the DIAF team. The art studio proposes field trips, guest artists, contracted professional development conducted by the studio staff, and

placement of teaching artists from the art studio on a contracted basis. In the meeting minutes, a proposal reads: “During the day—target one grade level—customized classes.”

This last approach—contracting with the art studio on grade-level projects—was the district’s favored option. The director of the art studio explained that they started with a project for all fifth grade students in the district (except those in the visual and performing arts magnet school, Pleasant View):

We did put together a program that's called "Music and Me" that we piloted last year, and it was a program with the fifth graders that integrated music and visual arts. So we had an instructor that actually had been an art specialist in the--not in the Lansing School District, but previously in another district--that is one of our lead teachers, and she took this on and delivered that program last spring and then she's getting ready to do that again this spring with the fifth graders. So that was one program that we--we contracted with the school district to do that. (interview transcript, January 9, 2015)

The studio director said that the programming could expand in the years to come to include other grade levels.

To get a sense of the “Music and Me” project, I watched a video of students working on “Music and Me” curricula (Music and Me, 2014). The video is part of a PowerPoint presentation that the art studio made to district administrators, and lasts around 10 minutes. Aims of the project are listed and include designing and producing musical instruments, exposing students to Latin music so that they make cross-cultural connections, and “promoting active musical activity through playing and moving to music” (Music and Me, 2014). Though the art studio director said the project included almost all fifth graders, the video only lists nine participating elementary schools. Each elementary school designed a different instrument (with paper, paint, glue, and

other supplies), and students are shown posing with their creations (e.g., guitars, violins, tambourines, panpipes, drums). Students also are shown “playing” the percussion instruments along with prerecorded music. The presentation noted that plans to bring students together to “jam” at an end of the school year event were unsuccessful.

While it is difficult to get an exact picture of which CAP groups are doing work with LSD students during the school day, several other projects are noteworthy. The Lansing Symphony continues to offer a young person’s concert each spring for all area schools. Accompanying curricula and materials (i.e., recorders, CD recordings, sheet music) and professional development for teachers accompanies the concert and is funded through the “Link Up!” program operated by Carnegie Hall. In Lansing, third grade students currently participate in the symphony partnership. It is impossible to know how many classrooms and schools participate, however, as principals and teachers participate voluntarily.

Several other community artists have partnered with the DIAF team. A local musician Ben Hassenger has worked with teachers in the district on a number of projects. One is the “Guitars in the Classroom” project, in which teachers are trained to use acoustic guitars and simple songs to teach classroom content. Ben also does a variety of projects in elementary schools, such as the “Ukulele Kid Experience” (U.K.E.) at Attwood Elementary. In March, local hip-hop musician Ozay Moore conducted a workshop titled, “Bringing Hip Hop into the Classroom.” In general, the ACGL has begun to act as a coordinator between the LSD and the Wharton Center’s Institute for Arts and Creativity (sponsored by the Michigan State University Federal Credit Union) to bring in “artists in residence.” These artists are funded by the Wharton Center Institute as part of its educational programming, and then, when grant money (or district

funding) exists, they are brought into Lansing classrooms. Because this district/grant money is scarce, only a couple artists take up residency each year.

### **Impacts of the Cuts on the LSD Staff**

In addition to the noticeable impacts on the arts education that Lansing School District elementary school students receive, participants spoke at length about the impacts on the LSD teachers—both those that lost their jobs in the cuts and those that are still employed by the district. The 27 AMPE teachers who lost their positions were affected differently depending on several factors. First, some art and music teachers who were non-endorsed or who held a second certification were able to go in classroom teaching positions after the cuts. For numerous endorsed specialists, however, the cuts meant being out of work, finding a new teaching job, leaving teaching altogether, or retiring. I discuss some of these endorsed specialists' stories in this section. Also, for the classroom teachers still employed in the LSD, the lack of planning time combined with new responsibilities seems to have negatively impacted teacher health/stress and morale. Based on participant interviews, it would be difficult to overstate the negative situation for classroom teachers: current and former educators constantly characterized the LSD as being in crisis.

### **Where are the AMPE Teachers Now?**

As mentioned, some AMPE teachers were able to go back into classroom teaching positions, while others were not. A former music teacher talked about how some of her friends with dual certifications were slotted into classroom teaching roles after the cuts, although they had not previously taught anything except art or music:

There was a teacher that was an art specialist who was also a reading specialist and she went back in the classroom ... I know one of our music specialists is now an English

teacher in high school. She never taught English. But the district said, "It's on your certification, so we're going to cut you from music and you're going to start teaching 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade English." (interview transcript, January 20, 2015).

Participants' characterization of what happened to the AMPE teachers, however, seemed to differ depending on coalition membership. Perhaps not surprisingly, former AMPE teachers spoke more passionately about the cuts than non-AMPE teachers. A former music teacher spoke of the broad impact on the teachers who were cut:

We've lost all these teachers, we've lost a quality education program, we've lost all these certified people who have families and who had a long career, people who have 20 more years of service and have been loyal to that district ... You're talking about people's livelihood and their ability to support themselves and their family. That is serious. A lot of those people still do not have jobs. (interview transcript, January 6, 2015)

Several non-AMPE participants, however, downplayed the negative effects on the AMPE department and noted that many of these teachers quickly found other jobs. A current classroom teacher said:

When you look at the number of elementary specialists positions that we had, many of those people held general elementary certifications. They weren't just specialized in art or just specialized in music. And many of them landed in positions within the district. Yes, there were layoffs ... But you know, many people landed in positions eventually. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

Several former AMPE teachers were able to find other jobs in school districts in Michigan. One counted herself "lucky" and "fortunate" because "usually [districts] don't even look at you if you have more than five years, because you're too expensive" (interview

transcript, March 16, 2015). The other talked about how strange it felt to relocate later in her life: “I mean I packed up, sold our house, and we moved ... It was hard. I mean who starts over at 50 years old? I did [laughs]” (interview transcript, January 16, 2015). The teachers ultimately felt happy in their new positions but also admitted they felt their hearts were “still in Lansing.”

Several AMPE teachers who were close to retirement chose to retire when the cuts were announced. These teachers were frustrated, however, because they felt forced into retirement and preferred to continue teaching. A former art teacher discussed her choice to retire early:

I early retired because it's really difficult to get a job when you've been a teacher for a long time. They don't want to hire someone who's older and so [other art teacher] and I both early retired. But other teachers were worried because they didn't know if they could find a job. And I knew I could retire, so I was going to be okay. Not happy about it.

(interview transcript, January 5, 2015)

Other teachers chose retirement because the available positions in the Lansing School District were undesirable. A former music teacher retired to avoid moving from elementary music to a secondary instrumental music position:

I had seniority but there were going to make me take a middle school and a high school band, and I just said, “I'm too old for it,” you know? With those programs, you've got to be there all the time, you've got to be up on it. And I was only planning on staying a couple years, and to build a band program it takes five or six [years]. And they didn't give me much other option ... I didn't like it how I went out, but decided to retire. [I] would have taught another couple years had they not done what they did. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

Several older teachers also decided, in part, to leave their jobs because they knew other younger teachers needed the positions more than they did. One former teacher explained:

I voluntarily walked away from a job because somebody who had 10 years of experience and a wife and children wasn't gonna have a job. And I had enough seniority and knew I would land somewhere else, so I voluntarily gave my job up so they could work.

(interview transcript, January 6, 2015)

Several teachers, for whom the cuts meant the end of their teaching careers, remembered feeling a mix of anger and “out of sorts.” One former music teacher remembered packing up her room at the end of the year: “It was very, very difficult that last [day] when I had to pack up my stuff ... I loved teaching, I loved teaching music” (interview transcript, January 20, 2015). This teacher went on to say that the first year of retirement was “extremely difficult because I had been pushed out of something that I had done all my life” (interview transcript, January 20, 2015). Another former music teacher remembered similar feelings during the last days of the 2013 school year:

I remember very clearly packing my room up, I think it was the last week of school. And just sitting there and just sobbing, realizing that I'm not going to be a music teacher anymore. That part of me that I've prepared for since I was three—I played violin when I was three—it's gone. I went through the whole depression cycle, and you know, just sad and mourning the loss of that part of me. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

Former AMPE teachers especially lamented the loss of teacher talent brought about by the cuts. While participants acknowledged prior weaknesses within the AMPE teaching force, they said the cuts had managed to send the weaker, non-endorsed teachers back into other teaching positions in the district, but had caused an exodus of endorsed talent. A former music



teacher said: “A lot of good teachers who could leave did. A lot of the good teachers, and not just music—art teachers, too ... And that’s the sad thing” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015). A former art teacher echoed this lament:

They lost a huge talent bank when this happened, because these people all needed to get jobs and left. I mean many people pulled up stakes and moved, had to move ... Good teachers that had been there forever, excellent teachers. (interview transcript, January 5, 2015)

### **Classroom Teachers Struggling: Health, Stress, and Morale**

Participants spoke at length about the difficulty that classroom teachers experienced since the 2013 cuts. The lack of planning time meant that, except for a 25-minute lunch period, teachers were occupied with students from “bell to bell.” Eating lunch was sometimes unusual for the teachers, as one related:

There's no breaks. You're with kids from bell to bell. So you're—I mean, you can't forget to make a copy in the morning. And you can't forget to get the paper you need for this, or the book you need for this, because there is no time to do it. Unless you do it during your lunch which means you're not eating. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

Classroom teachers said they often could not even find time to use the bathroom. Before the contract vote, one educator had jokingly warned the bargaining team that they would need to “invest in some Depends [adult diapers] for everybody because they're not even going to be able to go to the bathroom.” The joke, however, became reality: “I had some colleagues literally get urinary tract infections because they were so stressed, they weren't going to the bathroom enough” (interview transcript, March 14, 2015).

The classroom teachers said that, although they knew teaching without a planning period would be difficult, things were even more difficult than they had anticipated. The absence of planning time made the teachers realize how much they had been able to accomplish when their students went to art or music, as one educator related:

You would think it's not like we had that much time before, but it was these little slices of time in the day. I knew that when I had my 30 minutes for music, I was going to get 20 things done. And I would—you know, I would plan my planning time and I used it because that's the time we had. And now it's gone. It's very hard. I mean you can see it on people's faces that it's wearing on people. It's not easy. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

It was also problematic that the planning time cut had arrived alongside a new evaluation system and loss of job protection for teachers with seniority. This combination meant that teachers were working harder than ever, a classroom teacher said:

Our evaluations have gotten increasingly harder and complicated and unfair, so nobody feels like they're doing a good job even when they are working harder than they ever have before. Our evaluations are set up to make us feel like nobody's doing a good job. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

Another classroom teacher summed up the situation, saying the cuts had turned the district “upside down” and that the situation now was a “disaster” (interview transcript, February 13, 2015).

Because teachers had no breaks during the school day, routine tasks of teaching—grading papers, communicating with parents or colleagues, making copies, visiting the principal, filling out paperwork, updating a gradebook, tracking assessment data for performance evaluations, and

many others—accumulated and were put off until after school. A current classroom teacher discussed the challenge:

You make it through that day, and instead of having three or four things you need to get done before you go home, you have 100 things to get done before you get home. And you never feel fully prepared and fully caught up. That's [the hardest part] to me. I could stay until 10 o'clock every night and never feel fully prepared, fully caught up. (interview transcript, March 5, 2014).

A former teacher spoke of hearing the same complaints from colleagues in the district:

The atmospheres in the building, the morale is just tremendously low. Lines for the copy machines are out the door because you can only do it at the beginning of the day and the end of the day. They're working even more hours because there's no planning time.

(interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

A former art teacher who left the district noted that friends who still worked in the LSD said they were going to “lose it”:

I'm so surprised some people haven't just had a total nervous breakdown. A lot of my friends that are still there ... they said, “I am just,” one of them said, “I feel like I'm gonna just lose it.” I mean they're just miserable. And how that can be good for kids either? I mean the whole thing is ridiculous. (interview transcript, March 16, 2015)

Another current employee also brought up the effect that low morale was having on students:

The most obvious impact is that the students are less enriched by the school system, but a huge, huge by-product of this has been the impact on teacher morale. It's just horrible, and if you think about it, a day [is] sad enough for a kid who doesn't have any kind of arts

experience, but to be in this school where also you have a teacher who is really unhappy to be there, it's sort of a net effect, I think. (interview transcript, April 29, 2015)

Several participants said that teachers were now calling in sick or taking extended medical/stress leaves. A former teacher had spoken to friends in the district and reported that, "Teachers are just dying ... They're burned out. They're using more and more of their sick days than ever before" (interview transcript, January 21, 2015). A classroom teacher elaborated:

It's just been spiraling and we have had more teachers—I know because my friend was seeing [a doctor]. [My friend is] out on a stress leave and [the doctor] said that it's a revolving door that the Lansing teachers are on. Just multitudes of different stress leaves because of the no breaks and the no respect from downtown, no help, no listening, and just having to do everything on their own. And then not being respected for anything, and everybody's crabby and depressed, and that kind of stuff. I mean it's bad, very bad.

(interview transcript, February 13, 2015)

The stress leaves were taking a toll on building staff, teachers noted. In one building, two teachers—out of a staff of twelve—had left during the 2014-2015 school year: "Two teachers have gone. One at the beginning of the year was out on a stress leave for two months at the beginning. And one retired at Thanksgiving, didn't even finish out, and she retired because of the stress" (interview transcript, February 13, 2015). Another teacher who worked in this same building said there was even talk among teachers about which local doctors were willing to sign off on a sick leave: "There's talk sometimes about which specific doctors, which practices will support you taking a leave for health [reasons] ... It's a thing that people discuss for sure" (interview transcript, April 29, 2015).

With classroom teachers taking frequent sick days or being on extended health-related leaves, there has been a need for substitute teachers across the district. Participants said, however, that substitutes do not want to work in Lansing because of the lack of planning time and the student disciplinary issues. A classroom teacher said that once a substitute comes in to teach a given class, they are unwilling to return. Another said that the 2014-2015 school year brought numerous days where there were not enough substitutes to fill vacancies. These days were unpredictable because scheduled substitutes did not always show up:

[Subs will] say, "OK, yeah sure we'll be there, blah blah blah," and then they don't show up, so we might end up with three ... Why would they come to our district to sub, when they can go get at least a little bit of break here or there in these other districts? ... We're always short—and [subs] won't even call in. I think what they'll do is they'll sign up for a sub job [in Lansing] and then maybe someone better will come along and maybe they'll get a couple breaks and won't have to do anything. (interview transcript, February 13, 2015)

This teacher went on to say that, with teachers taking sick days, and subs not being willing to work, teachers who were present at school sometimes had to cover multiple classes, which created even more stress: “We get screwed and have to take over more kids in our classes sometimes” (interview transcript, February 13, 2015). Clearly, this issue became pressing enough that the Superintendent addressed it in a memo to staff on March 23, 2015:

Only two more weeks until Spring Break. Hang on! The substitute situation is very serious all around the nation, in fact. We had a very tough day on Friday with about a 75% fill rate for absent staff. Adjustments need to be made on the fly. It's not optimal for our students. So, I'm asking you to hang in there for another 9 days – then you can have a

whole week to regenerate for the run to June! Thanks. (Monday Morning Memo, March 23, 2015).

Several participants said the situation in Lansing was bad enough that older teachers were advising younger teachers to find other jobs—and those who found other jobs were leaving. As a former employee put it, “Anyone who can leave is leaving” (interview transcript, January 6, 2015). A former music teacher said she often counsels younger teachers to “get out of Lansing while you can”: “I just tell them, ‘Hey—go for it. Lansing's not going to do anything for you. The best thing, if you've only taught 10 years, your best thing is to get out now, so find a job.’” (interview transcript, February 13, 2015). I asked a classroom teacher with many years of experience if she considered retirement, and she said:

If I could right now, I would ... I can't afford it. I was just—one of the reasons I went to the doctor today [was] just the hopelessness. I'm like, "Oh my God. Seriously. I can't go because of the money, and what else can I do to make this kind of money, you know?" So that's the hard part. (interview transcript, February 13, 2015)

### **Bleak Future for the Lansing School District**

Two years after the cuts occurred, the district's financial outlook still looks bleak. Mostly, the contributing factors are the same ones that put the district in a deficit situation in 2013. Per pupil funding (state aid money for the district), while not keeping pace with retirement/benefit system costs, looks to be up slightly for the 2015-2016 school year (Greco, 2015). The Superintendent noted, however, that the increase in per pupil funding will reduce the number of layoffs, but likely will not be enough to stave off all cuts (Greco, 2015). Declining enrollment remains the major issue. The district is anticipating the years-long decline to continue, and is budgeting accordingly.

While the decline likely is affected by regional and statewide issues, my participants also emphasized that they had heard of families who left the district (at least in part) because of the cuts to art, music, and physical education. A former art teacher knew of a number of families who were “just disgusted that this happened” and used the school choice provisions to move students to a new district: “I know of one family that went to East Lansing ... A lot of families that I did know well went to [nearby district] Holt” (interview transcript, January 5, 2015). Moving kids out of the district to avoid the Lansing high schools was common, this teacher said, but other families who had stayed in Lansing “on principle,” left when the programming was no longer there:

[Families that eventually left] are people that had stayed with Lansing for a long time and believed in the whole, you know, that they wanted their kids to have diversity. But when it wasn't backed up with programming, they left. (interview transcript, January 5, 2015)

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the “financials” of the five-year union contract were able to be opened up for renegotiation after two years. With the grim financial picture in mind, participants were pessimistic about any return of certified arts specialists. A DIAF coordinator said: “Honestly, as they get towards negotiating again, [I’m thinking] that the idea of actually bringing us back—not maybe to the full capacity, but maybe partial capacity—is not necessarily an option. Budget’s still an issue” (interview transcript, February 23, 2015). A current classroom teacher agreed:

We're not really in much better of a financial situation than we were two years ago ... So I would say I wouldn't be shocked if they eliminated those [DIAF] positions, and I'd say I'd be surprised if they hired back more AMPE people, because they're not in a financial position, I don't think, to do that. (interview transcript, March 5, 2015)

Others cynically noted that once the AMPE positions went away, it would be almost impossible to restore them, since the cuts had saved the district money. A former teacher said: “So they’re still losing money, so if you’ve got a situation where they just saved a ton of money, you think they’re going to go backwards on it? Not anytime soon.” (interview transcript, January 21, 2015). In addition to feeling like there would be no short-term improvements in AMPE staffing, participants said they had heard the stipend was going to “go away.” Classroom teachers had been paid a \$5,000 stipend to give up their planning period, but it was rumored that the stipend would disappear after two years because of deficits.

### **Secondary Music Enrollment Suffers**

Participants discussed how the effects of the cuts were already trickling into the seventh through twelfth grade music programs. While acknowledging that the full effects would not be felt for some years (i.e., until those in early elementary school had no sequential music in K-6), some said enrollment was down and that students were behind in terms of skills. A current employee said:

With each progressive year with things staying the way they are, it’s not going to get better, it’s going to get worse. They still have—right now the high schools still have some kids that happened to have that beginning band program. Things like that. But now there isn’t. It’s sad. [Secondary music teachers are] aware that it’s going to have an effect on them. But right now they’re struggling to keep their own programs alive. Lack of numbers ... Because there’s not much feeding into it. We don’t have anything feeding there to inspire. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

A former music teacher had heard of enrollment problems at the secondary level as well, and said there were a variety of causes:



Between the restructuring of the grades, moving the teachers around, and the cuts at the elementary [level]—I mean all of those things have happened. I'll be very curious to see where the programs are in another year, another two years, and so on, because I don't see them getting any bigger or any better. (interview transcript, January 21, 2015)

This former teacher said that even though one high school band teacher was working hard, the number of students in the band program had dwindled to 35-40 students, a small group for a school of 800 students. In another building, no students had signed up for the eighth grade band. This former teacher exclaimed: "Look at our secondary music programs. They're shrinking. They're dramatically shrinking" (interview transcript, January 21, 2015).

### **Discussion: Conflicting Messages on District Health**

Even though most participants agreed that the LSD's future was bleak, conflicting external messages suggested the district had "righted the ship." Amid internal strife discussed by the teachers, the Superintendent was being supported by the School Board and praised by administrators in the state. This support came first when the Board of Education renewed the Superintendent's contract for two years at the March 2013 meeting at which it also approved the five-year union contract. This show of support was almost unanimous, with only one board member dissenting, and the others emphasizing that "her excellent work in the district thus far have [sic] made her a perfect fit" (Gibbons, 2013). This support was furthered in October 2014 when the board unanimously voted to extend Caamal Canul's contract through 2018 (Lavey, 2014). The board President penned an editorial explaining that the Superintendent had arrived at a time when relations between the board and the administration were poor, "the budget was in crisis, student enrollment was dropping every year, and the district lacked a clarity of vision and direction" (Spadafore, 2014). The president goes on to praise the Superintendent for the progress

made on all fronts. Around the same time, in November 2014, the Michigan Association of School Administrators named Caamal Canul the 2015 Michigan Superintendent of the year, praising her work on the district's strategic plan (Lavey, 2014).

In sum, there seems to be considerable support for the direction of the district. The praise for the Superintendent, in both board members' comments and her award nomination, constructs a narrative emphasizing how the "tough decisions" had to be made to "right the ship." The loss of elementary art and music specialists, at least in the public sphere, has almost completely faded from view. Even current protests about the Lansing School District do not mention the AMPE cuts. For example, a counterpoint piece, written by a local resident, was published alongside the board President's editorial that praised the Superintendent. This piece protests the general direction of the district and focuses on school safety and atmosphere, but makes no mention of the elementary art, music, and physical education cuts (Hussain, 2014).

In other words, the loud protests from March 2013 turned quickly into shrugs. This is exemplified in a Michigan Radio news story from January 2014, titled, "After cutting arts teachers, schools adjust to new normal in Lansing" (Wells, 2014). The piece discusses the move from outrage to acceptance, noting:

Last year, Lansing public school officials laid off all their elementary art and music teachers. The move got national attention from outraged educators and arts groups. Now, almost a year after the layoffs were announced, Lansing students and teachers are getting used to the new normal. (Wells, 2014).

A teacher is quoted as saying, "It is what it is" (Fredericks in Wells, 2014). The cuts also are forgotten in recent district messaging. Radio and television advertisements from the spring of 2015 emphasized the completeness of the district's offerings, saying Lansing offers "more

educational choices to students than any other school district in the greater Lansing region” (Lansing School District, 2015).

The fundamental question then arises: is the district providing arts education at the elementary level, or is it merely providing sporadic arts-enhanced experiences? Like the health and direction of the district, answers to this question differ. In March 2013, as the cuts were announced, the Superintendent and district spokesperson fought back against claims that the arts were being cut. And to be sure, the official district messaging still represents that elementary students receive arts education. One of my participants, a classroom teacher confident in her ability to teach art and music, argued the same point, saying: “To me, the biggest thing is there's this misconception that Lansing kids aren't getting art, music, and P.E. Yes they are. They're getting it from their highly-qualified, certified in all subjects, classroom teacher” (interview transcript, March 5, 2015).

The majority of participants, however, said they felt that the district was only “paying lip service” to the arts. The lack of time to teach and ability on the part of the classroom teachers, the lack of enforcement by administrators, the infrequency of DIAF coordinator visits, and the inconsistency of community arts provider visits combined to support this assertion. One of the classroom teachers felt the whole idea of the DIAF was evidence that the district needed to appear like it was not cutting the arts. The teachers said: “To me [the DIAF] was more of, we have to say we're doing something and so we're going to say we're going to put these positions in there, because there was all this talk about eliminating art, music, and P.E. So they had to say there was something there” (interview transcript, March 5, 2015). Another classroom teacher said the DIAF’s method in the second year—giving kids art, music, and P.E. back-to-back-to-back on the same day—was evidence of a lack of integrity in the district’s approach. The teacher

said that by doing this the district is “covering the bases” so as to not be dishonest in saying it provides arts instruction.

One of the DIAF coordinators said the truth lay somewhere in between the district actually attempting to provide quality arts education and merely “paying lip service” to the arts. This coordinator said:

To outsiders, it can indeed look like [lip service] when the district does what they can to look good to the public. “Oh, look—we have a string quartet in our schools. Music is alive! Praise God!” And I get that. But that’s not how we—that’s not how it was put to us. Although I’m sure the district’s going to try to save face and keep the student population up. Because if the student population drops, the situation isn’t going to get any better. (interview transcript, February 23, 2015)

Whether the district was trying to “look good to the public” or was really confident that its approach was as innovative as planned, the district’s financial problems seem likely to force its hand in the near future. As enrollment continues to decline and the state’s aid money struggles to keep pace with ballooning retirement costs, the district’s choices will likely clarify priorities around arts education.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Limitations**

Acknowledging the limitations of research studies is important to the interpretation of their findings. The first limitation to consider concerns the trustworthiness of the findings as a function of the overall design. Because this is a qualitative case study of a single school district's policy decision-making process, findings cannot be generalized to all settings. Of course, this is also not the goal of such research. Qualitative studies such as this aim for depth of understanding, rich and evocative description, and careful contextualization of phenomena (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Because qualitative studies operate in a different paradigm than quantitative studies, rules governing internal and external validity differ. Rather than aim for a large number of participants or controlled conditions, designs such as this require information-rich cases and demand that the researcher seek both data saturation and disconfirming evidence (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The localized nature of the study, while negating generalizability based on statistical power, does not engender insignificance. Scholars have suggested the potential for these kinds of “small stories” to challenge unquestioned “mega-narratives” in education (Olson & Craig, 2009). Olson and Craig (2009) write:

In the midst of powerful policy narratives at work in the field of education, small stories intimately experienced by people in relationship typically do not get attended to because narratives with mega-plot lines devised by others and routinely accepted by ourselves in the daily conduct of our lives tend to take precedence ... Becoming awake to small stories lived within and between individual human beings makes it possible to begin to be able to tell these stories in ways that show how tensions relating to diversity,

accountability, and standardization manifest themselves in the fabric of everyday lives.  
(p. 549).

In this case study, I sought to tell a “small story” and to relate this story to important macro-level policy conditions. As Olson and Craig (2009) suggest, telling “small stories” helps to address Greene’s (1995) challenge “to learn to move back and forth, to comprehend the domains of policy and long-term planning while also attending to particular children, situation-specific undertakings, the unmeasurable, and the unique” (p. 11).

### **Generalizability and Transferability**

In this study, I hoped to describe the particularities of the Lansing situation to the extent that readers may better comprehend other situations—of cuts to elementary arts education programs—with more nuance and understanding. While the aim is not generalizability, it may be possible that findings from this study can be transferred to other similar contexts, depending on the degree of similarity—or “fittingness”—between Lansing and a given school district (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). As discussed in Chapter Three, there is the potential for “logical situational generalizability” (Schwartz, 1996, p. 7). While it is unlikely that other school districts would echo the LSD’s process, with identical policy conditions, coalition relationships, and aftermath, it is likely that readers would be able to locate isolated similarities in the workings of other districts.

As I discussed in Chapter Three, the study also was limited by constraints on access. I originally planned to address the third research question by going into LSD buildings for observations of classroom generalists and DIAF coordinators. I also planned to interview these educators and the LSD administrators during these visits. Unfortunately, my request for access to the district was denied. As a result, my ability to describe what is currently happening—in terms

of elementary arts education—is limited. I do feel that participant interviews and other documents (e.g., DIAF lesson plans, news articles, Superintendent memos) provide sufficient data for understanding the current state of instruction in the LSD, but the data set would undoubtedly be richer with observations and interviews guided by visits.

It is also important to acknowledge possible limitations stemming from selection bias. Though I attempted to include the perspective of many different stakeholders, those who were willing to be interviewed may represent a certain “side” or set of opinions/beliefs, or—following my analysis—may have unduly represented a coalition. At the same time, it was rare that anyone that I contacted refused to be interviewed (this did happen once, as two DIAF coordinators were unwilling to speak). To combat the potential for a myopic view of Lansing’s decision, I sought disconfirming evidence and purposefully represented these viewpoints alongside the dominant voices. For example, one voice stands out as contrary in my sample of classroom teachers, and this educator’s perspective helps to bring nuance to the data set. The perspectives are also varied among the community arts provider representatives. At the same time, the data set is strengthened by the significant repetition of participant opinions. The former AMPE teachers were remarkably unified in their feelings about the cuts, and their telling of stories helped to triangulate each other’s assertions.

### **Policy Analysis Limitations**

This study aims to add to the nascent body of arts education policy literature. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, although policy matters have long been a concern for the arts education field, formal policy analysis is a relatively ignored area of arts education scholarship. With only a few exceptions (see Aguilar, 2011; Jorgensen, 1985; Kos, 2010), the arts education policy sphere has made little use of any recognized policy analysis strategies/frameworks. As a

result, a limitation of this study is its inability to easily fit into a broader body of similar literature.

There are also limitations to the use of the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) for this type of research study. In a recent review of studies using the ACF between 1987 and 2006, Weible, Sabatier, and McQueen (2011) report few applications to education policy and no studies of actions occurring within a single public school district. However, the authors note that the ACF has been applied to a variety of policy systems (e.g., transportation, marine law, forestry, pollution), suggesting the applications are potentially broad. In sum, using a public policy framework that was mostly intended for use with large policy subsystems to analyze decision-making in a single school district likely involves limitations. At the same time, other frameworks have been used in localized instances of educational policymaking, such as Houlihan and Green's (2006) analysis of physical education policy in England and Stout and Stevens's (2000) investigation of a failed Minnesota diversity rule. These two studies, while conducted at a state/national level, address similar coalitions and decision-making processes as my study.

Beyond issues of fit, there are almost certainly issues with using the ACF to study such a recent policy development. Authors suggest that at least 10 years should pass before using the ACF to study coalition actions around a policy issue (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). At the same time, Weible et al. (2011) acknowledged that certain research questions benefit from this waiting period, while others may not require the same passage of time. The authors suggest interpreting shorter-term study results, such as mine, within more long-term subsystem "dynamics" (Weible et al., 2011, p. 354). Since I have used the ACF to contextualize a decision made roughly two years ago, any firm conclusions are bound to change slightly as time passes.



Last, using interview data as the primary basis for an ACF-guided study is somewhat rare, as most studies use some combination of survey data or legislative document analysis. Primarily using interview data is not unprecedented, and this method accounts for roughly 20% of ACF studies between 1987 and 2006 (Weible, Sabatier, & McQueen, 2009).

### **Critical Discussion of Findings**

Throughout the paper, I have summarized and discussed discrete findings. In this section, I more broadly discuss the study's findings. I focus here on connecting Lansing to the broader conversations about class, social capital, and what counts as arts education. I also make recommendations for policy—both at the macro- and micro-levels. Throughout this discussion, I draw on the critical policy scholarship tradition, epitomized by the work of Ball (1990, 1994), Grace (1984), Lipman (2004), and others. Critical policy scholarship is characterized by interrogations of policy as both official text and discourse (Ball, 1994) and recognizes the inherent power relations in policy making. It also goes beyond recognition toward action. As Lipman (2004) writes, critical policy scholarship “recognizes the centrality of power in policy and policy making and is grounded in a commitment to transform unjust social relations” (p. 13). My intention is to interrogate, critique, and question issues raised by my participants and those that I believe are relevant to districts like Lansing. After this discussion section, I offer recommendations and implications.

### **Understanding the Cuts in Relation to Class, Race, and Capital**

Even as participants point to the immediate causes of the cuts, one cannot reduce the discussion about Lansing to being only about budget problems or only about union politics. The underlying issues deserve recognition, and I argue that it is impossible to understand the dynamics of the Lansing situation without discussing the role of class, race, and cultural capital.

Lansing School District is an urban district with a large percentage of minority students and students dealing with the effects of poverty. In general, the popular perception is that the LSD is prone to “problems” and offering “lesser-than” curricular offerings. The 2013 cuts, then, fit into the narrative about struggling/failing urban districts with their “backs to the wall.” It comes as no great surprise, in other words, that the cuts occurred in a place like the Lansing School District while nearby suburban districts manage to support high-caliber arts education at the elementary level. Interrogating the situation means asking some tough questions: why is it not surprising that this happened in a place like Lansing? And as a corollary, why is it—at least ostensibly—okay that it happened in a place like Lansing? Why would something like this “never happen” in Okemos, a well-to-do district several miles from Lansing?

Considering the class disparities made evident by comparing Lansing with surrounding districts points to troubling realities about inequity in schooling and the expectations for what urban schools provide. The inequity most evident in this situation is the lack of a challenging, intellectually rich, and well-rounded education, which Lipman (2004) claims as a central social justice imperative. There seems to be a feeling, expressed by some of my participants (though notably not by teachers) that districts serving lower-class students simply cannot offer everything. One participant commented that districts have to decide whether to cut the arts or to cut the school nurse. But why should districts like Lansing have to make this choice?

Disparate expectations also lead naturally to the disparate experiences of students in special magnet programs within urban districts. In Lansing, the children who attend Pleasant View Elementary (the visual and performing arts magnet school) continue to enjoy courses in art, music, dance, and theatre. Participants described this school as an “oasis” or as a “dream” school within the troubled district. However, providing unequal experiences within a district is a

form of injustice (Lipman, 2004). It also is worth mentioning that this arts magnet school offers similar curriculum to nearby suburban districts. What is an oasis for some students in Lansing is just another neighborhood school in wealthier suburban districts.

When troubling the narrative of which schools are expected to provide which curricular offerings, it is hard not to conclude that society is willing to withhold certain educative experiences from low-SES students. The conclusion from some seems to be that until children in struggling urban schools can show proficiency on “basic skills” like reading and writing, urban districts cannot or should not begin to worry about well-rounded programs full of art, music, and physical education. And with recent accountability systems (e.g., *No Child Left Behind*) requiring improvements in these basic subjects without necessarily “addressing the inequitable conditions under which children learn” (Noguera, 2007, p. 1), urban schools that lack resources and capacity for improvement can be further penalized. Accountability of this kind then can block access to intellectually rich and challenging curriculum.

The belief that struggling, high-poverty schools need not provide arts classes as a required element of their curriculum has become so ingrained that the arts are now positioned as a cure-all addition. The President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities (PCAH) has recently created the Turnaround Arts initiative, which uses a comprehensive arts-focused intervention to help failing (lowest 5% in a given state) schools. Operating in 27 school districts in 15 states, Turnaround Arts helps to implement robust and varied arts programs. Although the initiative’s materials stress the importance of the arts, the overall purpose of the intervention is to improve “attendance, parent engagement, student motivation and academic achievement” (PCAH, 2015). While the project itself is laudable and boasts significant success in achieving its goals, it is worth noticing how it contributes to the positioning of the arts in the educational landscape.

Here, the arts are brought into a struggling school through outside funding to make an impact on non-arts outcomes. An expectation that school districts provide exemplary arts education as a matter of course is not to be found.

Other local instances reinforce this point. A recent editorial in the *Detroit Free Press* detailed how the New Haven (Michigan) Community Schools cut its music programs in 2011 (Wunderlich, 2015). The editorial, penned by the district's Superintendent, says that New Haven was "forced" to make the cuts:

Too many policymakers and communities are forced to treat music education as a luxury in times of tight finances and budget cuts in the classroom. To protect core academic programs, local public schools must make tough choices every day. Music is often the first to go. Four years ago, New Haven was in that position. Much loved as it was, our music program could not escape the difficult cut. (Wunderlich, 2015)

The Superintendent goes on to say that after community members began digging up old sheet music and instruments from their attics, music was brought back. People teamed together to figure out "how to save a program the community wanted but could no longer afford" (Wunderlich, 2015). Again, this narrative deserves questioning. If the district was "forced" to cut music and deserves praise for bringing it back, what is the importance of the subject? Do all students deserve the arts and should districts be expected to provide this education?

Situations like the one in Lansing also raise important issues about cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) defined cultural capital as a collection of symbolic elements that confer status and contribute to inequality between those who possess the elements and those who do not. Examples include tastes (e.g., in music, art, food), clothing, material possessions, and mannerisms. Bourdieu theorized that because certain kinds of cultural capital are valued over

others, possession of dominant forms of cultural capital can affect social mobility as much as possession of economic capital (e.g., income, property, wealth). Cultural capital is relevant to this study because many students in a district like Lansing are likely to have less outside-of-school exposure to the forms of dominant cultural capital that may confer status (Shann, 2001). My participants brought this up frequently, noting that most Lansing students do not have access to extra-curricular music and art experiences. This disparity puts more pressure on the school district to be an equalizer of cultural capital (Noguera, 2007), providing cultural experiences during the school day.

The cuts to elementary arts education in the LSD add to inequality in terms of students' cultural capital in several ways. First, without a strong basis in skills and knowledge provided through regular and sequential arts curriculum in grades K-6, students will likely be hampered in their pursuit of artistic lives beyond their school years. This includes becoming a professional artist as well as meaningfully including the arts in one's life as an amateur pursuit. One participant referred to Lansing's decision as "taking away life possibilities" from kids, which echoes Lipman's (2004) assertions about inequality and injustice. Lipman notes: "Policies and programs perpetuate social inequality and injustice when they prepare students of specific racial or ethnic, class, or gender groups for different life choices" (p. 16). Second, the lack of stimulating music and art experiences likely robs students in Lansing of cultural capital that could add to their ability to navigate the social landscape.

The relative inability of parents and community members to mount effective opposition to the cuts is worth considering, both in relation to social capital and to deficit models. Several participants were frustrated with the lack of parental uproar about the cuts, and their anger seemed to follow a popular complaint: that urban parents are not engaged in their children's

school and must not care. This is a frequently discussed tension at many schools (Hargreaves, 2001), as teachers often feel distanced from parents who they perceive as uninvolved. But the assumption that Lansing parents did not turn out in earnest opposition because they did not care is problematic. This assumption relies on deficit thinking and ignores the numerous possible reasons for a lack of parental voice. Parents may not have turned out to protest at the school board meetings because they did not know details of time and place, were busy with work or child care commitments, or did not understand that the teacher contract would be discussed. It is also possible that certain parents—English language learners and those who are poor, may not feel comfortable speaking out in a public forum. Parents could have sensed that they lacked the social capital to be heard. Research has also suggested that even though teachers and administrators strongly believe in urban parental involvement, their actions can work to exclude parents (Barnyak & McNelly, 2009).

One need not look far to understand the role that economic and social capital can play in mobilizing effective parent/community opposition to school district actions. As I discussed briefly in Chapter Five, there are numerous examples of parental/community coalitions forming to successfully delay or stave off cuts to music programs. These actions, however, do not frequently occur in urban districts, but occur in more wealthy suburban communities. For example, East Grand Rapids, a small, very wealthy district an hour from Lansing, recently considered reducing its elementary “specials” classes (Moroney, 2015). In reaction, parents held yard sales and funneled donations through a foundation. Around 60 community members marched in protest, and students and parents held signs that read: “Our Music, Art, & Gym Are Important,” and “I Don’t Want a School Without Music or Gym and Art.” The response saved the classes, as reported in an *Mlive* article:

During Monday's final budget proposal, the board resurrected the elementary specials classes after receiving nearly \$260,000 in donations from EGRNow! – a campaign through the East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation. The funds also included about \$20,000 from a recent community yard sale held in the parking lot of Breton Downs Elementary School. (Moroney, 2015)

The contrast between the responses in East Grand Rapids and Lansing could not be much more different. In a striking example of both social and economic capital (and the power that comes with it), parents in East Grand Rapids mobilized, were able to raise enormous amounts of money, and got what they wanted. In Lansing, parental mobilization was absent.

### **Equity of Opportunity or More?**

Recently, there seems to be mounting pressure from the federal government to ensure that students receive an equitable education. As discussed briefly in Chapter One, pressure has come in the form of threatened action from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. The OCR sent a letter to states and districts warning that the office would investigate instances of unequal access to educational resources, and lists the advanced courses and arts courses as resources (Klein, 2014). So far, such investigations have been rare. In one such investigation, the OCR investigated the South Orange Maplewood School District (New Jersey) and found that African American students in the district were poorly represented in advanced courses in all grade levels. For example, a letter to the district's Superintendent states: "OCR determined that for school year 2012-2013, African-American students represented 51.5% (946 out of 1838) of the District's total high school enrollment, but only 18.7% (148 out of 791) of the District's high school AP course takers" (OCR, 2014). The focus here is on access to rigorous classes, and arts courses are only mentioned in a list of advanced placement (AP) courses that the district offers.

It remains to be seen whether a situation like the one in Lansing rises to the level of OCR concern. Such recognition seems unlikely since the elementary students are uniformly (across the district) missing out on instruction by endorsed arts teachers, rather than disenfranchising a subset of students. There would only be an issue related if there was inequity of opportunity between students at the magnet and non-magnet elementary schools. In Karpinski's (2006) case study of a racially-segregated arts magnet program, a principal confronts the inequity of having "few, if any" African-American students in magnet arts classes, but finds almost all of the minority students relegated to the "basic skills" classes (p. 46). Such a situation at a magnet school in Lansing undoubtedly would be cause for action, although there is not indication of such segregation. What is clear in Lansing, as mentioned, is that elementary students have different opportunities than in other districts in the area. These disparities between neighboring districts echo findings on access in other metropolitan areas (see Salvador & Allegood, 2014).

Any such pressure on equity of opportunity/access bodes well for children in urban school districts. However, numerous scholars have pointed out that equity of opportunity is not enough, adding that society must strive for equity of outcome. Noguera (2007) clarifies that while equal access to educational opportunities is important and far from assured, the much tougher fight concerns equity of results. Lipman (2004) agrees, arguing for an expanded definition of equity that includes outcomes. Blogger Peter Greene recently illustrated the limits of "access," writing:

So let me ask you a question. You've worked really hard at your job, and you have bills to pay. Would you rather have access to some money, or would you like to have the money. Would you like to work at a place where everybody has access to a nice



paycheck, or would you like to have a nice paycheck? When you are hungry, do you want access to food, or do you want food? (Greene, 2015)

This point is especially germane to Lansing's situation. Elementary students in the LSD technically have the opportunity to make music and produce artwork. However, this is different than their "access" to math instruction. These students are provided with sequential math instruction, but they mostly are not provided with sequential art and music instruction. These opportunities exist without integrity. The question then becomes how to address equality of outcome, and I turn more to this question in my recommendations.

### **The Role of the Arts in School Choice**

A rarely discussed issue central to the interpretation of this study's findings involves the relationship between a district's arts education programs and school choice provisions. As discussed in Chapter Four, districts like Lansing have seen their enrollment severely affected by Michigan's "school of choice" provisions, first enacted in 1996. Thousands of students who live within urban school district boundaries elect to attend school elsewhere. While research on exact reasons for pursuing school choice options is scarce (Schneider & Buckley, 2002), professed reasons for opting out of a district like Lansing are likely to include concerns over safety, graduation rates, and curricula. Because public school districts must compete with one another for students, they must consider these potential parental concerns. Unfortunately, competition and choice, when operating in the "marketplace" of public schools, does not necessarily lead to school districts automatically improving their safety, graduation rates, and curricula.

Improvements such as these depend in part on complicated district-level factors such as school leadership, relational trust among teachers, and capacity. These outcomes also are correlated heavily with the background characteristics of the students who attend the schools. In sum, the

competition caused by school choice can lead districts into difficult situations where they must attempt to improve—or appear to improve—even when they lack the tools necessary (Spillane & Diamond, 2004).

The need to appear to improve can lead districts into marketing campaigns. It is not unusual for public school districts to enlist agencies to develop branding strategies complete with media advertisements, slogans, website makeovers, and logos. One can easily see how the Lansing School District has been forced into this corner of competition. The district lacks the capacity, in terms of resources, to compete with neighboring districts but must still present itself favorably in order to maintain as much enrollment as possible. This has led to the district stretching the truth and engaging in “spin” about what it offers in terms of curricular offerings, speaking to the press with carefully crafted rhetoric, and evading tough questions about cuts. As shown in Lansing, the arts can become a part of a district’s marketing plans in times of competition and choice. There seems to be a need to say that arts offerings are innovative even in the aftermath of cuts. The inability of district administrators to speak with candor is problematic for the transparency a community should expect from its public schools.

### **“Shared Endeavor” and Appropriate “Roles”**

The extent to which the two State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education (SEADAE) white papers (2012, 2014) about arts education delivery were discussed and used by participants raises a number of questions. The first white paper, “Roles of Certified Arts Educators, Certified Non-Arts Educators, and Providers of Supplemental Arts Instruction,” (I refer to this paper as “Roles”) was published in 2012. The second, “Arts Education for America’s Students: A Shared Endeavor” (I refer to this as “Shared Endeavor”) followed in 2014 and acts as a kind of three-page executive summary of the “Roles” paper. The authors note that

the purpose of the “Roles” paper is “to outline the roles of the key partners who are responsible for providing an articulated, coherent, systemic, and sustainable K- 12 arts education for all students” (Richerme, Shuler, & McCaffrey, 2012, p. 1). The “Shared Endeavor” is a sort of call to action based on the roles paper.

Both papers are unequivocal about how the three groups—certified arts educators, certified non-arts educators, and “providers of supplementary arts instruction” (which includes cultural organizations, teaching artists, and community arts organizations)—should work together. The documents discuss clearly that the basis of a quality arts education is the work of certified arts educators. The “Roles” paper is most explicit: “The primary condition for successful delivery is a standards-based curriculum taught by educators who are experts in the delivery of that curriculum” (Richerme, Shuler, & McCaffrey, 2012, p. 1). Later in the document, it goes further by contrasting the work of certified arts educators and teaching artists. The authors note that while “one-shot” visits by artists are important and meaningful, they do not serve the same purpose as regular instruction. The authors also seem prescient in their concern for policy action that confuses the two:

Policymakers’ lack of understanding about the need for such ongoing, sequential arts education, the need for appropriately credentialed instructors, and the need for high quality assessment of arts learning may lead them to relinquish their responsibility to fund deep arts *education*. This, coupled with a general desire to cut spending for public education may encourage others to instead rely on evanescent, privately funded arts *experiences*. (Richerme, Shuler, & McCaffrey, 2012, p. 2).

While one often hears the lament that research and policy white papers rarely make their way into the hands of local actors, several participants referenced the “Roles” paper. Members of

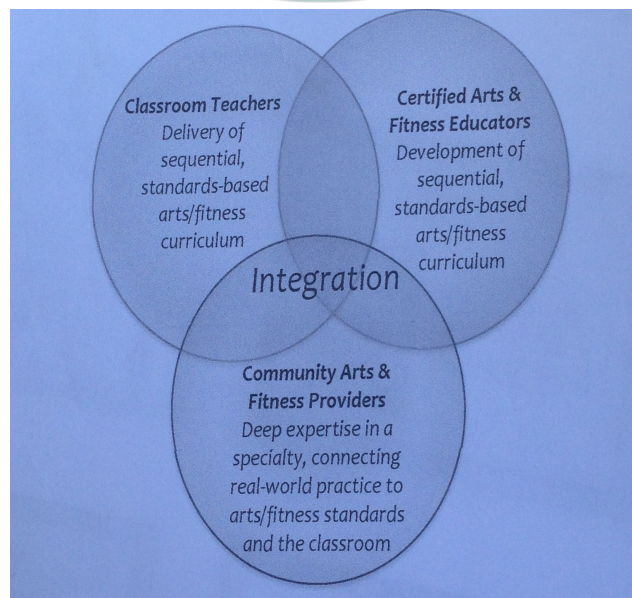
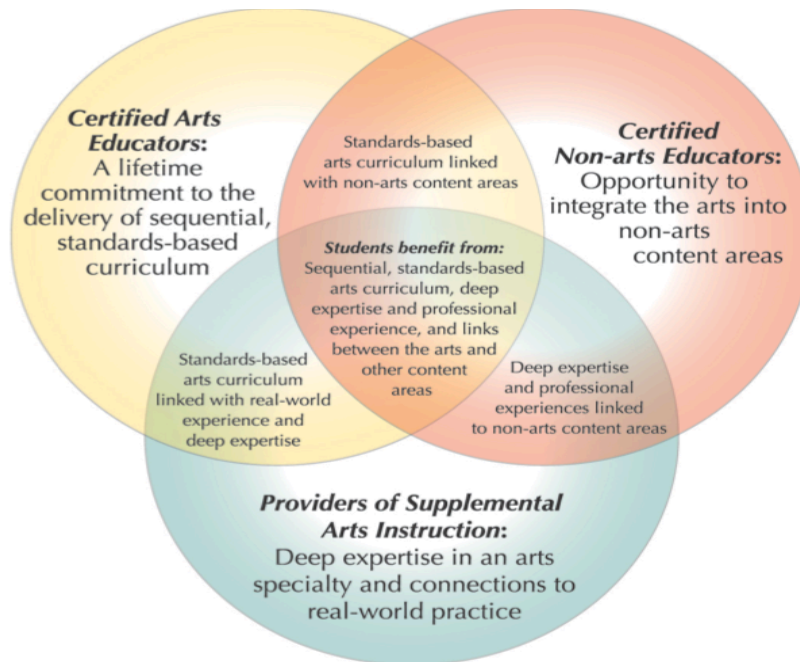
the community arts provider (CAP) coalition said it had provided a basis for their response to Lansing in the aftermath of the cuts, and some even used it to explain their feelings during our interviews. The Venn diagram was discussed, documents show, in the meetings of the CAP coalition during summer 2013. Few participants spoke at length about the paper itself; instead, they referenced the Venn diagram. In sum, the white paper seems to have been successful in providing guidance and clarification for those working to protest Lansing's actions.

Explicitness of the documents notwithstanding, the Lansing School District's co-opting of the Venn diagram shows how easy it is for the white papers to be used as a justification for very different arts education delivery systems. As discussed briefly in Chapter Six, the DIAF team used the Venn diagram in the flyer they made to advertise the new department. And—technically speaking—the district is not lying about having the three circles intact. Certified non-arts educators (generalists) are present, community arts providers are present, and certified arts educators are present. However, the size of the circles is dramatically different; so much so, in fact, that the diagram loses its original meaning. The DIAF team's use of the Venn diagram begs for stakeholders to interrogate the size and integrity of the circles. Is it enough to have just a handful of certified arts educators, some isolated supplementary experiences, and inconsistent instruction by non-arts educators? Taking a critical stance on the co-opting of the Venn diagram also begs for policy makers to read the accompanying material in the "Roles" paper. The document goes into great detail on differences in expertise and preparation of the different players and makes meaningful distinctions between arts education and arts enrichment/entertainment. In sum, the diagram is not enough on its own—it needs to be carefully "unpacked." See Figure 2 for a comparison of the SEADAE Venn diagram with the DIAF Venn diagram.

There also is no certainty that people agree on the roles described in the white papers. This study's findings make it clear that perspective matters: generalist teachers may or may not feel that they can handle arts instruction on their own. Teaching artists vary in their support for certified arts educators and may feel confident delivering instruction. There are also a number of examples nationally of "arts-focused" schools that have no certified arts educators delivering regular instruction but instead involve arts integration coordinators, classroom generalists, and teaching artists. Even the representative from Americans for the Arts described the group as being "agnostic" on who delivers the instruction. In other words, agreement on the roles paper may not be uniform.

It also is fascinating to examine the correlations between a district's socioeconomic demographics and the parts of the Venn diagram they embrace. As discussed earlier in this section, the general perception of Lansing versus its neighboring suburban districts is that its arts programs are lacking. Several of the wealthier suburban districts are considered to have flourishing arts programs. But does this mean that they embrace the Venn diagram and offer a coordinated experience for students? Generally, the answer is no. Their reputation is based on having consistent visual art and music instruction K-12, and on having excellent performing ensembles at the secondary level. It is not uncommon for these "strong" arts districts to have no involvement in students' arts education by non-arts teachers, and to have few if any relationships with community arts providers. These suburban districts are able to do two things that urban districts like Lansing struggle to do: support sequential arts instruction at all grade levels and rely on families to provide extra-curricular arts experiences. Arts educators and administrators at many healthy, suburban districts are expected to take care of only one circle on the Venn diagram: certified arts educators. This contrast, again, shows the heavy burden placed on urban

Figure 2: Comparison of the SEADAE Venn Diagram and the DIAF Venn Diagram



districts, which ironically also lack the capacity to shoulder an ever-expanding list of responsibilities and accountability demands.

Lansing School District's version of the Venn diagram epitomizes the "hollowed out" arts curriculum. As I discuss later in the recommendations section, this is an important concept that needs more attention. A district like Lansing technically can check boxes for offering elementary art and music, and the permissive elementary teacher certification rules in Michigan even mean that the district is using certified teachers (i.e., "K-8 all subjects") to deliver instruction. But, as shown through participants' accounts of the current state of instruction in the LSD, there are dramatic differences between what students get in Lansing and what they get in most other districts in the area. With DIAF visits occurring four times a year, and instruction by generalists occurring sporadically and seemingly without sequence/standards/supervision, the elementary arts program is only a shell compared with a healthier district. It also is important to confront the beginning of this kind of hollowing out. In Lansing, as I discuss in Chapter Four, the weakening began years before with cuts to beginning instrumental music and policies that permitted non-endorsed teachers to fill specialist positions. In other districts, one frequently sees minor staffing cuts achieved through attrition. An arts teacher retires or resigns, and the position goes unfilled as the district rearranges teacher schedules. This recently occurred in Battle Creek, Michigan (Merchant, 2015). The Superintendent noted that the "program" would not be cut, and all courses would still be offered. Continuing to offer courses, while admirable, can be a kind of "cover" for hollowing out actions.

### **The Role of Teacher Emotions, Stress, and Trust**

Understanding how teachers respond to policy changes is important, both for comprehending the programmatic success of reform implementation and for interpreting the

effects of teachers' psyches and relationships. As shown in this study, the proposed policy change led to (for some educators) anger, mistrust, and debilitating stress. Also, the acts of teacher resistance (e.g., the classroom teacher who throws away DIAF art projects) give credence to the assertion in extant literature that education is a "street-level bureaucracy" (Lipsky, 1980) and that teachers are de facto policy makers (Spillane, 1999). One can also see that classroom teachers' response to the policy change depended on relationships (or lack thereof) with AMPE teachers, suggesting the importance of social networks in educational settings (Daly, 2010).

Far from being surprising, these findings mirror those of numerous studies that suggest the importance of teacher emotions (Hargreaves, 1998; Schmidt & Datnow, 2005), caring (Campbell & Neill, 1994; Lortie, 1985; Noddings, 1984), values and morals (Ball & Wilson, 1996; Joseph & Efron, 1993; Santoro, 2011, 2013), and relational trust (Atteberry & Bryk, 2010; Bryk & Schneider, 2004). When the conditions of teaching change, these factors and others will mediate the acceptance of the changes. Policy-makers' acknowledgment of these factors, however, is not commonplace, as decision-makers may prefer to ignore how teachers will receive change, and may couch reforms and policy changes in what Fineman (1993) calls "emotionally anorexic" discourse (p. 9). Hargreaves (1998) posits that much more is "at stake" in reform than merely changing one's efforts:

Educational change initiatives do not just affect teachers' knowledge, skill and problem-solving capacity. They affect a whole web of significant and meaningful relationships that make up the work of schools and that are at the very heart of the teaching and learning process. (p. 838).



## **Recommendations**

When considering recommendations based on the findings from this study, it is difficult to know where to start. The forces shaping the challenging work of school administrators and teachers extends all the way up to macro-level influences including politics, cultural norms, and other “relatively stable parameters” (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). As a result, recommendations must be made at different levels of policy-making. At the same time, any recommendations must acknowledge the loosely-coupled “garbage-can” model of educational policy-making (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972). Influence and power can be confusing, since while education policy is largely made at the state and local levels, federal policy can “steer from a distance” (Marceau, 1993). At the same time, localized policy acts can be important on a limited basis, but lack the power to displace entrenched values (Koza, 2010). Also, the discourse about arts education often is dominated by “sentimentalized” and “glamorized” advocacy narratives rather than policy-specific suggestions (Smith, 2002, p. 23). Recommendations, therefore, need to be specific and actionable.

### **Strengthen Teacher Certification Policy Language**

When facing difficult budgetary situations and mandated improvement on test scores in tested subjects, districts will respond rationally. Without strong arts education policy, arts curricula will be cut or hollowed out. Therefore, to avoid cuts like the ones in the Lansing School District, state-level policy language needs to be strengthened. First, stronger policy language related to teacher certification is necessary. Arts education should be provided by teachers with subject-specific endorsements rather than “all-subjects” certifications. As with other certification provisions, there always will need to be flexibility for extraordinary situations, such as instances where geographically-isolated districts cannot reasonably comply with rules. However, such

arrangements should be handled through a discretionary approval process. Because the policy language in a state like Michigan is only a few words away from requiring such subject-specific endorsements for elementary arts educators, closing this loophole would not be overly burdensome.

### **Adopt Opportunity to Learn Standards**

During the standards boom of the late 1980s and 1990s, policy makers generally approached the standard-setting process by beginning with content and performance indicators. Eventually, however, the ambitious standards plan undergirding GOALS 2000 fizzled, at least in part because of the controversy over opportunity-to-learn standards (Ravitch, 1995). The idea behind opportunity-to-learn (OTL) standards was that without common understanding of the resources needed for schools to operate, students might be unrealistically held to standards without adequate support (Ravitch, 1995). Proponents saw these standards as providing equality through parity in funding, while opponents—mostly state governors—saw the opportunity-to-learn movement as portending unfunded federal mandates (Ravitch, 1995). Though the opportunity to learn movement never gained full traction, some disciplines—such as the arts—did create such standards. The music-specific OTL standards mirrored previous MENC documents titled, “The School Music Program: Description and Standards” (MENC, 1974, 1986).

To ensure that all students are provided with arts education experiences that have integrity, states and/or cities should consider adopting some version of OTL standards. Whether these are purely voluntary, or part of state aid funding (i.e., through categorical incentives), the adoption would signal that there are minimum requirements that students need in order to achieve content/performance indicators. Exemplars of OTL documents abound. In addition to the

1994 arts-specific OTL documents, several cities (New York City Department of Education, 2008) and states (Michigan Arts Education Instruction and Assessment, 2013) have composed “blueprints” that describe necessary conditions for arts learning. States should follow the structure of these documents in addressing appropriate curriculum/scheduling, staffing, materials and equipment, and facilities (MENC, 1994).

The most important of these adopted standards would be minimum contact time requirements for arts instruction. Forty-six states have already adopted some sort of K-5 arts instructional mandate, though these vary in specificity (Arts Education Partnership, 2014). The most clear mandate would specify that all students receive weekly instruction (or twice-weekly) and also specify a minimum number of minutes per meeting (30-45 minutes if twice weekly, 60 minutes if once weekly). In conjunction with the strengthened policy language on teacher certification, this policy begins to ensure that all students see a qualified expert and are able to build skills and knowledge through sequential curriculum.

### **Broaden the Concept of Accountability**

As a corollary to the last recommendation, another important step would be to broaden and reframe the concept of school accountability. Instead of narrowing elementary school curriculum through test-based outcomes on mathematics and English language arts, the focus should turn toward supporting schools and encouraging rich, broad offerings for students. While sanctions and school reconstitution are still in vogue, this may only be able to be approached through rewarding schools that excel in offering such offerings. An example of this approach exists in the “Schools of Opportunity” initiative (Schools of Opportunity, 2015). This initiative seeks to reward schools that successfully attempt to close opportunity gaps by prioritizing research-based approaches. Selection criteria for schools include maintaining a broad and

enriched curriculum (including arts courses) and ensuring equal participation in advanced courses (Schools of Opportunity, 2015).

The difference between more punitive, narrowing accountability schemes and projects such as this is that these initiatives acknowledge the value of a healthy school environment, both for teachers and students. While Schools of Opportunity currently operates in Colorado and New York, the idea is easily adapted to other states. The initiative asks important questions on curriculum, many of which could serve as a model for other similar projects:

Does the curriculum include a range of subjects, activities and experiences that provide a full, high-quality education? Is it designed with the particular needs of the students in mind? Does it include a rich and diverse array of subjects, including social studies, science, art, music and physical education, available throughout the school year?

(Schools of Opportunity, 2015).

Without adequate state aid, this concept of rewarding or providing incentives to schools that maintain healthy environments and enriching curricula could, however, cause the same kinds of problems for districts like Lansing. Without proper capacity building for urban districts, recognition could exacerbate the enrollment problems spurred by school choice policies.

### **Maintain Planning Time**

Probably the recommendation with the broadest support from participants in this study concerns planning time. Teachers in Lansing, including classroom generalists, former AMPE teachers, and current DIAF coordinators, all agreed that the loss of planning time was a poor decision with negative and unintended consequences. With all the problems that have ensued, it is likely that even the LSD administrators would question the logic of the cut as well. Based on my findings, advancing the option of a planning time cut, which effectively equals a targeted

“specials” staffing cut at the elementary level and across the board cuts at the secondary level (as middle and high school teachers individually assume more class sections or “preps”), seems to be a poor solution to budget deficits. Such a move pits teachers against one another and leads to intensification for classroom generalists (Apple, 1986; Ballet & Kelchtermans, 2009). Teacher morale and health both seem to suffer when planning time is lost.

Even aside from being directly important to the positive experience of students, planning time also is essential to maintaining a sense of professional worth in teachers. For classroom generalists, planning time is essential to becoming a thoughtful, reflective practitioner (Schon, 1983). Planning time during the school day can give teachers time to process a lesson, allow educators to speak with one another about instructional ideas, and encourage teachers to flexibly change lesson plans to pursue “teachable moments.” For the specialists who teach during this planning time, having dedicated time and space for teaching engenders professionalism. Though being thought of as place-savers for “planning time” is problematic, arts teachers must be pragmatic in understanding the scheduling challenges of elementary schools. Approaches that turn over the sophisticated work of an arts education expert to a classroom generalist who feels ill-equipped to teach the arts, or that attempt to encapsulate such work in a binder of pre-prepared lesson plans, play a detrimental role in the de-skilling of all teachers (Apple, 1993).

### **Proactively Build Broad Arts Education Coalitions**

As discussed, participants considered the lack of vocal support for AMPE teachers to be an enabling factor for the policy change in Lansing. Parents and community members did not “turn out” at the board meetings leading up to the contract ratification. There was no mobilization of community arts groups. And once the decision had been approved, the efforts on the part of the community arts provider (CAP) coalition to use any sort of leverage to reverse the

district's decision, failed. As discussed, one can find numerous instances where this type of mobilization of parent and community support did help to delay or stave off cuts to arts programs. The important recommendation, then, is for local arts education coalitions to be proactive in their advocacy work.

Having a proactive arts education coalition starts with relationships. Several participants stressed that, in the period leading up to the cuts, there simply was not a strong relationship between the district and the community arts groups. Without active relationships—between arts teachers and community arts groups, between arts teachers and district parents/booster groups—cuts like the ones in Lansing can be considered, voted on, and ratified before any significant opposition is organized. In an urban district like Lansing, community arts providers and surrounding cultural institutions may need to lead the coalition organizing since participants said that mobilizing parents was difficult. But parent booster groups should not be ignored, and elementary arts teachers should consider building and convening parent booster groups focused on advocacy (Elpus, 2008). Being proactive can be challenging, since contract negotiations are not always transparent. However, public pressure seems to be an important strategy (Elpus, 2007, 2008).

### **Implications for Research**

With the intent of improving our understanding of cuts to elementary arts programs, the purpose of this research was to investigate how and why one urban school district eliminated all of its elementary arts specialists. As I discussed in the review of selected research, this study is needed because of significant gaps in the literature on cuts to arts programs. While we have a number of studies showing the narrowing of curriculum and loss of instructional time for the arts, few studies examine the decision-making process and enabling conditions behind cuts.

Major (2010, 2013) and Coysh (2005) examined the issue from the other side, focusing on how districts decide to keep music programs afloat. This article aimed to examine a decision-making process that ultimately produced cuts. The present study also addressed the aftermath of cuts, which helps to build on previous quantitative research from Burrack, Payne, Bazan, and Hellman (2014), and ties into the research on generalists teaching art and music.

Much more research is needed on why school districts choose to cut or keep arts programs. To extend the findings from the present study, future research could focus on the role of administrator values and how teachers unions represent and view arts teachers. In-depth qualitative inquiry is essential for understanding the beliefs of these key decision makers. Since the public presence of parents and community members seems to be a factor in whether districts make cuts to arts programs, studies could also more closely investigate how these groups function in relation to local administrators and school boards. It may also be fruitful to compare the decision-making process of officials in similar districts. While no two districts are exactly the same, it would be potentially illuminating to view peer district responses to similar pressures.

Future research should also build on findings from this study and large-scale quantitative studies (see Elpus, 2014; Elpus & Abril, 2011; Salvador & Allegood, 2014) that have disaggregated data to illuminate students' access to and representation in arts education. As discussed in Chapter Two, studies on national access to arts education show that upwards of 90% of elementary students receive regular visual art and music instruction (Parsad & Spiegelman, 2011). However, these studies can miss the dismal circumstances and inequity present in many urban districts. Therefore, future research should dig deeper into subgroup access and a comparison of access within states and districts. Also, studies on access to arts education need to probe more deeply to uncover the true integrity of a district's curricular offerings. Statewide

studies such as the Michigan Youth Art survey (2012), Minnesota Arts Education Research Study (2012), and other similar reports conducted by Quadrant Arts Education Research, have made important steps toward investigating district arts education expenditures, staffing levels, and other important details. But these studies can go even further into determining details of teacher endorsement and frequency of instruction. They must also find a way to improve response rates, as the Michigan survey (2012) only had 20% of schools respond.

Future research should also extend the present study's use of accepted public policy frameworks. I found the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993) germane to coalition-building and negotiation process, and this framework may be used similarly in other arts education contexts. Researchers also should consider applying the multiple streams framework (Kingdon, 1995), punctuated equilibrium framework (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993), and others to arts education contexts, as these have the potential to provide a means of organizing and analyzing policy formation. As discussed throughout this study, any use of these frameworks in arts education contexts will be subject to limitations, since they have primarily been vetted outside of education. Local, state, and national arts education contexts, however, have been almost completely devoid of policy formation research. As I discussed in a presentation at the American Educational Research Association (Shaw, 2015), these frameworks can illuminate the development of national arts education policy initiatives such as the securing of "core" status under Goals 2000, and the development of revised national arts standards.

### **Coda**

The artifice inherent in concluding a study such as this is that the real and very difficult work of school districts like Lansing never ends. Urban schools are contested spaces subject to constant pressures and—too often—to "nonvictorious narratives" (Boutte, 2012, p. 516). While



the district's work continues, and the Lansing schools adapt to changing times, the work of arts education advocates, researchers, and policy makers continues. As a representative from Americans for the Arts expressed:

I don't think there will ever be a time in arts education, or in education in general, where we'll all going to wake up and say, "We fixed education! It's done! Okay." I don't think it's a problem to be solved. I think it's a set of values that we need to maintain and pass on to the next generation. (interview transcript, January 20, 2015)

I hope that the work of all parties focuses on the quality of students' experiences and on encouraging growth and flourishing through meaningful experiences in the arts.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

### **MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

November 5, 2014

To: Mitchell Robinson  
208 Music Practice Building

Re: **IRB# X14-1010e** Category: Exempt 2, 4  
**Approval Date:** November 4, 2014

Title: The Vulnerability of Urban School District Elementary Arts Programs: A Case Study

### **Initial IRB Application Determination \*Exempt\***

The Institutional Review Board has completed their review of your project. I am pleased to advise you that **your project has been deemed as exempt** in accordance with federal regulations.

The IRB has found that your research project meets the criteria for exempt status and the criteria for the protection of human subjects in exempt research. **Under our exempt policy the Principal Investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of human subjects** in this project as outlined in the assurance letter and exempt educational material. The IRB office has received your signed assurance for exempt research. A copy of this signed agreement is appended for your information and records.

**Renewals:** Exempt protocols do not need to be renewed. If the project is completed, please submit an *Application for Permanent Closure*.

**Revisions:** Exempt protocols do not require revisions. However, if changes are made to a protocol that may no longer meet the exempt criteria, a new initial application will be required.

**Problems:** If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems, adverse events, or any problem that may increase the risk to the human subjects and change the category of review, notify the IRB office promptly. Any complaints from participants regarding the risk and benefits of the project must be reported to the IRB.

**Follow-up:** If your exempt project is not completed and closed after three years, the IRB office will contact you regarding the status of the project and to verify that no changes have occurred that may affect exempt status.

Please use the IRB number listed above on any forms submitted which relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the IRB office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517-355-2180 or via email at [IRB@msu.edu](mailto:IRB@msu.edu). Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Harry McGee, MPH  
SIRB Chair

c: Ryan Shaw



#### **Office of Regulatory Affairs Human Research Protection Programs**

**Biomedical & Health  
Institutional Review Board  
(BIRB)**

**Community Research  
Institutional Review Board  
(CRIRB)**

**Social Science  
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## Appendix B: Letter from Lansing School District Denial of Access to District



Lansing  
School District

Department of Accountability and School Improvement

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December 1, 2014

Ryan Shaw  
808 Inkster Ave.  
Kalamazoo, MI 49008

Re: Project #1411-13

Mr. Shaw,

I regret to inform you that your Research Request Application entitled *The Vulnerability of Urban School Districts Elementary Arts Education Programs: A Case Study* **will not be approved** at this time.

The district is undergoing several restructuring initiatives and is unable to accommodate research applications that do not directly benefit our improvement goals.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me either by telephone at (517) 755-1041 or via email at [Tiffany.Bunge@lansingschools.net](mailto:Tiffany.Bunge@lansingschools.net). Thank you for your patience and for your interest in the Lansing School District.

Sincerely,

  
Tiffany Bunge  
Research, Evaluation, and Compliance Specialist

Lansing School District  
519 W. Kalamazoo, Lansing, MI 48933  
Telephone (517) 755-3000 • Fax (517) 755-3009

## Appendix C: List of Preliminary Codes

No relationship between CAP and LSD  
Union not representing AMPE  
DIAF chosen politically  
Right to Work legislation  
Two options: cut pay or cut AMPE  
Pitting teachers against teachers  
"Supplement but not replace/supplant"  
CAP publicly take hard line  
Arts Council looks for allies  
CAP Strategy: Leverage  
CAP Everyone on same page  
CAP: Be part of solution or not?  
Change in arts council leadership  
"But the kids won't get anything"  
LSD strategy: contract CAP directly  
Community/economic support for arts/creativity  
CAP Presents at Nat'l Meetings  
Advocate for Endorsed Art Specialists  
"Bless and Release"  
NAMM forum  
CAP Strategy: Public conversations  
Policy language: arts mandate  
Debbie/Yvonne Relationship  
Coalition splintering/outrage waning  
LSD strategy: well-crafted rhetoric  
Confusion about union vote  
ArtServe/Creative Many  
Lack of parental/community uproar  
Families leaving district  
"It's never going to go back to what it was"  
Tough budget-driven decisions  
21st century skills  
CAP Strategy: Develop relationships with LSD  
"Baby steps"  
CT ineffective at arts teaching  
LSD strategy: arts integration  
Policy language: teacher certification  
Students are losing out  
No after-school arts because of poverty  
CAP never stopped working in district  
CAP Strategy: research other models  
Threat of emergency manager  
Sustainability challenges

CAP Strategy: joint projects/giving a little/find new model  
DIAF job /personalities  
Test-based accountability/NCLB narrowing  
Federal grants programming  
CAP Members torn/"caught in the middle"  
Blame the union  
"Where was the arts community before?"  
LSD Strategy: Plan to outsource to CAP initially  
CAP worries about public perception of relationship with LSD  
DIAF meets with CAP groups  
Planning arts PD for CT is challenging  
Separating personal/professional feelings  
CAP: considering capacity issues  
Structural weakening of LSD  
CAP groups angry that coalition out of touch/uncertain  
LSD "calls out" CAP  
CAP seeking guidance from AFTA  
"Roles/Shared Endeavor" white paper & AFTA field guide  
Importance of CAP/teaching artists/community at large  
AFTA guidance: be solutions-oriented  
Advocacy turf war/groups looking at self-interest  
"The Lansing Solution" / cuts spreading  
"Shared delivery/leadership" and "collective impact"  
Subs won't come to LSD  
Ineffective principals/administrators  
Schools closing  
"Release/planning time specialists"  
AMPE not valued/undervalued  
CTs rotate/departmentalize to cover AMPE  
AMPE told to find other jobs  
Union frames in terms of \$\$  
AMPE shunned/tension with CT  
AMPE teachers moved around  
Impossible for CT to say no  
Union/administration "in cahoots"  
Community of Lansing losing out  
AMPE specialists angry at lazy non-endorsed  
Blame the admin/board of ed  
AMPE not optimistic about CTs doing art  
CTs ask retired AMPE for help  
Union has general membership meeting  
AMPE has bad oversight  
LSD punishes those who speak out  
Playing out in public: news stories/social media/board meeting  
DIAF approach lacks integrity  
DIAF is too infrequent

"Hand turkey"/make and take/recipe art  
Not a budget issue at heart  
LSD says parents weren't happy with AMPE  
AMPE teachers struggle with moving/changing jobs  
Ego at play with Superintendent  
Federal grants run out  
LSD does efficiency study  
Union slots CT in AMPE avoid layoffs  
Parents not organized/vocal about cuts  
Principals mad about lazy AMPE teachers  
"They didn't see the big picture"  
CT appreciated some arts teachers  
"Art on a cart"  
"Band-Aid" approach  
Does LSD value/prioritize the arts?  
Arts essential to academics/cognition  
Slow decline of arts programs in LSD  
Magnet schools/advanced tracks  
Dysfunctional district culture  
Teacher evaluation pressure  
Future: bring back some specialists  
LSD lost endorsed talent when teachers moved  
"Parents are stuck in LSD"  
Importance of planning time  
CT dissatisfied with/jealous of AMPE  
"Lansing used to be a powerhouse"  
At-risk kids need arts the most  
AMPE seen as "problem"/pain in the ass  
Union frames with "planning time" not AMPE cuts  
AMPE teachers leave to avoid "bumping"  
Teacher morale problems  
"No one came to help"  
CTs are miserable  
"Can't even go to the bathroom"  
CTs are fleeing district  
Union vote affected by LSEA membership  
DIAF setup is like return to '70s  
AMPE improved slowly from 70s to 2000s  
AMPE tries to advocate with CT ahead of bargaining  
CT regrets decision/vote  
DIAF schedule changes to provide planning time  
Union double-talk about AMPE  
Stipend issues  
Non-endorsed move back into CT roles  
Elementary kids sad about cuts  
"Music is the hardest"

Secondary music enrollment is down  
Secondary music has publicity aspect  
"Get out of Lansing while you can"  
Discipline problems/"hell" or "chaos"  
Layoffs common in LSD  
State funding shortfalls have negative effect  
"School choice is killing Lansing"  
AMPE frames as programming/kid issue  
AMPE appeals at union meeting  
LSD Admin dismissive of AMPE appeals  
"Yvonne values arts and culture"  
Teachers driven to retirement/other jobs  
Union politics  
STEAM schools/programs  
"Innovative approach"  
DIAF: CT ignoring lesson plans  
Teacher stress/medical problems  
LSD future looks bleak  
DIAF: difficult/impossible to write lesson plans  
Federal grants: new ones not pursued  
"Paying lip service" to the arts  
Visual thinking strategies training in LSD through grants  
LSD faces declining enrollment  
Federal grants: not embraced by older teachers  
DIAF uses AI resources from grants  
CTs not confident teaching arts  
CTs say current situation is a disaster  
CT frustrated with union  
Union vote: was it rigged?  
DIAF in classroom in 2nd year  
CTs: some say "oh well, let's move on"  
CTs not working well with DIAF  
DIAF all on same day in each school  
CTs barely doing any arts  
Priority school scrutiny  
CTs doing what they can/doing their best  
STEAM schools get no CAP projects  
Teachers taking sick days  
LSD faces future deficits  
Teachers have sense of mission about Lansing  
"There's no one you can go to"  
AMPE was only reason for some kids to come to school  
DIAF wants to be teaching kids  
Pay cut would have been hard to take  
Bargaining team/negotiating committee: conflicts/dilemmas  
AMPE: many landed in positions



CT: not hard to teach AMPE subjects  
CTs: fully capable to teach arts  
CTs: DIAF is bad/not necessary  
CTs: kids are getting more now  
Union: 85% vote pass rate  
"No one wanted this to happen"  
Union polls its members  
AMPE teachers not all endorsed  
AMPE forced to teach in CT's rooms  
AMPE/CT clash over classroom mgmt  
DIAF frustrated with expectations  
CTs too burdened to do AMPE  
DIAF creates lesson plan binders  
CTs "you can't do it all"  
CT: visual art is do-able  
Admin "disconnected" from what's going on  
AMPE outrage/disbelief over decision  
"This wasn't the only solution"  
Union often offered AMPE in cuts  
"Press play on the CD player"  
DIAF: applied for job for financial reasons  
DIAF: early disorganization  
DIAF: not all endorsed  
DIAF: covers a lot of schools  
DIAF: how will present itself?  
DIAF designed to not be with kids  
DIAF models lessons for CT  
DIAF follows calendar/holidays  
DIAF in the middle of outcry  
DIAF: will we still have jobs?  
DIAF runs PD for CT  
DIAF prioritizes music-making in 2nd year  
CTs have after-school choirs  
Adversarial atmosphere admin/teachers  
CAP: Advocacy on hold/changing because of contract timeline  
CAP has coalition meetings  
CAP groups working in LSD  
CAP/LSD bad communication/icy relations post decision  
CAP: groups have different missions  
CAP: hosted elementary art shows  
Teachers: fear of losing jobs if speak out  
CAP: feeling they want to make \$\$ in LSD  
CAP: frustration they suddenly care about LSD  
AFTA: wants to gather data on access/equity  
AMPE and CAP: hearing about cuts coming  
Future: hope for AMPE?

Insufficient CT PD

AFTA: good national access to arts education

Principals vary in enforcing CTs teaching AMPE

CAP: quickness/lack of clarity around decision

## Appendix D: Codes Mapped by Research Question

### R1: Perception and value of AMPE

- Ineffective principals/administrators
- "Release/planning time specialists"
- AMPE not valued/undervalued
- Does LSD value/prioritize the arts?
- AMPE seen as "problem"/pain in the ass
- Union often offered AMPE in cuts

### R1: Structural weakening of AMPE

- Policy language: teacher certification
- Structural weakening of LSD
- AMPE teachers moved around
- AMPE specialists angry at lazy non-endorsed
- AMPE has bad oversight
- Union slots CT in AMPE avoid layoffs
- Principals mad about lazy AMPE teachers
- "Art on a cart"
- CT dissatisfied with/jealous of AMPE
- Discipline problems/"hell" or "chaos"
- AMPE teachers not all endorsed
- AMPE forced to teach in CT's rooms
- AMPE/CT clash over classroom mgmt

### R1: Rise and Fall of LSD Arts

- Federal grants programming
- Federal grants run out
- Slow decline of arts programs in LSD
- "Lansing used to be a powerhouse"
- DIAF setup is like return to '70s
- AMPE improved slowly from 70s to 2000s
- Federal grants: new ones not pursued
- Visual thinking strategies training in LSD through grants
- Federal grants: not embraced by older teachers

### R1: Budget and enrollment issues

- Threat of emergency manager
- Schools closing
- Not a budget issue at heart
- LSD does efficiency study
- "Band-Aid" approach
- Layoffs common in LSD
- State funding shortfalls have negative effect
- "School choice is killing Lansing"
- "This wasn't the only solution"

R1: School Performance Accountability

- Policy language: arts mandate
- Test-based accountability/NCLB narrowing
- Priority school scrutiny

R2: Mistrust Around Decision

- DIAF chosen politically
- Union/administration "in cahoots"
- LSD punishes those who speak out
- Ego at play with Superintendent
- Dysfunctional district culture
- Union double-talk about AMPE
- Union vote: was it rigged?

R2: Framing/Imaging around Decision

- Two options: cut pay or cut AMPE
- Advocate for Endorsed Art Specialists
- NAMM forum
- Confusion about union vote
- LSD strategy: arts integration
- Students are losing out
- No after-school arts because of poverty
- Union frames in terms of \$\$
- Community of Lansing losing out
- Playing out in public: news stories/social media/board meeting
- Arts essential to academics/cognition
- At-risk kids need arts the most
- Union frames with "planning time" not AMPE cuts
- AMPE frames as programming/kid issue
- AMPE was only reason for some kids to come to school
- Messaging/Rhetoric
- "Supplement but not replace/supplant"
- LSD strategy: well-crafted rhetoric
- LSD "calls out" CAP
- "Roles/Shared Endeavor" white paper & AFTA field guide
- LSD says parents weren't happy with AMPE
- "Yvonne values arts and culture"
- "Innovative approach"

R2: LSD/CAP Negotiations

- No relationship between CAP and LSD
- CAP publicly take hard line
- Arts Council looks for allies
- CAP Strategy: Leverage
- CAP Everyone on same page
- CAP: Be part of solution or not?
- Change in arts council leadership

- "But the kids won't get anything"
- LSD strategy: contract CAP directly
- Community/economic support for arts/creativity
- CAP Presents at Nat'l Meetings
- "Bless and Release"
- CAP Strategy: Public conversations
- Debbie/Yvonne Relationship
- Coalition splintering/outrage waning
- ArtServe/Creative Many
- "It's never going to go back to what it was"
- CAP Strategy: Develop relationships with LSD
- "Baby steps"
- CAP Strategy: research other models
- CAP Strategy: joint projects/giving a little/find new model
- CAP Members torn/"caught in the middle"
- "Where was the arts community before?"
- LSD Strategy: Plan to outsource to CAP initially
- CAP: considering capacity issues
- CAP groups angry that coalition out of touch/uncertain
- CAP seeking guidance from AFTA
- Importance of CAP/teaching artists/community at large
- AFTA guidance: be solutions-oriented
- Advocacy turf war/groups looking at self-interest
- "The Lansing Solution" / cuts spreading
- "Shared delivery/leadership" and "collective impact"
- DIAF in the middle of outcry
- CAP: Advocacy on hold/changing because of contract timeline
- CAP has coalition meetings
- CAP/LSD bad communication/icy relations post decision
- CAP: groups have different missions
- CAP: hosted elementary art shows
- CAP: feeling they want to make \$\$ in LSD
- CAP: frustration they suddenly care about LSD
- AFTA: wants to gather data on access/equity
- AFTA: good national access to arts education
- CAP: quickness/lack of clarity around decision

## R2: Coalitions and Relationships

- Union not representing AMPE
- Pitting teachers against teachers
- Tough budget-driven decisions
- Blame the union
- Union has general membership meeting
- Bargaining team/negotiating committee: conflicts/dilemmas
- AMPE and CAP: hearing about cuts coming

- Coalitions: AMPE
  - AMPE told to find other jobs
  - AMPE shunned/tension with CT
  - "They didn't see the big picture"
  - AMPE tries to advocate with CT ahead of bargaining
  - AMPE appeals at union meeting
  - LSD Admin dismissive of AMPE appeals
  - AMPE outrage/disbelief over decision
- Coalitions: Union
  - Union vote affected by LSEA membership
  - Union politics
  - Union: 85% vote pass rate
  - Union polls its members
- Coalitions: Parents/Community Groups
  - Lack of parental/community uproar
  - Parents not organized/vocal about cuts
  - "No one came to help"
- Coalitions: LSD (Admin & BOE)
  - Blame the admin/board of ed
  - Admin "disconnected" from what's going on
- Coalitions: CTs
  - Impossible for CT to say no
  - CT appreciated some arts teachers
  - CT frustrated with union
  - CTs: some say "oh well, let's move on"
  - Pay cut would have been hard to take
  - "No one wanted this to happen"

#### R2: External Perturbations

- Right to Work legislation
- EAA
- Emergency Manager

#### R3: Continuing Financial Problems and Worsening Perceptions of LSD

- Families leaving district
- Future: bring back some specialists
- "Parents are stuck in LSD"
- Secondary music enrollment is down
- LSD future looks bleak
- LSD faces declining enrollment
- LSD faces future deficits
- Future: hope for AMPE?

#### R3: The DIAF in Years 1 and 2

- DIAF job /personalities
- DIAF meets with CAP groups
- Separating personal/professional feelings

- DIAF approach lacks integrity
- DIAF is too infrequent
- DIAF schedule changes to provide planning time
- DIAF: difficult/impossible to write lesson plans
- "Paying lip service" to the arts
- DIAF in classroom in 2nd year
- CTs not working well with DIAF
- DIAF all on same day in each school
- DIAF wants to be teaching kids
- CTs: DIAF is bad/not necessary
- DIAF frustrated with expectations
- DIAF creates lesson plan binders
- DIAF: applied for job for financial reasons
- DIAF: early disorganization
- DIAF: not all endorsed
- DIAF: covers a lot of schools
- DIAF: how will present itself?
- DIAF designed to not be with kids
- DIAF models lessons for CT
- DIAF follows calendar/holidays
- DIAF: will we still have jobs?
- DIAF runs PD for CT
- DIAF prioritizes music-making in 2nd year

### R3: Where are AMPE now?

- AMPE teachers struggle with moving/changing jobs
- LSD lost endorsed talent when teachers moved
- AMPE teachers leave to avoid "bumping"
- Non-endorsed move back into CT roles
- Teachers driven to retirement/other jobs
- AMPE: many landed in positions

### R3: Magnet Programs

- Magnet schools/advanced tracks
- STEAM schools/programs

### R3: CTs Teaching AMPE

- CT ineffective at arts teaching
- Planning arts PD for CT is challenging
- CTs rotate/departmentalize to cover AMPE
- AMPE not optimistic about CTs doing art
- CTs ask retired AMPE for help
- "Hand turkey"/make and take/recipe art
- "Music is the hardest"
- DIAF: CT ignoring lesson plans
- CTs not confident teaching arts
- CTs barely doing any arts

- CTs doing what they can/doing their best
- CT: not hard to teach AMPE subjects
- CTs: fully capable to teach arts
- CTs: kids are getting more now
- CTs too burdened to do AMPE
- CTs "you can't do it all"
- CT: visual art is do-able
- "Press play on the CD player"
- CTs have after-school choirs
- Insufficient CT PD
- Principals vary in enforcing CTs teaching AMPE

R3: CAP Involvement

- CAP never stopped working in district
- Sustainability challenges
- CAP worries about public perception of relationship with LSD
- STEAM schools get no CAP projects
- CAP groups working in LSD

R3: CTs have it tough

- Subs won't come to LSD
- Teacher evaluation pressure
- Importance of planning time
- Teacher morale problems
- CTs are miserable
- "Can't even go to the bathroom"
- CTs are fleeing district
- CT regrets decision/vote
- Stipend issues
- "Get out of Lansing while you can"
- Teacher stress/medical problems
- CTs say current situation is a disaster
- Teachers taking sick days
- Teachers have sense of mission about Lansing
- "There's no one you can go to"
- Adversarial atmosphere admin/teachers
- Teachers: fear of losing jobs if speak out



## Appendix E: Statement from the Arts Council of Greater Lansing

Dear Members,

You may have followed recent events regarding the Lansing School District and the private contract negotiations to cut as many as 87 teachers, many of whom are certified to teach art, music, and physical education to elementary students. You may have also learned that Lansing School District representatives decided to take these actions as a part of a deficit reduction plan, and that, according to the Lansing State Journal and Michigan Radio, the district's plan is not to eliminate art and music, but to "[redesign the PE, art and music program](#)" for elementary children. A part of this plan is to contract services to community artists and to take "[community arts programs and put them in the schools, rather than have a lot of uncertified art and music teachers](#)".

While we at the Arts Council of Greater Lansing respect the difficult financial circumstances facing the Lansing School District, it is critically important to understand that the actions and statements from the district have come without any prior input from the Arts Council or the mid-Michigan arts and cultural community. We were never contacted regarding a potential restructuring plan involving the arts community, nor involved in the decision to eliminate the district's certified art, music, or physical education positions. In fact, we learned of the district's plans in exactly the same way as the public--through the local media. While the programs provided by the mid-Michigan arts and cultural community are of high-quality and there is certainly a role for the arts community to play in providing supplemental arts education programs to area youth, it is careless to think that these community programs could supplant arts and music curricula in the Lansing elementary schools. We believe the elimination of any highly qualified art and music educators to be unacceptable and the lack of a transparent and democratic process leading to such an important curriculum decision to be irresponsible.

According to the [recent report released by the State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education \(SEADAE\)](#), there are important distinctions between certified arts educators, certified non-arts educators, and supplemental art providers. It states, "Certified arts educators, as 'highly qualified' members of the school faculty, are responsible and accountable for the ongoing achievement of their students. This sense of--and in many cases, formal implementation of--direct accountability for student success is missing from systems that lack certified educators." Regarding certified non-arts educators, the report states, "Although many certified non-arts educators feel a commitment to the arts, they typically have limited arts expertise." Supplemental arts providers, according to the study, can provide the "connection to the 'real world' of commercial and vocational art," but "have limited understanding of school practices and the school curriculum." Although the roles of each of these educators are very different, it is important that all work together synergistically, with certified arts educators in the schools serving as the cornerstones. I encourage you to read more about these very important distinctions by reviewing the report.

While the district claims that they are not eliminating the arts, just its specialized teachers, they are opting for a short-term budget fix, crippling their ability to address long-term high academic performance and the skills necessary to compete in the new economy. [Research shows](#) that arts in the schools advance students' motivation to learn, reduce dropout rates, and increase community volunteerism. Furthermore, a strong standards-based arts education promotes critical thinking, a skill necessary in the new economy. According to the [Land Policy Institute at Michigan State University](#), the new economy is a "knowledge economy" and is based on "who develops and enhances human capital best, and such places will become attractive to knowledge-based enterprises." For several years the Arts Council and many regional partners as a part of a collaborative [Cultural Economic Development Plan](#) have focused on strategies in the wake of the new economy. We believe a strong, healthy arts and cultural environment is key to this success, and a major component of it must include equitable access to high-quality, sequential arts instruction

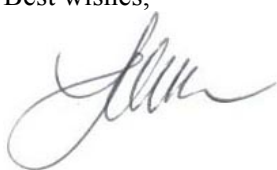
provided by certified art and music educators in our schools. Not only do our youth deserve access to high-quality, standards-based arts and music, but our region's long-term health depends on them if we want to remain economically and globally competitive.

While we don't yet know what the next steps of the Lansing School District will be, we do know that the decisions of the district have impacted not only our children and our community, but our national image. During the [Arts Education Partnership](#) Conference held in Washington, D.C. on April 4-5, the Lansing School District's actions were discussed in multiple times, including in a session titled, "Playing Well With Others: Understanding Each Partner's Optimal Role in Arts Education". Additionally, our national arts advocacy organization, [Americans for the Arts](#), directly contacted us to learn more about the issue after hearing about it at the conference and from other national sources, including the [National Association for Music Education](#).

This is national [Arts Advocacy](#) Week, and in honor of that, we want to thank each of you for your continued commitment to this issue. We hope that by sharing this important information, we can persuade the Lansing School District to reconsider its decision and understand why these recent actions are so devastating to our youth and to the growth of our region.

We will continue to keep you informed on the matter and ask that you keep in contact with us as well. Please don't hesitate to share your thoughts with me by emailing me at [leslie@lansingarts.org](mailto:leslie@lansingarts.org).

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Leslie', with a stylized, flowing script.

Leslie Donaldson, Executive Director  
Arts Council of Greater Lansing

## Statement Regarding Proposed Cuts to Art, Music and Physical Education in the Lansing School District

March 25, 2013

***Music teachers broaden learning on many levels. In response to the Lansing School District's recent announcement, the College of Music would like to offer some perspective.***

The recent decision by the Lansing School Board and Superintendent Yvonne Caamal Canul to cut music, art and physical education elementary teaching positions from the budget next year is disappointing. As leaders of Michigan State University's College of Music, we believe children in our urban schools deserve the same access to high quality music instruction, provided by certified music teachers, that their peers in the suburbs receive.

Students in Lansing will lose competitive ground due to the absence of the cognitive, kinesthetic and psychomotor development represented by the long-term, sequential study of music. This, in turn, will make Lansing a less desirable place for families with children to live.

While we understand the budget constraints faced by all of the state's educational institutions, the decision to bring in musicians from the community occasionally to engage with students is no more a substitute for a comprehensive music education than bringing in mathematicians periodically would be considered an appropriate math education.

We strongly support Lansing's music teachers and urge the Superintendent and the Lansing School Board to reconsider their decision, which negatively affects the quality of learning for Lansing's

children in significant ways.

Mitchell Robinson, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor and Chair of Music Education  
Michigan State University

Rhonda Buckley  
Associate Dean for Outreach and Engagement  
Executive Director, Community Music School  
Michigan State University

James Forger  
Dean, College of Music  
Michigan State University

## Appendix G: Superintendent Caamal Canul's NAMM Forum Speech

September 30, 2013

Many districts in Michigan are suffering from decreasing enrollment, Michigan alone has lost over 25,000 students in the last three years and therefore reduced revenues. We have to make some very difficult and painful decisions about what we can provide our students beyond the core curriculum mandated through testing. This requires us to think differently about how we have provided our students learning options that have existed in the past.

Just so you know about me a little personally, I was raised in Latin America. My father was a cultural attaché responsible for giving out Fulbright scholarships in Brazil, Mexico, and Chile. And I've had the pleasure of sitting at the feet of famous opera stars, and pianists, and artists—visual, performing—since the age of five. My bachelors degree is in speech and theater and even in 1973 when I was looking for a teaching job in my specialty, they were hard to find. In fact so hard to find I had to go back to college and get a degree in elementary education where there were plentiful jobs. I guess there is no “act three” for theatre people—never finish the play, do you? Never open up options for the younger crew [laughs].

I'm an artist at heart. I have a home filled with artwork from around the world. If you come to my office, you'll see a place that is a comfy home where art adorns every wall, nook, and cranny. Even my husband came to the U.S. on a visa only granted for special talent. He's a traditional Mayan woodcarver. So I personally am very committed to the arts as a way to enrich and broaden our lives.

Fortunately for Lansing, we have a wonderfully rich artistic community. Given our economic conditions, we thought long and hard about how to offer our elementary children new and different ways of enjoying and learning about the arts and physical fitness. And while our innovative approach is still in its infancy, we feel very confident that the program will support our efforts and join us in designing a model program that involves professional artists, classroom teachers, and specialists in the area of arts and physical education. I think today's event is a step in that direction. There's always a saying—there's a saying that I have always loved. It's from a book called *The Quotable Woman*. It's by Edna Ferber. “Living the past is a dull and lonely business. Looking back strains the neck muscles, causes you to bump into people not going your way.” Thank you for being here with us today, welcome to the Lansing School District, and as my hero would say, “Let's give peace a chance.”

## Appendix H: Department of Innovative Arts and Fitness (DIAF) Flyer

### Lansing School District Innovative Arts and Fitness Department

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Creating a Culture of Caring by developing lessons that promote a positive environment of mutual respect; a Culture of Collaboration where extensive partnerships with a wide variety of stakeholders invigorate and energize our school community; and a Culture of Excellence where each student is provided innovative arts and fitness learning experiences that advocate for 21<sup>st</sup> century readiness.

The diagram consists of three overlapping circles. The top-left circle is labeled 'Classroom Teachers' and describes the 'Delivery of sequential, standards-based arts/fitness curriculum'. The top-right circle is labeled 'Certified Arts & Fitness Educators' and describes the 'Development of sequential, standards-based arts/fitness curriculum'. The bottom circle is labeled 'Community Arts & Fitness Providers' and describes 'Deep expertise in a specialty, connecting real-world practice to arts/fitness standards and the classroom'. The central area where all three circles overlap is labeled 'Integration'.

- \* Classroom lessons that connect to the common core and relate to quarterly themes of Respect, Care, Cooperation, and Responsibility
- \* Engagement of Lansing teachers through professional learning opportunities
- \* Real-life experiences through connections with the community
- \* Showcase of student work

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