“WELLNESS STARTS WITH ME”: CHOIR TEACHER WELLNESS EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

By

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ABSTRACT

"WELLNESS STARTS WITH ME": CHOIR TEACHER WELLNESS EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

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The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of choir teachers in a Collaborative Teacher Study Group (CTSG) as they met to discuss wellness in music education and collaborated to include principles and strategies of wellness in their teaching amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Research questions included (1) How did CTSG members describe their perceptions and experiences of wellness in music education? (2) How did CTSG experiences impact participants' professional practice? (3) How did CTSG experiences impact participants' perceptions and expectations of wellness in music education?

This instrumental case study examined the case of one CTSG comprised of five choral music educators. As the COVID-19 pandemic affected nearly every aspect of teacher and student wellness, the context of COVID-19 was of special interest. I began data collection with two preliminary interviews in July, wherein participants shared their teaching histories, philosophies, and styles, discussed the impacts of COVID-19 on their teaching and personal lives, and suggested wellness discussion topics for CTSG meetings. The CTSG then met virtually for seven meetings during the months of August and September of 2020. Participants completed weekly check-ins through November and took part in one final interview in November of 2020.

Participants shared a desire for wellness resources, displayed eagerness to implement wellness plans for self and students, and perceived a toll on their mental health due to the ever-present uncertainty of teaching conditions during COVID-19. The CTSG served as a place of community, commiseration, and collaboration, as participants studied wellness topics such as

self-care, boundaries, emotional endurance, social and emotional learning, mindfulness, physical wellness, and music as wellness. Teachers workshopped and collaborated on policies, classroom expectations, lesson plans, and personal wellness plans which they then implemented in their classrooms and personal lives.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

On Wednesday, March 11, 2020, I awoke to reports of Ohio schools closing due to COVID-19, then a mysterious flu-like disease that had caused sickness and death of unprecedented proportions in China and Italy and was making its way to the Midwest. As I drove to Michigan State University that morning for my eight o'clock class, I could not help but wonder when our governor would follow suit and announce school closures. I arrived to anxious energies and frantic questions from the undergraduate students in the class: Would we have our concert this weekend? What will happen to senior recitals? Certainly, graduating students would still be able to walk at commencement, right?

Immediately following class, *the email* from administration arrived. We were to take our belongings and leave campus by noon; all classes would go online until at least finals week at the end of April. Although I was confident my classmates and I were equipped with the technology and support to spend five weeks in quarantine, I began thinking about all of the music teachers and students with whom I had interacted over the past eight years. How would they survive this time? What would music education look like if K-12 schools shut down, too? Would teachers and students have the resources and wherewithal to continue teaching and learning remotely?

At the time, "social distancing" was a new concept being thrown around on the news and social media. The idea was that we were to keep social interactions to a minimum and distance ourselves from all people except our immediate family. My husband and I immediately, albeit begrudgingly, began abiding to the principles of social distancing, but quickly noticed that some of our neighbors and family members did not seem to be taking it too seriously. To some it was a temporary and unnecessary annoyance, but to others it was a necessary life-saving tactic. As I considered my friends and colleagues in the education community, I wondered—how were

music teachers or directors supposed to keep their students or musicians socially distanced, healthy, and safe while in a classroom or rehearsal setting? Would music teachers need to fundamentally change their practice in order to slow the spread of this disease? If any changes occurred, what sort of issues of wellness would music educators be required to interact with on a daily basis within their new reality brought on by COVID-19? As I began this dissertation project in July of 2020, I was four months into social distancing and did not see clear answers to many of the questions I posed above. Teachers, students, and schools experienced a world of change in education throughout the spring and early summer of 2020, and in order to illuminate the context this project, I detail some of their experiences during this time below.

School Closures and Reopening Plans

By March 25, 2020, K-12 public schools in 48 states, 4 U.S. territories, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) had closed their buildings and ceased in person instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Peele & Riser-Kositsky, 2020). School closures affected at least 55.1 million students in at least 124,000 U.S. public and private schools. Responses within states and districts varied, as teachers at some schools were required to distribute printed packets, while others were expected to provide online instruction (MSU IPPSR, 2020). Packet printing, technology and software acquisition for students and teachers, food distribution, and school disinfecting cost some districts millions of dollars and the economic downturn had administrators concerned about budget reductions in the future (Wisely, 2020).

In the early summer months of 2020, plans for the 2020-2021 school year were unclear due to the mounting tensions and differences of opinions between outspoken scientists and political leaders (Blad, 2020b). For example, President Trump called upon governors across the

United States to re-open schools as soon as possible. In contrast, the chief medical advisor on the White House Coronavirus Task Force, infectious disease specialist Dr. Anthony Fauci, called for extreme caution and warned that reopening schools too soon and without vaccinations could lead to new outbreaks. Although some districts declared their intent to reopen in the fall, others offered an assortment of options including socially distanced in-person classes, mostly on-line offerings, or a combination of the two.

Bailey and Hess (2020) proposed that amidst such uncertainty, state and local school leaders needed to work together to address a variety of broad issues. In order to effectively approach the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, the authors discussed the importance of community coordination, communication, regulatory flexibility, and privacy protections. School leaders would have to reconsider school operations with regard to transportation, meals, and public health accommodations. Whole-child supports would need to be in place to support social emotional learning (SEL) and mental health concerns. Additionally, districts had to prepare for school personnel issues like protecting vulnerable personnel populations, modifying teacher certification requirements, and preparing for staffing challenges; for academic issues including continuity of learning, schedules and learning time, and assessing students' needs; and for distance learning issues including home connectivity and professional development. Bailey and Hess's framework for re-opening was thorough and intensive, but the unknown variables of the pandemic left many questions for students, teachers, and school leaders.

In the late spring of 2020, educational leaders looked for insights as to what "back to school" might look like in the fall of 2020 by examining the practices of schools that were reopening world-wide (Blad, 2020a; Borowski, 2020; Kamentz, 2020). Schools in China required returning students to wear protective face masks and monitored student body

temperatures through camera technology. Students in Germany took final exams at spaced out desks in gymnasiums wearing face masks after being greeted with hand disinfectant at the door. Students in Madagascar were required to drink an herbal extract before entering their school buildings (Borowski, 2020). Some small schools in states with low reported instances of coronavirus like Montana and Idaho reopened in the spring of 2020 with modifications like shortened school days, shortened passing periods, and cancelled assemblies (Blad, 2020a; Kamentz, 2020).

Districts in states across the nation found themselves strategizing for a variety of scenarios regarding back to school in the Fall of 2020 while considering suggestions from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), governors, and other politicians, (Gonser, 2020; Kamenetz, 2020). For example, the Kentucky Department of Education encouraged local school districts to plan for multiple scenarios regarding back to school in the fall (Marsee, 2020). The Governor and Lieutenant Governor of Kentucky asked districts to plan for a July start, a traditional start, and a late start while also considering a regular opening or an adjusted opening with closed buildings, staff shortages, or social distancing measures. Meanwhile, superintendents in other states like Maryland and Washington focused their energies on strengthening remote learning capabilities as they prepared for full-time or part-time online learning (Gonser, 2020).

Guidelines from the CDC introduced additional considerations for K-12 schools in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19 (CDC, 2020b). Considerations included personal prevention practices like handwashing, wearing cloth face coverings, and staying home while sick as well as principles of maintaining healthy environments like cleaning and disinfection, ventilation, and modified layouts. All of these suggestions come with a cost though: Columbus City Schools in Ohio predicted they would need to spend $20 million on face masks, $10 million

on hand sanitizer, and $25 million on computers for distance learning in the fall (Richards, 2020). Costs like these, along with potentially massive state budget cuts to school funding, left many districts questioning how they would pay for staff and services during the 2020-2021 school year. Other challenging logistical issues school leaders needed to consider included food distribution, socially distanced transportation, and staggered start times (Gonser, 2020; Kamenetz, 2020).

Educators and COVID-19

School closures throughout the United States in the spring of 2020 required many teachers to adapt to distance learning with little notice or preparation (Tate, 2020). The transition from face-to-face interactions with students in brick-and-mortar buildings to distanced instruction in virtual classrooms or via paper packets led to a slew of issues for many educators. Teachers' anecdotal accounts from news articles, blogs, and social media accounts illuminated some of their primary concerns in the first few months of online teaching, including issues with technology, disconnection from students and continuity of their education, and teacher anxiety regarding student well-being.

Technology Concerns

Teaching courses online required educators to acquire a new set of skills in order to reach their students. Many educators invested hours reading, researching, and finding ways to connect with students in new and engaging ways (Tate, 2020). Teachers searched for support through Facebook groups and professional learning communities, free online workshops, and professional development regarding the use of technology and teaching platforms (Thomas, 2020). During this time, teachers were required to recreate a classroom culture and establish trusting online relationships in new virtual spaces (Henry, 2020). On top of their traditional

responsibilities, teachers also found ways to scaffold student responsibility as they taught students how to craft learning schedules and create appropriate spaces for learning in their individual living situations.

Unfortunately, many teachers and students found a smooth transition to online learning was easier theorized than enacted as they struggled with technology use and coordination, Wi-Fi access, and network issues (Thomas, 2020). The pandemic magnified existing equity issues, especially regarding the digital divide created by student and teacher internet access and technology ownership (Will, 2020). Although some districts were able to provide internet hotspots for teachers and students, Will (2020) reported that more than a quarter of U.S. homes had no access to internet service, while others did not have strong enough service to support the demands of families with multiple internet users at one time. The PEW Research Mobile Technology and Home Broadband Survey of 2019 illuminated digital gaps for low-income and low-education demographic groups and between community type, race, and ethnicity groups (Anderson, 2019). As of February 2019, "92% of adults from households earning $75,000 or more a year say they have broadband internet at home, but that share falls to 56% among those whose annual household income falls below $30,000" (Anderson, 2019, "A majority of Americans" section). Digital gaps like these led to stories of teachers and students sitting in parking lots of buildings with public Wi-Fi or visiting family or friends to access their internet (Lee, 2020; Will, 2020).

Teachers reported a sense of exhaustion as they adapted to their new realities (Gewertz, 2020). In addition to balancing unfamiliar technologies and reinventing lessons, teachers were flooded by emails, texts, and calls from students, parents, and administrators (Schneider, 2020). Many teachers experienced physical exhaustion due to the shift from constant classroom activity

to sedentary computer use (Tate, 2020). Those educators with school-aged children experienced the additional stressor of juggling work demands with their children's school schedules and technological demands (Will, 2020). Although many teachers were able to find ways to adapt to the technology shift through daily schedules and organization tactics, worry for their students remained a common concern (Gewertz, 2020).

Issues of Disconnection

During the shift from classroom to on-line learning, many educators expressed concern regarding three different types of barriers to connection in education. First, they worried about those students they were not able to connect with, those who gave no response to assignments or school communications (Gewertz, 2020; Willen, 2020). Second, they missed the face-to-face in-person connection with their students on a daily basis and grieved because they could not be in their classrooms and with students (Gewertz, 2020; Tate, 2020). Finally, educators worried about the disconnection in students' learning and expressed concern about catching students up in the 2020-2021 school year (Schneider; 2020). The disruption in student learning and unknowns of the future of classroom education were concerning for educators as they virtually interacted with their students.

Teacher Concerns for Student Well-being

Students and teachers alike experienced an emotional toll due to the sudden shift to schooling from home and fears regarding the coronavirus (Gewertz, 2020). From a distance, teachers attempted to care for their students' mental and emotional needs (Prothero, 2020b). In addition to managing issues of personal and familial well-being, teachers were responsible for recognizing signs of trauma, anxiety, and depression in their students (Minke, 2020). From their virtual classrooms, educators sought to provide the sense of stability and comfort their students

had come to expect in their physical classrooms (Willen, 2020). Factors that challenged these goals included technological issues, unsupervised and unsupported students whose parents were required to work from home or at their workplaces, students losing family members to the virus, effects of social isolation, and tumultuous home lives (Prothero, 2020b; Willen, 2020). In some communities, educators had to help their students grieve the deaths of staff members, parents, or students from a distance with virtual memorials, caregiver training, and grief counseling (Prothero, 2020c). All of these issues added to mounting stress and grief and took a toll on student and teacher well-being (Gewertz, 2020).

Some educational leaders promoted Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) as one way that teachers could approach issues of mental and emotional health personally and for their students during the COVID-19 pandemic (Walker, 2020). SEL is an educational framework that encourages learners to understand and manage emotions and relationships, empathize with others' situations, set goals, and make responsible decisions. Competencies within the framework include self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management, and relationship skills (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2017). Proponents of SEL like Gewertz (2020) proposed that utilizing SEL strategies while teaching during the pandemic may allow opportunities for teachers and students to adapt to their new normal through schedule-building, organization, realistic goals, and self-care. The CDC (2020a) encouraged teachers to have thoughtful, honest, and accurate conversations regarding current events as another way to minimize anxiety and fear for students. Through calm and reassuring language and age-appropriate stories, the CDC suggested, teachers may be able to quell student anxieties regarding COVID-19.

Developmental psychologists encouraged teachers to use specific SEL strategies like

psychological distancing and student empowerment to approach student anxiety and trauma due to COVID-19 (Prothero, 2020a). Psychological distancing asks students to interact with a situation as if they were advising or supporting a friend and encourages them to examine their self-talk (i.e., negative or positive internal dialogue). Advocates of this strategy suggested that it might allow the student to create strategies with a sort of compassion they may not traditionally give themselves and determine if their self-talk is helpful. Developmental psychologists also encouraged educators during the early months of the pandemic to empower students with knowledge and strategies for addressing stress and anxiety. When equipped with knowledge about COVID-19, ways in which they can lower their risk of contagion, and strategies like breathing exercises and journal prompts, experts suggested, students might be able to more carefully manage themselves and have an awareness of their social surroundings (Gewertz, 2020; Prothero, 2020a; Walker, 2020).

There was considerable turmoil in the spring, challenging students' experience of schooling. This in turn impacted teachers—both in terms of their ability to work with students and in terms of what their schools asked them to do. School mandated check-ins during the first few months of distance learning in the spring of 2020 allowed teachers and school administrators to gather a sense of student mindsets and responses to COVID-19 (Cagle, 2020). As described in anecdotal accounts, student concerns at the time included feelings of isolation and worry, issues of family stability, and heightened anxiety due to not knowing what might come next (Cagle, 2020; Kreitz, 2020). Students mourned a loss of structure and routine, social interactions, extracurricular activities, and rites of passage (Cagle, 2020; Edgar, 2020; Kreitz, 2020). Additional student worries included lack of resources, food supplies, WiFi, and computers for distance learning (Soto, 2020).

Issues of inequity and access within schools, districts, and communities became heightened and more publicly visible during the nation-wide transition to on-line learning (Schneider, 2020). Factors that influenced how well a student might continue their education through the pandemic included parent educational experience and ability to be home, household resources and environments, and whether or not basic needs were met at home. Educators reported concern for students who experienced tumultuous home lives missing the "respite" that school often provides, and issues of confidentiality and access challenged teacher abilities to provide necessary support (Prothero, 2020b, para. 5). Students with physical and mental disabilities as well as those students who were survivors of abuse faced additional hurdles as they transitioned to online learning and adapted to changes in their daily routines (Cagle, 2020; Prothero, 2020b).

Music Education and COVID-19

Music educators and their students encountered a unique set of stressors as they adapted to distance learning in the spring of 2020 and shared their experiences via blogs and think pieces for local and national news outlets. In addition to managing the disappointments of cancelled concerts and contests and the unknowns for the future of music education, music teachers had to reconceptualize their traditional music classrooms for virtual learning (Edgar, 2020). In an effort to access their students through distance learning, teachers originally trained in ensemble pedagogy were required to adapt a new set of skills, using technology as their main mode of teaching and communication (Cabral, 2020). Although music and educational associations offered an abundance of resources (see NAfME, 2020), music teachers and students found themselves overwhelmed by the sudden and drastic shift in educational setting and teaching style (Edgar, 2020; Robinson, 2020).

Initial music teacher concerns about online music learning included the loss of ensemble community, equity issues regarding access and supplies, and barriers to participation (Edgar, 2020; Lee, 2020; Robinson, 2020). In an article posted on NAfME's website, Edgar (2020) deemed the task of transitioning the social and emotional components of music learning to an online platform "impossible" (para. 1). Similarly, in an opinion piece for *The Hechinger Report,* music teacher Sarah Robinson (2020) mourned the connection and community of making music together. As students encountered new demands on their time as a result of distance learning, some music teachers responded by reducing music assignments and focusing on individual, personal connections with their students instead (Lee, 2020; Robinson, 2020).

In the spring, community and school choir leaders and members worried for the future of choral music making. News reports in early March of 2020 of the virus spreading rapidly in one rehearsal to 52 of 60 members of a choir in Washington State led music teachers, ensemble directors, and musicians of all ages to question when they would be able to make music together again (Dobrin, 2020; Geggel, 2020). In early May, the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), the Barbershop Harmony Society, and the Performing Arts Medical Association (PAMA) assembled an expert panel to discuss the future of singing (OfficialNATS, 2020). The panel of scientists and medical professionals discussed the COVID-related challenges of choral singing including the lack of spacing solutions for eliminating risk, the inefficiency of masks to protect choir members or audiences, and the impossibility of testing large groups like choirs. Without a vaccine and effective treatment, which at that time was not likely to be developed for 18 to 24 months, the group of specialists concluded there possibly would be no safe way for singers to rehearse together for up to two years. Messages from music leaders regarding music participation were

not unified however. While choral leaders prepared for the worst, some band and orchestra groups continued to meet and make music as they received guidance that allowed for playing together. For example, the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra's musicians participated in a study that concluded that as long as orchestra musicians remained at least a meter apart from each other, there was no increased risk for playing together (AFP, 2020). Opposing views such as these left music educators questioning what they would be allowed to do in their classrooms in the fall and if their programs would be able to survive these unprecedented times.

Advocates for music education reform used the transition to online learning as an opportunity to explore and promote alternative paths to music education. In a blog post on NAfME's website, middle school band teacher Meghan Cabral (2020) lauded the flipped classroom as the future of music education and encouraged music educators to capitalize on time at home to create electronic resources that they could reuse for years. Anne Fennell (2020), the K-12 music program manager for San Diego's Unified School District, encouraged music teachers to consider a focus on student-centered work and independent learning centered on creating, responding, and reflecting on music in a blog post on NAfME's website. Nick Ferraro (2020) challenged the traditional need for validation in music creation and performance, and in an opinion piece for *The Hechinger Report* asked music teachers to allow their students to create music of their own simply for themselves. Other adaptations to traditional music curriculums included found household item compositions, lyric re-writing assignments, virtual ensembles, digital recording projects, and video conference lessons online (Lee, 2020; Robinson, 2020). The unprecedented challenges of music education during COVID-19 introduced curricular worries, provoked uncertainty, and exposed philosophical divisions within the field.

Teacher Wellness during COVID-19

The concept of *wellness* has a variety of definitions and interpretations. Sackney et al. (2000) equated wellness with "health promotion" and defined the two as "good health, a balanced life, and well-being" (p. 42). Greenberg (1985) defined wellness more holistically as "the integration of social, mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health at any level of health or illness" (p. 404). Expressing the importance of balance among the elements of wellness listed above, Greenberg further explained that "people can be well regardless of whether they are ill or healthy" (p. 404). Several wellness authors (Sackney et al., 2000; Thornton, 2013) expressed the importance of process over product: "Wellness is not a goal to be attained, but a process to be maintained" (Ardell, 1995, p. 1).

Rachele et al. (2013) conceptualized wellness as a holistic and multidimensional notion where "a person is perceived in terms of their journey towards being the best that they can be, within the environment in which they are situated" (p. 7). As they described it, wellness represents the development of individual lifestyle behaviors that work towards optimum performance and self-realization. Rachele et al. (2013) identified four features distinct to wellness: Wellness is holistic and multidimensional, focuses on lifestyle behaviors, is about action, process, and relationship between person and environment, and is always unique by way of goal and context. The COVID-19 pandemic and resultant changes in education challenged teachers' wellness as it required them overnight to uproot personal and professional lifestyle behaviors, environments, and unique contexts.

The nature of teachers' work is complex and, even without the stressors of a global pandemic, poses a variety of challenges to an educator's wellness due to the elements of caring and emotional labor. Along with social work and health care, teaching is often conceived of as a

caring profession (Noddings, 2012). Teachers therefore are expected not only to be in command of the curriculum, but also to care for and nurture students. In order to become a receptive carer, Noddings (2012) explained, an educator must hear and understand what their students are experiencing. Then, if the educator is interested in the expressed needs of the students, they invest energy in the needs of their students and have to choose if they can respond to their students' needs. If a need is school-related, it is easy for a caring teacher to help; however, Noddings delineated, sometimes a need as expressed by the student is ill-advised, calls for resources the teacher does not have, or is beyond the scope of the educator's responsibility. In those cases, the educator must find a way of maintaining their caring relationship without meeting the needs of their students. To complete the cycle of teacher-student caring, the student has to show that they have received the caring. This reception of care is the intrinsic motivator for many teachers' careers. Rather than be rewarded by money and public acclaim, they look for the little moments of caring.

When these moments of caring expressed by teachers are not received by students or lead to results that are different than expected, teachers may experience what Isenbarger and Zembylas (2006) classified as emotional labor. The authors explained "caring relationships in teaching may be a source of professional satisfaction for teachers, but they can also become a source of emotional strain, anxiety, anger, and disappointment" (p. 123). Teachers must then control the emotional dissonance they feel and "perform" the positive emotions that are socially acceptable in a classroom. Isenbarger and Zembylas expressed that emotional labor does not need to be harmful to teachers as it may lead to both positive and negative emotions. Higgins (2012) summarized this polar nature of the teaching profession: "Teaching can be passionate, rewarding, and even beautiful. But to be palatable this statement must be amended to include the

fact that teaching can be ugly, rewards scarce, and passion short-lived" (p. 215). On a daily basis, teachers can experience the highest of the highs and the lowest of the lows—it is then up to them to take their feelings home and find a healthy way to process those experiences.

During the weeks of distance teaching and learning, educators expressed care and worry for their students' physical safety, nutritional health, and social-emotional well-being and mourned their loss of the daily school activities that promoted their intellectual curiosity, social skills, and understanding of the world around them. Additionally, teachers had to cope with a full life-style change that challenged all of the routines, lessons, and understandings they had established throughout their careers. In short, teachers faced a new set of wellness concerns for themselves and for their students.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected nearly every aspect of student and teacher wellness. Anderson (2016) described wellness as a constant, proactive, and preventative journey that provides balance and productivity throughout a range of aspects of one's life. Dimensions of wellness include physical, social, emotional, intellectual, occupational, and spiritual dimensions (Hettler, 1976). Teachers worried for student *physical* wellness regarding sickness, food acquisition, and safe living environments, while experiencing their own physical wellness concerns ranging from sickness due to COVID-19 to struggling to exercise and sleep. Social distancing immediately challenged student and teacher *social* wellness, and mental health concerns of depression, anxiety, and burnout posed serious threats to student and teacher *emotional* (or mental) wellness. Students' and teachers' *occupational* lives were turned upside down as schools and communities asked them to adapt to a new style of teaching and learning, they were over- or under-stimulated *intellectually* depending on school response to distance learning, and shifting worldviews challenged their *spiritual* health throughout the pandemic.

Traditionally, the music community has primarily approached wellness with a physical health focus. Musician hearing health, vocal health, and musculoskeletal health resources have become plentiful throughout the past twenty years (e.g., Conable, 2000; Jahn, 2013; Klickstein, 2009; Rosset i Llobet & Odam, 2007; Taylor, 2016). Emotional health resources for musicians include those that discuss performance anxiety (e.g., Kenny, 2009; Nagel, 2017), mindfulness (e.g., Cornett, 2019), and social emotional learning (Edgar, 2017). Additionally, musician emotional health concerns are frequently touched on in the final chapter(s) of physical health resources such as the ones listed above. Music education researchers have also examined music teacher emotional wellness issues such as stress and burnout (e.g., Bernhard, 2016; Hedden, 2006; Shaw, 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the lack of resources for music educators and their students regarding the full gamut of wellness dimensions. The music education profession as a whole was unprepared for the transition to remote learning, and strategies focused on musicians' physical wellness became secondary in importance as compared to issues of social, emotional, and spiritual wellness. Although the transition to online learning provided some educators the opportunity to prioritize certain aspects of wellness like social and emotional learning, online teaching also exacerbated issues of music teacher stress, compassion fatigue, work-life balance, and constant accountability. When I began this study in the summer of 2020, there was no empirical research documenting how music teachers adapted their classrooms, curricula, teaching styles, and work habits to better serve the needs of their students and the needs of their own unprecedented realities.

Purpose and Problems

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of choir teachers in a

Collaborative Teacher Study Group (CTSG) as they met to discuss wellness in music education and collaborated to include principles and strategies of wellness in their teaching amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic. Research questions included:

1. How do music teachers describe their perceptions and experiences of wellness in music education?
2. How do CTSG experiences impact participants' professional practice?
3. How do CTSG experiences impact participants' perceptions and expectations of wellness in music education?

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing wellness concerns for music teachers and their students while illuminating new wellness issues within the music education community. Working remotely forced teachers to confront issues of stress, fatigue, work-life balance, and accountability while learning how to navigate a new mode of education and finding ways to care for and interact with their students from afar. Additionally, music teachers had to balance the fears of the unknown regarding the futures of their programs and professions.

In this review of literature, I draw upon music education literature to illustrate the concept of wellness and the ways in which music educators have interacted with wellness. I begin by discussing the role of wellness in music education. Then, I detail the ways in which music education researchers have approached each of the six interdependent elements of wellness according to Hettler's (1976) framework of wellness, highlighting and discussing topics of wellness that are missing from the music education research literature throughout. After a brief review of the literature on collaborative teacher study groups, I conclude by discussing how gaps in the literature lead to the need for my study and by considering the ways in which this review of the literature informed this dissertation project.

Wellness Dialogues in Music Education

Much of the literature on wellness for music educators has focused on resources for music educators who wish to address musicians' wellness either for themselves or for their students. Musicians' wellness authors have addressed essential knowledge of the musicians' body (Conable, 2000; Rosset i Llobet & Odam, 2007), fundamental wellness skills for performers (Klickstein, 2009), and ways for music educators to teach healthy musicianship to their students (Taylor, 2016). Musicians wishing to enhance their wellness in specific ways may

access resources regarding specific branches of musicians' wellness like musician mindfulness (Cornett, 2019), yoga for musicians (Olson, 2009), performance anxiety management (Nagel, 2017), and posture and alignment through the Alexander Technique (Kleinman & Buckoke, 2014) or Body Mapping (Conable, 2000). Practitioner books and articles regarding music student and teacher wellness concerns like vocal health (e.g., Benninger et al., 2016; McBroom, 2017; Salvador, 2010), hearing health (e.g., Chesky, 2008; Shafer, 2008), posture and alignment (e.g., American Federation of Musicians, 2019; Johnson, 2008), breathing (e.g., Boardman, 1996; Durham, 2020), self-care (e.g., Kuebel, 2019; Silver, 2016), stress management (e.g., Bernhard, 2020b), and social-emotional learning (e.g., Edgar, 2017; Varner, 2020) are plentiful.

Other dialogues on musicians' wellness occur at conferences, in professional organizations, and on social media. I have attended and facilitated wellness sessions on topics such as vocal health, Body Mapping, yoga and breathing, and self-care for music teachers at state, regional, national, and international conferences. At such conferences, music educators have created special interest groups for musicians' wellness (e.g., The International Society for Music Education, The Society for Music Teacher Education, and the Ohio and Florida Music Education Associations). Several organizations such as the Performing Arts Medicine Association, National Association for Schools of Music, and College Music Society provide wellness directives for music teachers as well as musicians' wellness resources like articles, webinars, worksheets, and links to helpful websites. Music educators also have access to musicians' wellness accounts and groups on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

Within the collegiate music education community, medical and music education scholars have worked together to address issues of wellness in schools of music. In 2004, medical and

music education professionals met for the Health Promotion in Schools of Music (HPSM) conference held in conjunction with the Performing Arts Medical Association. Following the conference, Chesky et al. (2006) and Palac (2008) shared four areas of concern for student musicians:

1. Neuromusculoskeletal health, covering issues of the physical body, such as nerve entrapments and pain in the muscle tendon units;
2. Vocal health, concerning the sound-producing mechanisms of the human body;
3. Hearing conservation, dealing with noise-induced hearing loss and its prevention;
4. Psychological health, involving such issues as performance anxiety and general mental health. (Palac, 2008, p. 20)

As a result of these investigations, officials of the conference recommended four action items (Chesky et al., 2006). First, they suggested schools of music adopt a health promotion framework as a commitment to holistic health. Second, they recommended schools of music develop and offer an undergraduate occupational health course required for all music majors. Third, they proposed ensemble instructors hold the responsibility for educating students about hearing loss. Finally, they encouraged schools of music to assist students through active engagement with healthcare resources.

Music educator responses to calls for wellness promotion have led to a variety of initiatives in schools of music. For example, Palac (2015) helped to create a Musician's Wellness Team, a collaborative and multidisciplinary group that met regularly to triangulate their knowledge base in an effort to plan presentations and classes, do research, discuss initiatives, and assist student musicians. Through creating awareness, accepting responsibility for helping others, providing access through a consult and refer clinic, and creating a climate that encouraged taking

action, Palac reported, the team made an impact on the local culture of wellness. Palac and Spahn (of Ginsborg et al., 2012) created occupational health courses for their music students. Through the examination of effective use of the body and mindfulness and relaxation skills, Ginsborg et al. (2012) proposed, students may raise their consciousness of injury, improve their attitudes toward health, advance their health-conscious behaviors, and observe benefits in both school and musical performance.

Many resources that music educators can access emphasize the importance of injury prevention. Music scholars in the past twenty years have recognized the threats of performance- and education-based injuries and illnesses (e.g., repetitive stress injuries, vocal strain, stress, etc.) and have rooted their scholarship in creating preventative strategies and cues to action (Ginsborg et al., 2012; Norton, 2019; Palac, 2008, 2015; Sackney et al., 2000; Taylor, 2016; Wijsman & Ackermann, 2019). Champion and Skinner (2008) characterized cues to action as strategies to activate or trigger readiness and suggested that the application of these cues include how-to information, awareness promotion, and the creation of reminder systems. Despite the promotion of cues to action regarding musicians' wellness, Ginsborg et al. (2012) noted that many musicians "seem surprisingly unable—or perhaps unwilling—to prioritize and advance their own physical and psychological well-being" (p. 362). Amongst these musicians, perhaps, a culture prioritizing musician wellness has not yet been created or acknowledged.

Overwhelmingly, musicians' wellness researchers suggest that music educators must lead by example not only to create a tradition of musician wellness amongst their students, but also to keep themselves well (Cherkowski et al., 2018; Norton, 2019; Rachele et al., 2013; Sackney et al., 2000; Taylor, 2016). Wellness in music education is still a relatively new concept in the field, and therefore Taylor (2016) explained, much of what music teachers know about wellness in

music comes from personal experience. This means that much of what music teachers teach their students regarding wellness may be primarily rooted in their own experience. Personal experience alone does not expose a music educator to the gamut of injuries, behaviors, prevention strategies, and wellness enhancers an educator experiences over their lifetime. Norton (2019) referred to this toolbox of wellness strategies found through experience over time as part of a "hidden curriculum"—those things students learn as a result of being around teachers and mentors and in the environments they create. Norton explained that educators should not feel the need to always be or say they are healthy, but rather should model "behaviors that move us toward better health and wellness from wherever we currently are" (p. 16).

When educators model functioning and efficient wellness behaviors, they may better contribute to their classroom and school culture, while encouraging students to do the same (Holmes, 2019). Music educators have the opportunity to impact their students by "highlighting the importance of musicians' health and modeling how musicians can look after themselves" (Norton, 2019, p. 16). Through an open, honest, and transparent pursuit of self-care and preventative health strategies, educators may bring a hidden curriculum of wellness to light while also enhancing their own capacities as musicians and educators (Cherkowski et al., 2018).
In the process of modeling wellness behaviors, music teachers must also understand their pedagogical limits when it comes to injury or illness: "Music teachers should not attempt to diagnose students' ills or recommend treatments—not even pain relievers" (Palac, 2008, p. 20). Instead, scholars such as Palac (2008, 2015) and Wijsman (2019) suggested that educators should build a network of trusted collaborators: professionals to whom one can recommend students within and outside the school at the moment of first consultation. Rather than perpetuating the "cycle of injury and lack of health awareness in students" (Wijsman, 2019, p.

871), music educators might have a toolbox of wellness contacts and strategies prepared for their student musicians.

Pierce (2012) called for a healthy paradigm shift in the field of music education through an infusion of wellness within K-12 and higher music education curricula. The author suggested music teachers adopt a person-centered approach that would add holistic wellness training to the curriculum for musicians and future music educators, as wellness has traditionally not been a part of music teacher education curricula. As the literature reveals throughout this review, conceptions of wellness in music education are segmented, with many authors discussing individual aspects of wellness. Additionally, there is a disconnect between wellness research for musicians and those who teach music and wellness research for the field of music education. Music teacher self-care, however, is a promising strand of music teacher education dialogue that can be holistic. For example, Kuebel (2019) utilized a holistic view of wellness in her conceptualization of self-care as she asked music teachers to evaluate their physical, mental, emotional, professional, social, and spiritual care and provided self-care suggestions for each dimension. Below, I discuss music education research regarding each of these dimensions in order to illuminate the holistic and multi-dimensional nature of wellness.

Wellness Research in Music Education

In this section, I use Hettler's (1976) Six Dimensions of Wellness to frame the literature related to music education wellness research. Each of the elements of the framework — physical, emotional, occupational, social, intellectual, and spiritual — depend on the others. Due to the dependent and flexible nature of the six dimensions of wellness, several research topics (e.g., stress, happiness, work-life balance) could be appropriately categorized in multiple sections of the framework. For example, the topic of stress could relate to—at the very least—emotional and

occupational wellness. Additionally, several studies could be categorized in multiple areas (e.g., a study related to sleep and stress could be categorized under physical wellness-sleep or emotional wellness-stress). With this potential overlap in mind, I organized the literature within the six dimensions of wellness. I placed each topic within the dimension I believed it fit best, while consistently making explicit the ways that research demonstrates the holistic nature of the six dimensions.

Physical Wellness

The physical dimension of wellness refers to physical activity, diet, nutrition, and medical and complementary health self-care (Hettler, 1976). Music education researchers have studied music teacher musculoskeletal health, vocal health, and hearing health. Notably missing from the music education literature regarding physical wellness is research on music teacher sleep, exercise, nutrition, and sick leave habits. A large portion of music education wellness research falls within the category of physical wellness.

Musculoskeletal Health

Teachers are at high-risk for the development of musculoskeletal disorders related to neck, shoulder, and back pain (Erick & Smith, 2011). Erick and Smith performed a meta-analysis of 33 studies that measured the prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders among teachers or reported possible risk factors regarding teacher musculoskeletal health. Contributing factors to teacher development of musculoskeletal disorders included physical fitness, physical and psychological stress, and poor posture. Results from Erick and Smith's analysis indicated that female music teachers were more likely to have problems with their neck, shoulders, and upper back than their male counterparts. The authors also noted the association of musculoskeletal disorders with "psychosocial factors such as high workload/demands, high perceived stress level,

low social support, low job control, low job satisfaction, and monotonous work" (p. 10). This association is an example of how the physical dimension (musculoskeletal wellness) can be linked to other dimensions of wellness like the emotional (stress level), occupational (job control), and social (social support).

Music teacher musculoskeletal wellness can be affected by repetitive actions in the classroom related to conducting, playing instruments, or grading. Fjellman-Wiklund et al. (2002) investigated the perceptions of nine Swedish music teachers regarding important health and well-being factors. The researchers found that although they were generally in good health, music teachers reported experiencing physical and/or mental bodily responses that were time and energy consuming. Participants perceived that the repetitive actions necessitated by their jobs led to "bodily reactions" like "mental and muscular tensions leading to shoulder, neck, and back pain" (p. 8). Additionally, some participants felt like they had few ways of managing or alleviating mental or physical strain, which left them feeling frustrated and exhausted. The authors concluded that music teacher educators have a responsibility to teach preservice music education students about the physical and psychological aspects of music pedagogy for music teacher effectiveness and health.

Work environment is another factor that can contribute to music educator musculoskeletal wellness. For example, Fjellman-Wiklund et al. (2003) examined the relationship between work environment and musculoskeletal discomfort for 208 music teachers in Sweden. Examining aspects of work environment that included individual, physical, and psychosocial factors for each participant, the researchers used a questionnaire that included questions regarding physical work environment factors and demand, control, and support work factors. Results indicated that 82% of music teachers surveyed had experienced musculoskeletal

discomfort in the past 12 months, especially in the neck, shoulders, and lower back. Risk association patterns for women revolved around psychosocial factors like "high psychological demands and teaching at many schools" (p. 36). Risk association patterns for men included low social support, manual handling, and playing the guitar. The authors concluded that prevention strategies and ergonomic interventions may be helpful in lowering risk for music teachers.

Music educator playing posture and playing time can affect musculoskeletal wellness. In a pilot study investigating 47 music teachers from one Swedish municipality music school, Edling and Fjellman-Wiklund (2009) found that 77% of the music teachers participating reported experiencing musculoskeletal disorders during the past year. Those teachers of instruments that require asymmetric playing postures like the trombone, flute, and bowed string instruments "had a significantly greater amount of neck, shoulder, and back disorders (combined) compared with music teachers with a symmetric playing posture" (p. 115). The authors concluded that because of the small number of participants, further studies should include larger populations and evaluate the combination of playing time and symmetric or asymmetric playing position.

Injury prevention is another musculoskeletal wellness concern for music educators. Redmond and Tiernan (2001) sought to uncover the injury prevention techniques that 42 Washington State private piano instructors taught to their high school students in an effort to determine prevention education needs among piano instructors. Using a statewide survey, the researchers surveyed participant demographics, injury prevention knowledge, injury prevention instruction regularly taught, and desire for more injury prevention information. Results indicated that many participants had received injury prevention education, mainly from teachers, colleagues, and workshops regarding playing techniques, body mechanics, and playing posture. Although teachers reported learning about risk factors for injury, strength and conditioning

importance, and basic anatomy, they also reported not addressing these issues in lessons. Participants requested more information on playing-related injury prevention. The authors concluded that music instructors should collaborate with health care professionals to provide injury prevention resources for their students.

The research on musculoskeletal wellness for music educators is limited. As I have not been able to find empirical research regarding musculoskeletal health for music teachers in American public schools, the research I presented above, situated in the Swedish context and related to private piano teachers, is only somewhat related to the present study. Additionally, I was not able to find research from the past ten years regarding music teacher musculoskeletal wellness. In contrast, several researchers have examined musician musculoskeletal health. Examples include Kok et al.'s (2018) investigation of playing-related musculoskeletal disorders for amateur musicians, Kok et al.'s (2015) systematic review of professional musician musculoskeletal complaints, and Cruder et al.'s (2019) examination of student musician risk of playing-related musculoskeletal disorders. Considering music teacher applications of Alexander Technique, Body Mapping, and yoga postures in music classrooms, there is a surprising lack of empirical study of their utilization by or for music educators. Additionally, I was unable to find any investigations of musculoskeletal wellness for specifically choral music educators.

Vocal Health

Vocal health is a concern for many music educators as they use their voices on a daily basis for instruction, demonstration, and verbal feedback (Hackworth, 2009). In a comparison of 659 music teachers' perceptions of vocal hygiene according to level of experience, Hackworth (2009) found that many teachers had knowledge of vocal stress prevention and "rated the teaching profession at high risk for voice disorders" (p. 82). Teachers with more experience were

more likely to rank teaching activities like verbal instruction while students sing, speaking over noisy classroom conditions, or lunchroom duty as more high risk. Mean ratings from preservice, early-career, and late career teacher perceptions indicated that "preservice teachers might have valid ideas about activities' effect on vocal health, but teachers with experience might have a deeper understanding" (p. 83). Hackworth concluded that teacher training programs should embrace vocal hygiene instruction in order to help preservice teachers gain more understanding.

One way music teachers attempt to care for their vocal health is through the use of personal amplification systems. Morrow and Connor (2011) measured total phonation time (i.e., time that vocal folds produce sound) and vocal intensity (i.e., volume of the sound) of seven full-time elementary music teachers with and without vocal amplification. Comparisons revealed a significant decrease in mean vocal intensity, distance dose (i.e., distance traveled by the folds as they oscillate), and total phonation time when participants wore a personal amplification system. The authors concluded amplification is an effective method of preventing voice problems and that teacher education programs should educate students in vocal health prevention and maintenance.

If music teachers do not care for their voices, vocal injuries or disorders are likely to occur. Doherty and van Mersbergen (2017) sought to estimate the presence of music educator voice disorders or complaints, compare results across disciplines, and identify risk factors throughout the music teacher population. Participants included 213 music teachers from the Illinois Music Educators Association. The researchers utilized a survey that collected information on demographics, teaching experience, and voice concerns or diagnosed disorders. A job stress inventory, the Voice Handicap Index-10 survey tool, and the Singing Voice Handicap Index-10 were also part of the survey. Results indicated that female music educators were more

likely than male music educators to have a voice disorder, that older educators were more likely than younger educators to have a voice disorder, and that those who reported voice as their primary instrument were more likely to have a voice disorder. The authors concluded that professional development regarding vocal health should be available not only to preservice teachers, but also to practicing teachers through in-service sessions or through national professional organizations.

Although there is much literature regarding vocal health for music educators and practical resources that promote voice-saving strategies for music educators, many music teachers continue to fatigue and abuse their voices. Schmidt and Morrow (2015) amplified the social and political aspects of vocal health for music educators through their investigation of seven music teachers. The researchers quantified vocal load for the music teachers and compared it to classroom teachers, looked at the effectiveness of voice amplification on reducing vocal load, and collected participant stories through informal and formal interviews and daily voice logs. Results of quantitative explorations indicated that music teachers had a larger average vocal load than classroom teachers, which was significantly reduced when using a voice amplification system. Within the qualitative results, the authors noted a "pathologisation of voice use among music teachers" (p. 118) that has led to disruptive work-related voice fatigue but no preventative or responsive action from the participants. Due to concerns of budget cuts, poor substitute teachers, or a dedication to continuity for their students, "music teachers seemed to view job-related voice problems as something they merely needed to endure, an occupational hazard that needed to be accepted" (p. 119). The authors concluded their article with a call for claiming policy as a personal act of empowerment through the establishment of clear health parameters for music educators.

Emotional wellness concerns like stress have the potential to influence music teacher vocal health (Brown, 2020). Brown examined the relationship between vocal health and job-related stress for 372 K-12 school music teachers. The author used the Voice Handicap Index to gauge how vocal health contributes to functional, emotional, and physical elements of teaching and the Teacher Stress Inventory to determine the presence of job-related stress. Results indicated that participants with higher levels of job-related stress were more likely to report a vocal health issue and that teachers with less experience were more likely to report higher levels of job-related stress. (I will discuss stress in detail in the emotional wellness and occupational wellness sections below). Brown concluded that teachers should be made aware of the correlation between stress and vocal health issues and the possibility of the combination of the two leading to teacher attrition. The author suggested that preventative and remediating steps toward vocal wellness may allow teachers to avoid attrition.

Within the beginning of this literature review, a striking number of studies have concluded with calls to music teacher educators to provide prevention and maintenance techniques for their preservice music education students. Especially within the vocal health literature, researchers suggest prevention and remediation strategies for preservice and in-service music educators. One gap in vocal health research literature is a comparison of vocal use within different music teaching specializations. In other words, do band, choir, orchestra, and general music teachers require different strategies for preventing vocal health injury and maintaining vocal health?

Hearing Health

Another concern of physical wellness for music educators is hearing health. Hearing music and student dialogue is essential in order for music educators to provide feedback and be

responsive to their students' needs. Because of their direct exposure to loud noises in music classroom, without hearing protection, music teachers are prone to noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL), defined by Cutietta et al. (1994) as "the permanent loss of some degree of hearing due to exposure to sound at substantially high levels, especially over prolonged periods of time" (p. 318). The 104 practicing music educator participants in Cutietta et al.'s study took hearing tests that followed standard audiometric testing procedures. Results indicated that 19% of the participants displayed evidence of having NIHL. Of those participants, band directors and males were slightly more likely to be at risk for hearing loss. The authors concluded that band directors should employ safeguards like wearing hearing protection and requesting acoustical treatment within their rehearsal rooms.

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH; 2018), noise is potentially hazardous when it reaches 85 decibels (dB) or higher. Any level higher than 85 dB for a cumulative period of eight hours may damage the hearing mechanism. To put this measurement into context, the Hearing Health Foundation (2021) shared that the noise of heavy city traffic or a school cafeteria is typically around 85 dB, the noise of personal listening devices at full volume is typically 105 dB, and the sound of an ambulance siren is typically 120 dB. Behar et al. (2004) examined noise exposure for 18 Canadian music teachers in an effort to determine hearing loss risk. The researchers used dosimeters to determine continuous noise and school-day noise exposure levels. Results indicated that most participants were "exposed to excessive sound levels during their teaching periods" but that "when averaged over a whole working day, most music teachers experience an exposure that is marginally acceptable" (p. 247). The authors concluded that music teachers held a potential risk of hearing loss and therefore should implement noise reduction measures to conserve their hearing.

Many music teachers are not aware of their noise exposure, and therefore are not utilizing protection for their hearing (Isaac et al., 2017). In an investigation of 158 voice teachers from the East Coast of the United States, Isaac et al. explored levels of and contributing factors for noise induced hearing loss for teachers of singing. Participants completed a questionnaire answering questions regarding singing, teaching, and hearing use experiences and perceptions and participated in an audiometric test. Results indicated that when compared to the general public, voice teachers show a greater prevalence of speech frequency hearing loss, high frequency hearing loss, and objective hearing loss, especially with the older voice teacher population. The researchers also reported an "association between hours per day teaching and subjective tinnitus" (p. 379.e30). Isaac et al. concluded that voice teachers and singing students need to be more aware of excessive noise exposure and use hearing protection.

It is possible that music teachers are not aware of the hearing health risk levels associated with playing and teaching music (Beach & Gulliver, 2015). In an investigation of music teacher attitudes to hearing health and symptoms of hearing damage or loss, Beach and Gulliver surveyed 27 Australian music teachers and gave them a hearing test. Survey results indicated that the majority of music teachers surveyed were concerned about their hearing health, but did not believe they had damaged their hearing yet. Most participants preferred not to wear earplugs while playing music, but would consider reactive measures if they were to develop tinnitus. Hearing test results found 13 of 27 teachers to have signs of hearing loss or damage. The authors noted that the participants "demonstrated a tendency to downplay the risk from their music activities...despite most also saying they were aware of the relationship between music and hearing damage" (p. 8). This "downplay" of hearing risk is similar to Schmidt and Morrow's

(2015) “pathologisation” and acceptance of vocal injury as occupational hazard, even though preventative care tools like ear plugs and amplification systems are accessible and affordable.

Missing from Music Education Physical Wellness Research

Music education researchers have not explicitly addressed the topics of sleep, exercise, nutrition, and sick leave habits for music teachers. Of these topics, I found discussion of only sleep habits as one contributing factor to emotional or physical wellness issues for music teachers (Bernhard, 2016; Manternach, 2015). In their articles about self-care and resilience in the field of music education, respectively, Kuebel (2019) and Salvador (2019) both mention adequate sleep, regular physical activity, balanced eating, and taking time off when sick as wellness strategies. Empirical research investigating these physical wellness strategies might help to bring attention to the personal and professional benefits of physical self-care for music educators.

Emotional Wellness

The emotional dimension of wellness encompasses awareness and acceptance of feelings of self and others and the management and expression of one’s feelings (Hettler, 1976). This dimension also includes the realistic assessment of limitations, autonomy development, and ability to cope effectively with stress. Music education wellness researchers have studied music teacher stress and stress reduction and music teacher utilization of mindfulness and social emotional learning. However, empirical research on music teacher performance anxiety is missing from the research literature.

Stress

Stress is a “physiological and psychological response to a situation perceived as threatening to one’s resources” (Ryan et al., 2017, p. 3). Educator stress often results from

teachers not being able to cope with the pressures and demands of their jobs (McCarthy, 2019). Unique to each teacher and teaching situation, stress can result in burnout and attrition (Ryan et al., 2017). Music education researchers have studied stress factors and stress manifestations for music educators.

Factors that may affect music teacher stress levels include schedule and time demands, a lack of program support, and student motivation issues (Gordon, 2000). In a multiple case study of four practicing music educators, Gordon (2000) identified a multitude of stress factors. In addition to those listed above, emergent stress factors included commute, back-to-back classes, negative attitudes, verbal hostility, and undermining of music programs by colleagues and administration, inadequate program budgets and faculty development, student discipline issues, and incomplete professional development. The author concluded that a plethora of stress factors impact a music teacher's environment and suggest that improved professional preservice preparation regarding lesson planning, curriculum design, classroom management, and literature knowledge may help with the problem. Additionally, Gordon suggested that school leaders should address time management skills and stress reduction techniques.

Many music educators experience stress and emotional tension during their first year of teaching (Stringham & Snell, 2019). Stringham and Snell documented the challenging experiences of one first-year music teacher in the Southeastern United States. Interviews and electronic journal entries exposed tensions and stressors related to workplace incivility, inequality, hierarchical norms, and conflict incited by the participant's co-teacher. Echoing Gordon's (2000) suggestions, Stringham and Snell (2019) contended that music teacher educators must prepare pre-service music teachers for "issues such as workplace incivility, power struggles, gender inequities, and tensions between traditions and change" (p. 93).

Additionally, early career in-service music educators should be prepared to navigate sensitive issues, and experienced in-service music educator need to be aware of these issues and administrators should be prepared to mentor and support new music teachers.

Over time, many teachers learn to manage stress through experience and understanding (Hedden, 2006). Using the Teacher Concerns Inventory (TCI), Hedden examined stress and the way that it manifested for 62 music teachers in one Midwestern state. The researcher surveyed participants once in 1996 and again in 2003. Over time, the results indicated, participant stress levels decreased, especially in regard to time management, work-related stressors, and professional distress. In view of the considerable job stability of the participants, Hedden interpreted that the results perhaps suggested that "the subjects learned to handle stressors more effectively over time" (p. 63).

The research on stress for music educators is limited. General education researchers have investigated stress topics beyond stress factors and manifestations. Additional stress topics include the relationships between stress causes, stress responses, observed teaching behavior, and attrition (Harmsen et al., 2018), beginning teacher stress causes and responses (Harmsen et al., 2019), the relationship between teacher-reported stress, fatigue, and depression and student satisfaction and perceptions of teacher caring (Ramberg et al., 2019), and the influence of teacher's perceptions of school climate and social emotional learning (SEL) on teacher senses of stress, efficacy, and job satisfaction (Collie et al., 2012).

Stress Reduction

I was able to find only one example of empirical research of a stress reduction approach for practicing music teachers. Varona (2019) investigated K-12 music educator occupational stress and burnout levels in response to a mindfulness-based intervention. Ninety music teachers

participated in an online training called Mindfulness Training for Music Educators. In comparison to the 120 waitlist-control group participants who did not participate in the training, teachers who took the training reported significantly higher decreases in responses to occupational stress and burnout. In order to address occupational stressors associated with teaching music, participants utilized coping strategies like breathing and meditation. Although Varona noted that mindfulness-based interventions might help music teachers manage situations beyond their control and manage stress reactions, mindfulness interventions should not serve as a replacement for problem-focused coping and improving teacher workplace conditions.

Although the *Music Educators Journal* has provided several practitioner articles on stress reduction for music educators, all but one of these articles are over 15 years old. Authors have provided exercises and coping resources for stressed and burnt-out educators (Hamann & Gordon, 2000), shared classroom management strategies for reducing music teacher stress (Gordon, 2001), and identified categories of stress like working conditions, salary, public perceptions of teaching, and curricular priorities in schools (Scheib, 2004). Varona (2018) provided mindfulness-based strategies for music educators in order to "help music educators manage occupational stress and avoid burnout" (p. 64). Strategies included pausing to take time, giving full attention to the task at hand or a student requesting time, practicing mindful awareness, looking inward and setting intention, and keeping a gratitude journal. By bringing awareness to classroom climate and personal well-being, Varona suggested mindfulness may allow music educators to "remain present, take pause, and act from a place of clarity" (p. 70).

General education researchers have investigated stress interventions for teachers (Frank et al., 2015; Harris et al., 2016; von der Embse et al., 2019). In a systematic review of type and effectiveness of stress interventions for teachers, von der Embse et al. (2019) found that the most

effective interventions included elements of behavioral regulation and cognitive evidenced-based approaches. Two research groups (Frank et al., 2015; Harris et al., 2016) focused their investigations on interventions for educator stress and psychological well-being. Frank et al. (2015) evaluated a mindfulness-based stress reduction program and its effectiveness on high school educator's stress and well-being. Results suggested that those who participated in the program reported significant gains in self-compassion, self-regulation, and mindfulness skills like observation, non-judgment, and non-reacting. Harris et al. (2016) completed a similar procedure with a yoga-based *Community Approach to Learning Mindfully* program for 64 middle school educators. Similarly, self-reported benefits included stronger mindfulness, classroom management skills, and distress tolerance, while medical measurements reported benefits for blood pressure and cortisol awakening response. The researchers reported that educators found the intervention feasible and beneficial, and suggested that this program had potential "as a strategy to improve educators' social-emotional competence and wellbeing, prevent stress-related problems, and support classroom functioning" (p. 208).

Mindfulness

One definition of mindfulness is the formal or informal "cultivation of moment-by-moment non-judgmental focused attention and awareness" (Meiklejohn et al., 2012, p. 291). Music teachers might use mindfulness in their classroom to recognize their students' needs, give full attention to tasks at hand, look inward at their own intentions and feelings, and to become aware of classroom climate and personal wellness (Varona, 2018). Although there are many mindfulness programs for teachers, the Institute for Mindfulness-Based Wellness and Pedagogy (n.d.), based in Bloomington, Indiana and headed by music educator Frank Diaz, offers the only workshops, teacher certification programs, and other services specifically for music teachers.

Research on mindfulness for music teachers is sparse. The only empirical study of mindfulness for music teachers that I could find was Varona's (2019) investigation of the effects of a mindfulness-based intervention on music teachers' perceived stress and burnout (described above). Researchers have investigated mindfulness for collegiate musicians (Diaz, 2018; Diaz et al., 2020) and mindfulness for K-12 teachers (Braun et al, 2020; Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Collegiate musicians who utilized mindfulness techniques reported improvement in general mindfulness (Diaz et al., 2020) and lower performance anxiety (Diaz, 2018). In K-12 general education, Meiklejohn et al. (2012) found that mindfulness trainings for teachers lowered risk of burnout and emotional exhaustion and benefited children and adolescents and Braun et al. (2020) concluded that mindfulness trainings have the potential to help teachers cultivate prosocial skills like forgiveness, empathy, and compassion.

Missing from Music Education Emotional Wellness Research

Music teacher performance anxiety is an emotional wellness concern that is notably missing from the music education emotional wellness literature. Music performance anxiety is the apprehension and potential impairment of performance skills in a public performance regardless of the performer's aptitude, preparation, and training (Diaz, 2018; Salmon, 1992). Music education researchers have investigated performance anxiety for young musicians (MacAfee & Comeau, 2020), for collegiate music students (Diaz, 2018), and for music teacher candidates (Sarikaya & Kurtaslan, 2018). Researchers (e.g., Diaz, 2018, Sarikaya & Kurtaslan, 2018) have linked music performance anxiety to perfectionism and Diaz (2018) suggested that meditation and mindful practices may alleviate performance anxiety.

Occupational Wellness

The occupational dimension of wellness includes a person's attitudes about their career and hobbies and their personal satisfaction and enrichment in life through the ways they occupy their time (Hettler, 1976). Occupational wellness is reflected in the contribution of individual talents to meaningful and rewarding work. Music education wellness researchers have studied elements of occupational wellness including music teacher job satisfaction and happiness, role stress, accountability stress, and burnout. The topics of compassion fatigue and secondary trauma are missing from music education research literature.

Job Satisfaction and Happiness

Factors that affect music teacher job satisfaction might include support from other teachers, positive school environment, and administrative support (Baker, 2007). In an investigation of early career choral teacher job satisfaction, Baker surveyed 87 early career teachers and 53 administrators. Results indicated that administrators impact music teacher job satisfaction, but that music teacher and administrator perceptions of support are not complementary. Thirteen percent of teachers surveyed indicated that they planned to leave the teaching profession. Those teachers who intended to remain teaching listed factors influencing their decision to stay, including support from their colleagues, positive and consistent school environments regarding student motivation and discipline, and involvement, and support from administration in the form of concert attendance and schedule optimization.

Using datasets from the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) and the 2000-2001 Teacher Follow-up Survey, Gardner (2010) investigated K-12 music teacher job satisfaction in relation to retention, turnover, and attrition. Results indicated that music teachers in general were satisfied with their teaching positions and the profession as a whole. Challenges

to satisfaction levels included large class sizes, less than adequate support for working with students with special needs, and a lack of administrative support regarding non-musical tasks like budgeting, planning concerts, and requesting transportation for offsite events. Those teachers who perceived higher levels of administrator support and recognition, parental support, and control over instruction and student evaluation showed highest levels of satisfaction on the job. Bernhard (2020a) examined music teacher perceptions of three components of happiness (pleasure, meaning, and engagement) in relation to gratitude levels, grade level taught, teaching area, and certification status. Through a survey of 235 music teachers, Bernhard found that participants had healthy levels of pleasure and gratitude and high levels of meaning, but low levels of engagement (i.e., energized focus or full immersion in the task at hand). Middle school teachers reported lower levels of gratitude and happiness than elementary and high school teachers and instrumental music teachers reported higher levels of happiness and gratitude than choral and general music teachers. Happiness and gratitude levels were higher when participants exercised more and were lower when participants worked longer hours or slept less.

Role Stress

Role stress is conflict or tension created by lack of congruence between job expectations, which can lead to feelings of job dissatisfaction and occupational stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion (Scheib, 2003). Scheib (2003) investigated school music teacher role stress and issues that may lead to ineffectiveness, stress, dissatisfaction, and attrition. The collective case study of four music teachers from one high school music department revealed varying levels of stress from inter-role conflicts between personal and professional roles, high levels of role overload due to inadequate staffing, and tension regarding unimportant or tedious low-skill tasks which took away from teaching, planning, and assessment. Much of the role-conflict that participants

discussed resulted from teacher expectations and self-definitions of teaching roles as well as incongruence between expectation and reality. Scheib suggested music teachers should be prepared for the limitations and possibilities brought about by each program or community in order to circumvent role stress. General education researchers have further investigated the relationship between teaching role, work stress, and strain (Mulholland et al., 2013) and relationships between work-related role stressors, emotional regulation ability, and mental health indicators like depression, anxiety, and stress (Mérida-López et al., 2017).

Accountability Stress

One subcategory of stress specific to educators relates to teacher accountability for student testing. Ryan et al. (2017) defines test-based accountability as "the consequences attached to student standardized test performance for teachers, including tenure decisions, provision of performance or merit pay, and influence on performance evaluations" (p. 4). This accountability can lead to high-stakes testing stress, the "manifestation (expression of anxious symptoms) and sources of stress (pressure from colleagues or administrators) related to high-stakes achievement testing for students" (p. 4). Although music teachers are held accountable for student performance in large group and solo contexts as well as in local school performances or regional or state competitions, only Shaw (2016) has investigated issues of accountability stress for music teachers.

Shaw (2016) investigated four music teachers' perceptions of accountability stress in the state of Michigan. Each of the four teachers described experiencing teacher evaluation reforms differently, as they reported feeling indifference, support, opposition, and extreme stress in regard to evaluation depending on their specific situations. Some participants described the challenge of focusing on school-wide math and reading scores within their music classes, which

resulted in building-wide stress and intensification of their workload. Additional stressors included the uncertainty of teaching assignments and schedules, the potential of ensemble festivals becoming included in music teacher evaluations, and the lack of administrator support. Shaw suggested that educational leaders should consider "how combinations of existing and new stressors impact teachers' overall stress" (p. 113) and recommended policy solutions such as music educator-developed workbooks for evaluators, peer observations, and stress management training for music teachers.

Burnout and Attrition

Burnout in an educational setting is a state of exhaustion and extreme stress, in which the teacher (a) loses interest and passion for the subject they teach, the students they work with, and the community they serve; (b) finds themselves unsatisfied by their work; (c) begins developing a negative self-concept and cynicism; and (d) feels a sense of helplessness and low self-efficacy (Kilic, 2018; McLain, 2005; Zysberg et al. 2017). The symptoms of burnout as described by Kilic (2018) "generally have physical, psychological, and behavioral features" (p. 39) and lead to the three interactive results of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and loss of feelings regarding personal accomplishment (Kilic, 2018; McLain, 2005). When these three results interact, Zysberg et al. (2017) explained "burnout [can be] associated with diminished job performance, withdrawal behaviors, a broad range of health problems, disruptive behavior in the workplace, and absenteeism, as well as depression and other severe emotional and psychological conditions" (pp. 123-124).

Although McLain (2005) maintained that the "causes of teacher burnout are complex and interactive" (p. 72), the author generalized the causes of burnout to be "associated with the possibility of realization of expectations. Burnout emerges in situations where the gap between

the expectations of a person and the reality is large" (p. 40). If a teacher began their teaching experiences with grand goals and expectations based on their learning experiences and are not prepared with the tools and knowledge to accomplish these goals, or perhaps are met with students who are not ready or willing to take on their challenge or administrators who do not support their work, they may reach a point of burnout. This feeling of burnout, Kilic (2018) suggested "may even lead to them deciding to leave their jobs because they are unhappy with their professions" (p. 50).

Personal and professional variables affect music teacher burnout and attrition. Madsen and Hancock (2002) explored retention and attrition issues using a questionnaire they distributed to 137 music education alumni of one large southeastern university first in 1995 and again in 2001. In 1995, 70% of participants made comments related to retention and attrition, citing personal issues, administrative support, financial issues, parental support, and classroom management difficulties as contributing factors to considerations of attrition. By 2001, 34% of the same participants reported leaving the field of music. Those teachers still in teaching reported support from administrators, schools, and parents. The authors concluded that school leaders need to understand the personal and professional variables leading to burnout and attrition in order to maintain occupational commitment from music teachers.

Hancock's (2008) secondary analysis supported Madsen and Hancock's findings that personal and professional variables may impact attrition. Through a secondary analysis of data from the 1999-2000 Schools and Staffing Survey, Hancock (2008) examined risk factors for attrition and migration for 1,931 music teacher participants. Results indicated that high risk attrition/migration factors included age (teachers less than 30 showed higher attrition/migration, teachers 30-39 showed higher attrition levels), gender (female teachers showed higher

attrition/migration), race (minoritized music teachers showed higher attrition/migration), age level taught (secondary school teachers showed higher attrition/migration), work time spent beyond the school day (those who worked more showed higher attrition/migration), and school type (private school teachers showed higher attrition/migration). Music teachers who reported positive factors like efficacy in their classrooms, administrative and parental support, and higher salaries were less likely to be at high risk for attrition or migration. Hancock concluded that school leaders might use the results of this inquiry to determine who is most at risk within their buildings and create preventative strategies for them.

Environmental factors may also affect music teacher burnout. McLain (2005) examined the interaction of environmental factors on music teacher burnout as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey. The researcher surveyed 514 K-12 music teachers from 42 states in the United States. Results indicated that music teachers within this study were moderately burnt out in relation to emotional exhaustion but displayed low burnout levels for depersonalization (i.e., feelings of disconnect or detachment) and personal accomplishment. Although a majority of respondents reported positive feelings toward environmental factors, those who responded negatively exhibited higher emotional exhaustion. Support from community and administrators correlated with lower levels of depersonalization. The authors concluded that "environmental factors may make a difference in the burnout levels of music teachers" (p. 82) and suggested that future studies implement longitudinal designs in order to more thoroughly understand music teacher burnout and subsequent attrition.

For some music teachers, a lack of occupational wellness necessitates a change in teaching location or profession. Using the 2003-2004 Schools and Staffing Survey and the 2004-2005 Teacher Follow-up Survey, Hancock (2016) examined personal and professional outcomes

and contributing factors for music teachers who had changed schools, changed careers, and/or returned to the profession of teaching. Results indicated that 9.1% of music teachers surveyed left the teaching profession. Most important reasons for leaving included parenting, retirement, school staffing actions, personal reasons, dissatisfaction with the school or assignment, or to pursue other work options. Those music teachers who left music education experienced improvements in work-life balance, workload management, and professional development possibilities. Hancock reported that 10% of participants moved to a different school. They cited involuntary transfer and dissatisfaction with administration, workplace conditions, or teaching assignment as motivating factors for moving. Moving teachers reported improvements in 14 of 19 working conditions addressed within the survey. Hancock concluded that although leaving music education may incur a considerable loss for professional and social capital, "sometimes changing careers and leaving the profession is in the best interest of the teacher and arguably the profession" (p. 434). The author suggested that teachers questioning the fit of a school or occupational role with their personal identity must have the opportunity to consider the personal and professional improvements or losses a role change may incite.

Music teacher burnout levels have increased over time (Bernhard, 2016). Replicating a 2006 investigation, Bernhard examined 258 elementary and secondary school music teacher perceptions of burnout and compared relationships between burnout and academic and personal variables. Bernhard created a questionnaire using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey and an adaptation of Hamann's Demographic Data Form. Data indicated that average perceived levels of burnout for the 2016 investigation were more severe than those of the 2006 investigation, which indicated that "perceived music teacher stress and burnout may now be more acute and in need of attention" (p. 154). The author suggested new music teachers may

benefit from mentorship, administrative support, continuing education, and lighter teaching loads. Results also indicated higher levels of burnout correlated with increased hours of teaching, additional jobs, and less relaxation and sleep. Bernhard concluded that teacher health and work-life balance resources may be useful in improving teacher burnout levels.

Burnout levels for music teachers potentially correlate with their overall wellness (Tombrella, 2020). In an investigation of 143 Texan choir teachers, Tombrella found that when teacher burnout increased, overall wellness decreased. Additional factors of low life satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and negative efficacy perceptions contributed to music teacher overall wellness. Tombrella suggested that educational leaders meet music teacher basic psychological needs through counseling, teacher collaboration, and support for autonomy.

Although burnout is exhausting and unpleasant, Paetz's (2021) narrative inquiry about music teacher Eleanor shared that a teacher may recover from burnout. After five years of teaching in a toxic environment with little support and high levels of stress that resulted in physical illness, Eleanor quit her high school ensemble teaching position. When she began teaching at another school, Eleanor recognized that her previous experience was atypical and that she really did enjoy teaching. Paetz identified key points of Eleanor's narrative that led to her burnout, including problematic assumptions about teaching, a lack of support and mentorship, a lack of preparation for teaching in a rural setting, and a deep ethic of care. The author suggested that undergraduate teacher educators examine with their students the teacher "savior discourse" (p. 88) in order to avoid unreasonable expectations, investigate pre-service music teachers' expectations and values, and introduce their students to mentors before and during teaching.

Missing from Music Education Occupational Wellness Research

Music education researchers have not as of yet published empirical research regarding music teacher compassion fatigue, also known as secondary trauma, vicarious trauma, or secondary traumatic stress. Compassion fatigue is the "natural emotional and behavioral reactions stemming from exposure to someone close who is experiencing a traumatic event, combined with the stress caused by the desire to help the traumatized individual" (Koenig et al., 2018, p. 262) and can occur after just one encounter. General education researchers have investigated preservice teacher encounters with secondary trauma (Miller & Flint-Stipp, 2019), relationships between burnout, compassion fatigue, and self-care (Koenig et al., 2018), the impact of trauma informed care training on teacher secondary trauma (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020), and techniques for preventing teacher secondary traumatic stress (Hydon et al., 2015). Considering the rising rates of student trauma (Christian-Brandt et al., 2020), further investigations of music teacher compassion fatigue are warranted.

Social Wellness

Research regarding music teacher social wellness is limited. This dimension of wellness emphasizes the interdependent relationship between the individual, community, society, and nature (Hettler, 1976). Music education researchers have investigated one element of social wellness for music teachers: work-life balance. To my knowledge, music education researchers have not yet investigated other aspects of social wellness including practicing music teacher community involvement and recreational practices.

Work-Life Balance

Educators who struggle to mentally distance themselves from work find themselves negotiating a work-life balance, a topic that education (Johari et al., 2018; Nilsson et al., 2017)

and music education (Shaw, 2014b) scholars note has been neglected in research. Work-life balance is a concept in which one seeks balance between different domains in life as they strive for comfort in both work and non-work commitments (Johari et al., 2018). If one is able to find this balance, Johari et al. (2018) postulate it may "result in improved productivity and reduced absenteeism and turnover rate" (p. 110).

Shaw's (2014b) study of work-life balance for competitive high school marching band directors revealed that participants felt the pressures of their workload were inhibitive of work-life balance. This concept of balance can be especially challenging for educators because "in addition to literally bringing work into one's home, there is a tendency for teachers, as with other caring professions, to also bring work home mentally" (Nilsson et al., 2017, p. 592). When boundaries between work and non-work are blurred, educators are unable to restore their work-selves and overall well-being. Participants in Shaw's (2014b) study revealed that they were able to use strategies to improve work-life balance over time and acknowledged that although some aspects of their jobs were inhibitive of work-life balance, other aspects were facilitative of finding this balance. Although participants felt in control of their overall balance, they recognized that they learned how to find balance over time through "a series of failures and successes" (p. 76). The music education field would benefit from more research on music teacher work-life balance perceptions and learned strategies.

Missing from Music Education Social Wellness Research

I found no evidence of music education research investigations regarding music teacher community involvement and recreational practices. The ways in which music teachers involve themselves in their communities have potential to impact their social wellness. Music education researchers have investigated community engagement on an institutional level, looking at a

community-school music partnership in a K-12 setting (Jones, 2020), and have looked at the effects of community engagement for preservice music teachers (Forrester, 2019). Through an investigation of one community music-school partnership, Jones (2020) found benefits for students including an enhanced sense of community within the school building and the ability to "build bridges" outside of school in the larger community (p. 70). Forrester (2019) examined the ways in which community engagement through service-learning effected pre-service music teachers. Participants reported that through service-learning, they confronted their implicit biases regarding urban education, race, and musical aptitude, and began expanding their viewpoints as future educators. The field of music education would benefit from research that examines practicing teachers' engagement with their school, music, and larger communities and the effect that these relationships have on music teacher social wellness. It would be interesting to know if music teachers might be able to "build bridges" outside of the school community through involvement in community engagement, and how those connections affect their overall wellness.

A second aspect of music teacher social wellness on which I was unable to find research is music teacher recreational practices. Research on the ways that music teachers recreationally interact with their community, society, and natural environment beyond their school may provide insight to social and overall wellness. Although they have not discussed impact on teacher wellness, general education researchers have examined in-service and prospective teachers' reading habits and literacy attitudes, which provided insight to teacher literacy values and enjoyment (Burgess et al., 2011; Nathanson et al., 2008; Reichenberg & Andreassen, 2018).

Intellectual Wellness

The dimension of intellectual wellness refers to knowledge and skill expansion through problem solving, creativity, and learning (Hettler, 1976). Individuals further stimulate this

dimension of wellness through the sharing of creative activities and development of intellectual curiosity. Music teachers may stimulate their intellectual wellness through creative interactions, music making, problem solving, and professional development. I discuss each of these elements of intellectual wellness below.

Music Teacher Creativity

Creativity is a core component of music making and thus of music teaching (Abramo & Reynolds, 2015). Research on music teacher creativity has highlighted pedagogical creativity (Abramo & Reynolds, 2015; Langley, 2018; Sydykova et al., 2018) and music teacher empowering of student creativity (Kladder & Lee, 2019). I have found no evidence of research regarding music teacher creativity beyond the classroom (e.g., writing songs, creating art, performing) and the ways in which creativity influences music teacher intellectual wellness. Researchers have conceptualized creativity in several ways. Sydykova et al. (2018) proposed that self-movement, self-adjustment, and self-development were components of creativity that stimulate "intellectual individuality" (p. 165). Similarly, Abramo and Reynolds (2015) proposed a framework of creativity for music teachers that emphasized responsiveness, comfort with ambiguity, combination of novel ideas, and flexible identities. They explained that these traits of creativity for music teacher educators help cultivate student dispositions toward creativity, but did not illuminate personal or professional benefits of creativity for music teachers.

Music teacher perceptions of creativity as a concept are not consistent. Teachers in Langley's (2018) study indicated that they perceived creativity in a segmented way: creativity in general and creativity in the classroom. Langley suggested that music teacher preparation programs should help preservice teachers understand creativity and how to channel it into their teaching. Even if a teacher is creative, they may not be able to utilize it in their classrooms due to

a variety of factors. For example, although participants in Kladder and Lee's (2019) study indicated that they believed it was a music educator's responsibility to teach with creativity, due to constraints brought about by standardized testing they felt they weren't always able to be creative in their classrooms or allow for student creativity. Participants in Langley's (2018) study cited a lack of development in their undergraduate education as a barrier to utilizing creativity. Pre-service and in-service music teachers may benefit from further examinations of music teacher creativity in and out of the classroom and the ways in which creativity effects intellectual wellness.

Music Teacher Music Making

Another way music teachers might stimulate their intellectual wellness is through music making. Fredrickson (2006) recommended that music education departments should partner with school music programs to create professional developments focused on music making. Asserting that music was likely "the thing that brought them to the profession in the first place," Fredrickson (2006) suggested that music making might "reinvigorate" stressed and struggling music educators (p. 7). Through a review of literature, Pellegrino (2011) came to a similar conclusion, asserting that music teachers who make music display "increased vitality, awareness, motivation, concentration, stamina, self- confidence, and self-efficacy" (p. 84).

In a phenomenological case study of four string teachers, Pellegrino (2014) investigated the intersections of music making and teaching. Participants shared that they perceived personal and professional benefits of making music outside the classroom and felt a renewal of excitement for music and inspiration from their experiences. One participant noted that after they practiced or played, they felt a sense of well-being, while another participant described music making as a tool for expression and channeling emotions. Pellegrino concluded that making music outside of

the classroom was a form of nurturance for these participants that also helped them remain compassionate to their students' music-learning needs. I was unable to find any large-scale studies on music teacher music making and wellness benefits or any studies investigating the types of musics and music-making groups with which music teachers interact.

Music Teacher Problem Solving

Music teachers engage with problems solving constantly in the classroom as they work with their students to develop technique and rehearse repertoire (Roesler, 2016). Through observations of 49 lessons taught by six distinguished music teachers and subsequent qualitative coding and analysis, Roesler identified a framework of problem solving that included five components: establish goals, evaluate performance, conceive and consider options, generalize and apply principles, and decide and act. Roesler concluded that teachers and students may enhance their problem-solving skills by focusing on each of the components above individually.

Much of the literature on music teacher problem solving similarly focuses on enhancing problem-solving skills for students and teachers. Music education researchers have investigated how to develop student critical thinking in the music classroom (Garrett, 2013, 2021; Pogonowski, 1987; Shaw, 2014a), problem-based learning (Laprise, 2018), and the intersections between problem solving and composing (Burnard & Younker, 2004). Missing from the literature is an investigation of the personal and professional intellectual wellness benefits of musical problem solving for music teachers in and out of the classroom. Although one participant in Pellegrino's (2014) study on music teacher music-making touched on this concept when they discussed how they enjoyed the problem-solving aspects of practicing music, more investigation is needed.

Professional Development

Another way music teachers might contribute to their intellectual wellness is through professional development. Bauer (2007) systematically reviewed research literature related to professional development for experienced music teachers. The author found and discussed research on professional development preferences and needs, effectiveness of professional development, and experiences of and practices related to professional development. Emergent questions asked about optimal practices for professional development, the roles of formal and informal mentors, and the perceived value of conference attendance and professional association membership. Bauer concluded that more generalizable studies of professional development needed to be done in order to "develop broad perspectives and detailed understandings of this complex phenomenon" (p. 20). One broad perspective that would be valuable to investigate is professional development contributions to music teacher intellectual wellness.

Music teachers have mixed perceptions of professional development. Conway (2008) interviewed 19 experienced music teachers in order to examine their career-wide perceptions of professional development. Emergent themes included the importance of informal interactions in professional development and the need to be proactive in finding appropriate professional development for one's self. Participants valued interactions with other professionals and learning from others as key elements of their own development and found that they needed to seek out their own continuing education as districts did not provide what they needed. Conway concluded that music teacher professional development "may be an important link to continued music teacher success" (p. 16) and suggested future research examining changing needs throughout a music teacher's career.

Music teachers have indicated their preference of participating in music-specific and collaborative professional development (Dorfman, 2017; Lind, 2007). For example, Dorfman (2017) examined the experiences of five practicing music teachers who were enrolled in a one-week rock music performance and pedagogy professional development workshop. Participants reported enjoying the low-pressure environment of the class, appreciating the style of music and speed at which they were able to learn, and finding the encouragement to step outside of their comfort zones. With time and experience, the author suggested, "teachers may even seek out these opportunities because of the enjoyment and the immediate sense of accomplishment they can bring" (p. 292). The participants drew comparisons between the environments of rock bands and their traditional American music education ensembles and recognized ways in which they could transfer leadership skills from the rock band setting for their own students. Although all of the participants enjoyed the experience, they perceived school level obstacles which might prevent them from engaging what they learned in their classrooms including equipment availability and curriculum traditions. Participants of Lind's (2007) investigation of high-quality professional development for arts educators similarly perceived obstacles to implementing what they learned from professional development including time, curricular obligations, and hesitancy.

To influence policies regarding professional development (PD), Johnson et al. (2019) suggested that music teachers must request discipline-specific PD, should document positive results of PD, and should actively reflect on skills, attitudes, and perceptions regarding their own teaching and trajectory. They proposed four frameworks for PD, one each for pre-service, candidate, early, and late-stage teachers. The authors concluded that PD ought to come from teacher communities rather than from administrative mandates and suggested that "reflective and

differentiated PD thrives within professional learning networks, local professional communities, teacher dialogue groups, and school system-university partnerships" (p. 217). Although music education researchers have discussed professional impacts of professional development, notably missing from the literature is discussion of personal impacts of professional development regarding music teacher intellectual wellness.

Spiritual Wellness

The spiritual dimension of wellness involves a search for meaning and purpose and strives for actions that are consistent with one's beliefs and values (Hettler, 1976). Music education researchers have investigated spirituality in music education and moral/ethical dimensions of music teaching. Additional topics on which I was unable to find music education research include challenges to music teacher spiritual wellness like demoralization, the idea of teaching as vocation, and ascetic ideals of teaching.

Music Teacher Spirituality

Although spirituality and music-making have been intrinsically linked for many years, most investigations of music teacher spirituality in music education have occurred just in the past 20 years (Boyce-Tillman, 2017). Music education researchers have conceptualized wellness in a variety of ways. In her introduction to the book *Spirituality in Music Education,* Boyce-Tillman identified seven strands of spiritual concepts within the literature: metaphysical (i.e., encounter with a higher power or purpose), intrapersonal (i.e., freedom resulting from being at peace with one's self), interpersonal (i.e., empathy and caring for others), intergaian (i.e., connection beyond the human world), extrapersonal/ethical (i.e., unity with other people), narrative (i.e., the story within which one situates themselves), and tradition (i.e., strength through rituals). Although religion and spirituality are related, Boyce-Tillman asserted, one need not be religious to be

spiritual. In fact, Palmer (2010) urged music teachers to "recast the mental-emotional phenomenon" of spirituality as "having an independent life and area of investigation without reference to aspects of formal and informal religious practice" (p. 152).

Another model of spirituality in music education is from van der Merwe and Habron (2015). Their model presents music as a holistic experience that has a potential to "offer an experience of the sacred" (p. 54). Within this model, van der Merwe and Habron proposed that four multidimensional and interconnected themes work together to influence music teacher spirituality: corporeality (embodiment, sensory experience, creativity, and breath), relationality (connection, spiritual virtues and vices, and meaning), temporality (journey, joy, and flow), and spatiality (awareness, wonder, and transcendence). With this model, van der Merwe and Habron suggest, a music practitioner might develop awareness of the possibility for spirituality for themselves and for their students, which has the potential to influence their well-being.

Music teacher experiences of spirituality in the music classroom vary. For example, through an investigation of five Dalcroze teachers' spirituality, van der Merwe and Habron (2020) found that participants experienced moments of spirituality while teaching. The teacher participants credited the Dalcroze teaching technique for enhancing spirituality in the classroom by promoting elements of breathing, channeling energy, creating connections with students and colleagues, fostering awareness, continually growing and learning, finding holistic meaning, promoting students' wellbeing, and facilitating moments of transcendence. In contrast, pre-service music teachers in Harris and Mackrill's (2013) investigation of spirituality in music education in the UK indicated that although they had considered the role of spirituality in their future classrooms personally, many participants had not experienced mention of spirituality in their training.

Several music education researchers have theorized that music teaching and explorations of student spirituality are complimentary endeavors. For example, Carr (2008) described music education as "a prime vehicle of spiritual education" (p. 17) and Freeman (2002) proposed the virtue of a spiritual approach to music education, indicating that such an approach recognizes the unique spirit of each student. Freer (2011) suggested that the broad spectrum of spirituality might appropriately link concepts like aesthetics, peak experiences or flow, and musical critical thinking. When music teachers understand the concept of spirituality in a non-religious and non-doctrinal way, Palmer (2010) recommended, spirituality can be a way for music teachers to facilitate understanding of student potential in the arts.

Moral/Ethical Dimension of Teaching

Music education researchers have pondered a variety of ethical considerations of teaching music. Regelski (2009) wondered whose musical values are prioritized in the classroom, if advocacy for music education is in the interest of teachers or society, and to what extent music teachers should expect their students to commit to music. In order to teach in an ethical manner, Regelski suggested that music teachers should disclose their ends and goals through action ideals and critical reflection on their pedagogical methods. Selection of musics and daily pedagogical decisions like motivational tactics have potential to positively or negatively affect student wellbeing.

Considering a vision of ethical music education, Allsup and Westerlund (2012) suggested that music teachers "need exercise in ethical encounters" (p. 144). As they condoned utilizing methods as the only form of instruction in a music classroom, the authors also posited that music education professionals were beginning to adapt pedagogies that were more inclusive of student participation and musical variety. Allsup and Westerlund proposed that being more responsive to

students' preferences and needs through a focus on student self-esteem, collaboration with classmates, and popular music performance on popular instruments "needn't exist in conflict with teacher expertise" (p. 132). One way that music teachers might be empowered to make ethical decisions, the authors said, was through dialogue with their students regarding the "*whats, hows,* and *whys*" (p. 141) of their curricula.

Missing from the music education dialogue regarding music teacher ethics is a discussion of the personal effects on music teachers of enacting or not being able to enact an ethical or moral curriculum. Education researchers have described teaching as "inherently moral" (Campbell, 2003; Bullough, 2011). When one is unable to act with their conscience, they may encounter what Colnerud (2015) called moral stress. During an investigation of the relevancy of moral stress for 75 teachers in the teaching field, Colnerud's participants wrote about a teaching situation that posed a difficult moral or ethical decision. Participants reported moral/ethical dilemmas related to intrapersonal issues like fairness, loyalty, and privacy and external constraints like institutional grading rules and confidentiality. Colnerud concluded that situations like the ones reported by participants, combined with conflicting moral imperatives and the weight of unresolved dilemmas, puts teachers at risk for moral stress. In order to relieve moral stress, the author suggested that educators should have "access to a moral vocabulary and appropriate professional language…in order to articulate the ethical arguments and exercise moral judgement in the best interest of pupils" (p. 358). Future investigations of ethical/moral dimensions of music education might benefit from the added context of music teacher spiritual wellness.

Missing from Music Education Spiritual Wellness Research

To my knowledge, music education researchers have not yet investigated challenges to music teacher spiritual wellness like demoralization, teaching as a vocation, and the ascetic ideals of teaching. Work from general education researchers may provide insight to these three concepts. Teacher demoralization results from the ways in which moral and ethical challenges posed by the profession make teachers feel. This idea is often studied in relation to compassion fatigue and burnout and could be considered an element of occupational and emotional wellness as well. Santoro (2019) suggested that "many teachers become dissatisfied not because they're exhausted and worn down but because they care deeply about students and the profession and they realize that school policies and conditions make it impossible for them to do what is good, right, and just" (p. 28). Teachers become demoralized when they are unable to engage in work that benefits their students, community, and profession.

Pressures from school and state testing may contribute to teacher demoralization. Santoro (2011) examined one teacher's demoralization through a case study. In the participant's experience, rewards of the job came from creating a learning environment for her students rooted in student need and interest. The introduction of standards of learning in her state during the late 1990s led to curricula dictated by district learning review packets and a teacher-directed model of instruction that contrasted the participant's teaching philosophy. The joy of connection and creativity was replaced by the pressures of test passing and adequate yearly progress. Santoro describes the participant's eventual exit from the teaching profession as a result of demoralization, the "process of continually being frustrated in one's pursuit of good teaching" (p. 17). This is not burnout because the participant was not overwhelmed, exhausted or depleted.

Rather policy changes fundamentally altered her teaching practice which prevented her from the moral rewards of teaching she previously enjoyed.

Similarly, Wronowski and Urick (2019) hypothesized that deprofessionalization and demoralization were unintended consequences of accountability policy and sought to identify teacher- and school-level predictors of teacher perception of deprofessionalization and demoralization across the accountability policy era in the United States. Deprofessionalization in this study referred to the loss of teacher agency regarding curriculum and instruction. Results from a secondary analysis of data showed an increase in teacher perception of demoralization and deprofessionalization during this time, which was related to the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Poor schooling environment and administrator support were predictors of demoralization. The authors suggested that innovations in school and teacher evaluation may help "reverse the narrowing of curriculum and instructional practices that has taken place under NCLB" (p. 32) and thus effect teacher perceptions of deprofessionalization and demoralization.

Contradictions between teacher identity and teaching requirements may also lead to teacher demoralization. Santoro (2013) interviewed 13 teachers who had worked in high-poverty schools for more than five years before they left the teaching profession. Interviews revealed participants' experience of contradictions of identity and integrity required by the profession of teaching. Teaching, for these professionals, was an aspect of their moral and professional identity. Participants indicated that they left the profession because they no longer felt they could fulfill their duties, thus diminishing their work and personal morality. Santoro concluded that in order to sustain the moral aspects of teaching, school leaders and educators must be in dialogue regarding the importance and presence of conscience and integrity in regard to teaching.

Thinking of teaching as a vocation may impact a teacher's spiritual wellness as well. Hansen (1994) examined teaching as a vocation within the then contemporary educational climate. The author argued that a sense of vocation is expressed within public dimensions through obligation and within private dimensions through personal fulfilment. By participating in work that has social meaning and value, Hansen argued that teachers find personal meaning and satisfaction. The author viewed vocation as "more than a psychological state" (p. 264)—it requires devotion, internal motivation, and social practice. Teachers who view their career as a vocation, Hansen maintained, have a sense of agency and commitment to their work, but also entertain questions, doubts, and uncertainties about the job. The author warned teachers against exploitation and manipulation by those who want to take advantage of a sense of vocation and suggested that an initial sense of vocation may grow into a larger understanding over time and with experience.

Teachers who view teaching as a vocation define "vocation" in a variety of ways. Estola et al. (2003) investigated vocation as part of three Finnish teachers' life and work experiences. Each participant displayed or discussed the idea of vocation in different ways. The first participant embodied the idea of vocation throughout their teaching service and personal satisfaction without ever using the word "vocation." The second participant reported a strong awareness of three separate vocations: teacher, mother, and writer. The third participant reported that she was on the journey to vocation and felt that she was on the correct path. Through analysis of the data, the authors reported being convinced that "teaching as a vocation does not imply an inborn ability to accomplish a specific task and is not something self-evident. Rather, one grows into and develops a sense of vocation, often through highly strenuous and

contradictory life experiences" (p. 247). The authors concluded that researchers may gain insight into the emotional and moral aspects of teachers' work through the exploration of vocation.

The ascetic ideal, as described by Higgins (2003), refers to "the ways in which we secretly take pleasure in our mortifications or pride in our sacrifices" and "begins when one distances oneself from one's desires in the name of the good of others" (p. 143). Asceticism is especially viable in cultures of service that match altruistic ideals with difficult working conditions. Educators encounter the ascetic ideal when they receive no recognition from students, parents, or administration and face what Higgins called the "existential tension—of trying to exist for yourself and for others" (p. 145). If teachers are unable to balance the positive aspects of teaching with the moral demands of the job, the author asserts "their teaching itself will suffer" (p. 146) and teachers may experience burn-out. Higgins warns educators against entangling their identity with their students' success and suggests that an ethics of teaching must allow for teacher flourishing: "As *public* servants, teachers are likely to see their aspirations for a rich and excellent life as private and separable from their vocation. As public *servants,* teachers are vulnerable to the power of the ascetic ideal" (p. 154).

Carr (2006) disagreed with Higgins's argument as outlined above and contended that teacher burn-out "may often be a consequence of individual failure to achieve a sane and sensible balance between professional imperatives and other human goods of personal recreation, friendship or family commitment" (p. 180). Ascetic ideals, according to Carr, are generally grounded in teacher concern for the welfare of others and connect to the vocational aspects of teaching. The author asked readers to "recognize that our own good is often precisely realized in other-regarding concern for the interests of others" (p. 179) and suggested that teachers should not draw lines between interests of self and interests of others. The field of music education may

benefit from future investigations of music teacher spiritual wellness concepts like demoralization, teaching as a vocation, and ascetic ideals of teaching.

The literature review above functions as an overview of wellness research in music and in music education and exposes the gaps in music education research. It demonstrates the holistic and multidimensional nature of wellness and illustrates the many wellness needs that music educators may encounter within their occupation. Within this study, five choral music educators grappled with the roles of wellness within their lives, careers, and classrooms, and addressed many of the elements of music teacher wellness described above.

Collaborative Teacher Study Group

Now that I have examined the literature on wellness in music education, I pivot to investigate the literature on Collaborative Teacher Study Groups (CTSGs). In order to inform my utilization of the professional development format, I review the literature on CTSGs in music education and general education below. I further discuss the necessary elements of CTSGs and benefits of the professional development format as perceived by researchers and participants who have engaged in CTSGs.

Due to the independent nature of being a music teacher, many music teachers struggle to collaborate meaningfully with other music teachers or with teachers in their own building (Stanley et al., 2014; Whidden, 2017). In the past 15 years, the collaborative teacher study group (CTSG) has emerged as a rewarding and successful form of professional development in music education (Shaw, 2020; Stanley, 2009, 2011, 2012; Stanley et al., 2014) and in general education (Johnson et al., 2021; Thibodeau, 2008). Stanley (2011) used the term collaborative teacher study group (CTSG) to denote "a group of teachers collaborating in a shared, systematic investigation of teaching practice in a situation that can be with or without outside leadership or

facilitation" (p. 72). She further explained that CTSGs are structures that allow participants to share knowledge and expertise while sharing in reflective inquiry. Necessary elements of CTSGs include long-term commitment to community and collaboration, teacher participation in a variety of roles within the community, and established guidelines for talking about teaching and students which leads to collegial conversations (Stanley, 2012). Additionally, CTSG facilitators should organize groups around content and skill knowledge that most appeals to community members within the group. Often these organizational ideas come through video or in-person observations of educators in their classrooms (Stanley, 2011).

Music education researchers have utilized CTSGs to study a variety of topics. Stanley (2011) and her CTSG participants discussed student collaboration in elementary music classrooms. Biasutti et al. (2019) designed their three-year online collaborative professional development based on teacher participants' professional development needs, including topics of lesson planning, music and disability, and effective communication. Shaw's (2020) collective case study examined the impact of music professional development for five teachers located in urban contexts with culturally diverse learners, with an emphasis on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP).

Benefits of the CTSG format, as described by Johnson et al. (2021), included the opportunities for teachers to share their practical knowledge, co-design lessons and activities rooted in knowledge gained from the CTSG, and gain competence through intensive interaction with other educators. Participants of Stanley's (2012) study expressed that advantages of collaborative teacher study groups include confidence boosting, positive encounters with reflective teaching, opportunities for serious discussion, and immediate relevance to their teaching practice. One participant expressed that one strength of the CTSG format was sharing

and learning from colleagues: “It’s a two-way street. You know, they give you ideas, you give them ideas, and you hope it becomes better, and you feel better about your profession” (p. 60). Through a systematic review and integrative synthesis of research regarding collaborative teacher study groups, Firestone et al. (2020) found that CTSGs positively influence teacher knowledge and practice as well as student outcomes. Variables that affected the likelihood of teachers implementing CTSG strategies included years of experience, instructional views, and openness to self-reflection.

Teachers in Thibodeau’s (2008) content literacy collaborative study group perceived an ownership and control of the group, which led to a sense of responsibility to fellow group members and their students. All of the participating teachers reported sharing, whenever the opportunity arose, “some aspect of their new learning and instructional practices with their department colleagues outside of the collaborative group” (pp. 61-62). In their comparative study of CTSGs versus principal coaching, Meyers et al. (1997) found that the structure of the collaborative groups led to more effective integration of instruction and management procedures. The authors hypothesized this was “perhaps because they meet with supportive colleagues and focus on improvement of their own teaching” (p. 21). Participants in Shaw’s (2020) study additionally enjoyed setting their own agendas and having open dialogic spaces for open conversations.

Need for Present Study

The literature I have reviewed above provides an overview of music education research regarding music teacher physical, emotional, occupational, social, intellectual, and spiritual wellness as well as a brief discussion of collaborative teacher study groups. This review revealed

that many music educators face a wellness challenges on a daily basis. It also revealed the many gaps in the literature regarding a variety of wellness concerns and strategies for music teachers.

Although several researchers indirectly examined multiple dimensions of music teacher wellness, no studies investigated wellness for music teachers as a holistic, multidimensional concept. An investigation of music teacher wellness as a whole has the opportunity to reveal the breadth and depth of music teacher wellness experiences and the concerns or strategies that music teachers prioritize in and out of the classroom for themselves and for their students. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated or created new issues of wellness for music teachers and their students. This study, therefore, seeks to holistically highlight stories of music educators as they encounter unprecedented professional demands and student needs. It is my hope that through this study, I may provide new insights and add to the knowledge base on musicians' wellness with a special emphasis on music teacher voice and experience.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of choir teachers in a Collaborative Teacher Study Group (CTSG) as they met to discuss wellness in music education and collaborated to include principles and strategies of wellness in their teaching amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter provides a description of the method, including a description of the theoretical frameworks, methodology and design, participant selection, and data collection and analysis methods.

Theoretical Frameworks

Social Constructivism

For this study, I drew on social constructivism to frame music educators' perceptions and experiences. Social constructivism is a paradigm in which individuals search for understanding of their world and develop complex and varied meanings through interactions with others within the context of cultural and historical norms (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Lincoln and Guba (2013) proposed that any constructivist inquiry begins with the "presupposition that social reality is relative to the individuals involved and to the particular context in which they find themselves" (p. 39). Therefore, a social constructivist framework allows for an investigation for patterns of meaning for individuals and development of co-created knowledge and understanding.

Three essential elements of social constructivist inquiry include sense-making, constructions as a product of inquiry, and shared constructions (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). First, it is through sense-making that one is able to critically perceive, comprehend, and interpret their world. Lincoln and Guba consider sense-making an act of construal: "Humans do not merely experience events, they create them" (p. 45). By making sense of experiences, researchers using a social constructivist lens are able to organize their thoughts and experiences into a

comprehensible form that can be understood in a broader context. Second, constructions are the result of individual or group sense-making efforts as they weave together patterns of constructs over time and may be reconstructed at any time (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Third, individuals may share constructions, tacitly or explicitly. Parallel constructions are the result of shared experiences and may occur independently or may be the result of learning, socialization, or joint development. These three essential elements of social constructivist inquiry were present throughout the course of this study. Participants sense-made through interviews, interactions with materials like readings and videos, and discussions during CTSG meetings. They consequently constructed ideas individually and as a group and shared their constructions with each other, with their students, and with others in the music education community.

Three well known theorists who laid the foundations for social constructivism are Piaget, Dewey, and Vygotsky (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). Piaget's theory of cognitive development connects to the sense-making and pattern construction described above: "Our cognitive structure changes as we mature, allowing us to construct meaning at more sophisticated levels" (p. 36). Similarly, Dewey viewed experience as an interaction between individual and environment and considered this interaction to be the basis of education. Vygotsky gave particular attention to the role of sociocultural context in the process of meaning construction. As a result of this focus, Merriam and Bierema (2013) explained "a continuum has emerged with a more psychological orientation on one end drawing from Piaget, to what is called social constructivism on the other end drawing more heavily from Vygotsky" (pp. 36-37).

Researchers utilizing a social constructivist lens search for emergent ideas through interviews, observations, and text analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Utilizing broad, open-ended questions that address contexts of life and work, historical and cultural settings, and situation-

specific interpretations, the constructivist researcher encourages participants to construct personal meaning of a situation. Additionally, social constructivist researchers disclose their relationship to the material and acknowledge the ways in which their social, cultural, and historical backgrounds may affect their interpretation of the data. Through a social constructivist lens, reality construction is a cooperative process, shaped by both researcher and participants. As interviewer, CTSG facilitator, and organizer of data for this study, I acted as a co-constructor of knowledge with the participants. As the participants engaged in sense-making, constructed understandings, and shared their comprehension of wellness in music education, I simultaneously made sense of their understandings and constructed my understandings of their situations. Through this document, I share the participants' understandings as well as my constructions.

Regarding constructivist interpretation of data, Crotty (1998) presents the image of a researcher-as-bricoleur. A bricoleur is a French term for a handyman or an artisan who "makes something new out of a range of materials that had previously made up something different" (p. 50). A researcher acting as a crafty constructivist therefore is invited to reinterpret the data in front of them and may "approach the object in a radical spirit of openness to its potential for new or richer meaning." (p. 51). A constructivist data interpretation recognizes the individual nature of each piece of data while simultaneously searching for a deeper, inclusive understanding.

Several research formats are appropriate for implementing a social constructivist inquiry, including phenomenological studies, grounded theory, and case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Lincoln and Guba (2013) suggested that case study is particularly well-suited for a constructivist inquiry as it allows for representation of multiple constructions of realities, sufficient scope and depth, and the opportunity for thick description. Constructivist case reports should reflect the

process of construct building:

a) From foundational truth-telling about 'how things really are and really work' to relativist sense-making via one or more consensually constructed realities;
b) From generality to local understanding;
c) From accretion of knowledge to contextual sense-making;
d) From a we-they (inquirer-subject) polarity to an etic-emic fusion from which all parties profit; and
e) From the stance of detached observer or voice of a stranger to the passionate participant deeply involved in the reconstruction of a "reality" in which all, including the inquirer, have a stake. (Lincoln & Guba, 2013, pp. 80-81)

In an effort to properly display these processes and allow for representation of multiple constructions of realities within my study, I utilized an instrumental case study design, which I describe in detail below. Throughout the course of the case study, I sought to make sense of music teacher constructs of their wellness perceptions and practices in a certain environment. I did not intend to "reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75) as in a phenomenological framework, but rather endeavored to examine multiple viewpoints in a complementary manner. The constructivist framework allowed me the opportunity to weave together multiple constructs with my participants in an effort to understand their current reality.

Hettler's (1976) Wellness Framework

I used Hettler's Wellness Framework to organize the literature review and to introduce concepts of wellness to the CTSG. Many wellness scholars (Miller & Foster, 2010; Rachele et al., 2013; Roscoe, 2009; Sackney et al., 2000; Thornton, 2013) have rooted their

conceptualizations of wellness in Hettler's (1976) Six Dimensions of Wellness (see Figure 1 below). These six dimensions are comprised of the interdependent categories of emotional, occupational, physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual wellness. Although there are many models of wellness (e.g., Myers and Sweeney's [2004] Indivisible Self wellness model and Swarbrick's [2006] Eight Dimensions of Health and Wellness), I chose to utilize this particular framework for this project due to the simplicity of the model and my familiarity with the framework.

Figure 1: Hettler's (1976) Six Dimensions of Wellness

According to this framework, a person striving for occupational wellness aims for life satisfaction through work and consistency between career and personal values, beliefs, and interests. One pursues physical wellness through good exercise and eating habits, as well as through a personal responsibility for monitoring vital signs and warning signs delivered by the body. To attend to social wellness, one contributes to their environment and community. Intellectual wellness can be stimulated with creative mental activities that expand knowledge and

skills, and by sharing knowledge and skills with others. The spiritual dimension recognizes the human search for meaning and purpose which results in a world view. Finally, the emotional dimension leads to awareness, acceptance, management, and expression of a wide variety of feelings from self and others. Additional dimensions of wellness put forth by other authors include environmental, cultural, economic, and climate-based wellness (Miller & Foster, 2010; Roscoe, 2009).

I used the wellness framework as a tool to introduce participants to the multi-dimensional nature of wellness. During the first CTSG meeting, I introduced each of the six dimensions of wellness to the participants and invited them to examine the ways in which they addressed the individual dimensions personally and within their classrooms for themselves and for their students (See Appendix A for the worksheet). Participants frequently referred to the framework throughout the intervention period and often pointed to specific dimensions that they were struggling with. One participant used the wellness framework to create a worksheet for their students and another used it to create their own personal wellness plan. This wellness framework helped participants conceptualize wellness for themselves personally and professionally and for their students.

Social Constructivism and Wellness

As I reported in chapters one and two, societies have constructed a wide variety of definitions and interpretations of wellness. Within this study, participants used the Six Dimensions of Wellness Framework to organize their understandings of wellness. Prior to introducing the wellness framework, I asked participants to share their personal constructions of wellness through the first two interviews and at the beginning of the first meeting. By introducing the wellness framework to participants, I encouraged my respondents to think about

wellness in a holistic and multidimensional way and perhaps influenced their personal constructions of wellness. Together, they made sense of wellness in music education, broadened their definitions and interpretations of wellness through their studies and collaborations, and shared their constructions of wellness in music education with each other, with their students, and in some cases, with colleagues and administration.

By imposing a wellness framework upon the participants' constructions, I potentially could have forced the multidimensional concept of wellness into artificially systematic divisions. One way that I attempted to avoid this pitfall was through discussion with participants about the overlap of dimensions, possibilities of additional dimensions beyond the six we discussed, and mention of other frameworks of wellness. Participants had the opportunity to construct their preferred perception of wellness using the six dimensions of wellness as a reference point or organizational tool. Participants quickly identified their wellness practices (or lack thereof) within the wellness framework and organized their conceptions, and I felt these benefits outweighed the potential influence on participant constructions.

Research Method and Design

This project was an instrumental case study examining the experiences of choir teachers in a Collaborative Teacher Study Group (CTSG) as they met to discuss wellness in music education and collaborated to include principles and strategies of wellness in their teaching amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Qualitative case study research allows an investigator to explore a bounded case or cases over time through extensive data collection and to report descriptions and emergent themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Below, I will describe the prominent voices of case study research, defining characteristics of the methodology, attributes specific to instrumental case study, examples of case study in music education, and strengths and

weaknesses of the methodology.

Three seminal authors of case study methodology are Merriam (1998), Stake (1995, 2006), and Yin (2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined case study as an "in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (p. 37). Yin (2018) similarly defined case study as "a social science research method, generally used to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and in its real-world context" (p. 286). Merriam and Tisdale (2016) and Yin (2018) described case study in terms of strategy and method, but Stake (2006) described case study in terms of design and what is to be studied: "The prime referent in case study is the case, not the methods by which the case operates" (p. 2). Further, Stake's (2003) definition of case study included the researcher's process and *product*: "Case study is both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry" (p. 136). All authors above proposed the necessity of a main object or focus of inquiry in qualitative case study: a case, bounded in time, place, or situation.

Merriam, Stake, and Yin clarified the need for clear boundaries surrounding a case. In order to bound a case, Yin (2018) suggested researchers must decide and report who will be included within the participant sample, where data collection will take place, what evidence will be collected, and for how long the researcher will collect data. This process also helps to solidify the connection between case, research questions, and priorities in data collection. Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995) both describe the case—the object of study—as a bounded system. The case could be anything from a person or group to an event or specific policy. Anything beyond the boundaries a researcher has determined is not part of the case and will not be studied. If there is no bounding, there is no case.

Three defining characteristics of case study research are their particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic qualities (Merriam, 1998). First, case studies must focus on a particular case. This

may be a person, group, event, program, or situation. The design allows for revelations specific to the case focus and may inform other similar instances. Second, case studies must result in a rich, thick description of the particular case. Through the integration of many forms of qualitative data including interviews, observations, and artifacts, a researcher is able to present an in-depth understanding of the case, what Creswell and Poth (2018) called "a hallmark of a good qualitative case study" (p. 98). It is through these rich descriptions that a reader is able to connect to the situation or phenomenon, which leads to the third defining quality of case study: its heuristic function. By "attempting to capture the perspectives of different participants and focusing on how their different meanings illuminate your topic of study" (Yin, 2018, p. 16), one is able to similarly "illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 30). Merriam explained that a case study is heuristic if it (a) explains the background of a situation or problem, what happened, and why; (b) explains why an initiative worked or did not work; (c) discusses and evaluates alternative options; and (d) evaluates, summarizes, and concludes with an objective of applicability. The heuristic nature of case study allows readers to vicariously experience the case and discover an understanding for themselves, potentially extending their current knowledge or confirming what they already know.

A researcher may design a qualitative case study intrinsically or instrumentally (Stake, 1995). An intrinsic case study illuminates a unique case that a researcher can describe in detail due to its unusual nature. Alternatively, a researcher selects an instrumental case design when they have a research quandary and select a case in order to make sense of said quandary. I used an instrumental case design in this study as I sought to understand the issue of wellness in music education through the case of one collaborative teacher study group. Although the specifics of the case were important to the overall study, an instrumental case study design allowed me to

focus my attention primarily toward the specifics of the phenomenon of wellness in music education.

Researchers utilizing case study orient their case studies in a variety of ways (Merriam, 1998). First, a researcher may define a case study by disciplinary orientation, utilizing ethnographic, historical, psychological, or sociological orientations. A researcher may also define a case study by overall intent, utilizing descriptive, interpretive, analytical, or evaluative approaches. The overall intent of this case study was descriptive. Throughout the descriptive instrumental case study, I sought to present a detailed account of the experiences of one group's construction of knowledge, principles, and strategies through rich, thick description.

Music education researchers have widely used case study design in their research. Recent examples of case study designs in music education include Vasil's (2019) exploration of individual teachers who enact change in music education, Sieger's (2017) investigation of perceptions of individual teachers regarding student performance anxiety, Colombo and Antonietti's (2017) study of student responses to one teacher's metacognitive teaching strategies, and Giebelhausen and Kruse's (2018) explorations of several community ukulele groups' experiences. Barrett (2014) attributes the wide use of case study in music education research to the highly contextual nature of the methodology, the flexibility in focus, the multiplicity of scholarly orientations, the transparency of intent, and the possibility for broad readership. Music educators as readers and as researchers are drawn to the narrative elements of case study which lead to heuristic experiences: "Rich description...allows the reader to come close to lived situations, feel their pulse and tensions, and weigh how they might extend to other settings and situations" (p. 114).

Conway et al. (2014) and Barrett (2014) explained that music education researchers as a

whole have presented contradictory conceptions of case study throughout years of research reports. In a review of case study use in music education research, Conway et al. (2014) noted an inconsistency in the field regarding the citation and description of case study as a research method. The authors suggested music education researchers employing case study improve the trustworthiness of their research by clarifying their case study design, unit of analysis, theoretical framework, sampling procedures, and analysis procedures.

The broad definition and open-ended nature of case study methodology leads to a variety of strengths and limitations. Strengths of case study research include its versatility, the rich and holistic accounts it allows, and the insights and illuminations it may provide to readers (Merriam, 1998). In music education, this utility has allowed "descriptive, analytical, or critical power to inform practice, policy, research, civic action, or professional discourse" (Barrett, 2014, p. 123). In contrast, case study presents limitations including time and length requirements, potential to simplify or exaggerate, and reliance on the interpretation of the investigator (Merriam, 1998). To address concerns of rigor, generalization, and comparison to quantitative treatments, Yin (2018) recommended case study researchers document systematic procedures, keep conclusions specific to their case, and recognize the importance of the "how" and "why" within qualitative studies.

The instrumental case study was appropriate for my study because it allowed me to address the "how" and "why" in the case of one CTSG as its participants addressed the phenomenon of wellness in music education. The bounding factors were the profession of K-12 school music educator, the time period inclusive of the summer and fall semesters following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the topic of wellness for music educators, their students, and their profession. Through this study, I intended to add to the music education professional discourse regarding music educator wellness. An instrumental case study methodology allowed

for the rich, thick description that can lead to practical implications for the field.

Participant Selection

I recruited five participants for the study using purposeful sampling strategies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My goal was to find a group of choral music educators who were interested in the topic of wellness in music education and who wanted to explore philosophies and practical techniques to apply in their classroom. In order to achieve these goals, I utilized purposeful sampling and found a group of people who could "best inform the researcher about the research problem under examination" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 148). After receiving IRB approval, I created a survey that allowed me to search for participants who were interested in the topic of wellness in music education and who were invested in and committed to the project. See Appendix B for the Facebook post and Google Forms survey.

Utilizing the message function on Facebook, I sent invitations to friends and colleagues, asking them to either take or share the survey with choral music educators who they thought may be interested in the project. During the one week that the survey was open, ten music teachers completed the survey, three of whom I had previous relationships with. After examining the potential participants' availability, experience, and wellness interests, I chose the five participants who were the most availability and represented a bit of variety in experience, teaching assignment, geographic location, race, gender, and sexuality.

Role of the Researcher

To build an in-depth picture of participants' perceptions and experiences, as a researcher I took on the roles of interviewer, CTSG facilitator, documenter, and archivist (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). I conducted two preliminary interviews with each participant in July of 2020 as my first source of data collection and one final interview with each participant in November of

2020 as my final source of data collection. As an interviewer, my primary jobs included following the intended line of inquiry and verbalizing un-biased conversational questions to keep the line of inquiry fluidly moving (Yin, 2018). Therefore, my role was to craft a fluid line of inquiry and develop follow-up techniques which allowed for smooth, natural conversation.

My roles in the CTSG included participant selector, content gatherer, and discussion and workshop facilitator. In this way, I took what Stanley (2011) called a "helpful approach" (p. 75) by designating myself as a logistical organizer and manager who gently facilitated and adapted guidance throughout CTSG meetings. Using data from the preliminary interviews, I created a plan for seven 90-minute CTSG meetings focusing on topics as suggested by the participants. I gathered materials such as articles, podcasts, and YouTube videos which functioned as the basis for each meeting. During the meetings, I participated in conversations, answered questions, and provided literature or real-world examples if prompted. Taking cues from Stanley (2011), I ensured that the groups goals were shared and flexible, and "not fixed on one conception of expertise imposed by a more knowledgeable 'other'" (p. 75). I provide more information on the specifics of the CTSG below.

As documenter and archivist, I kept record of personal documents, news articles, and/or archival records related to the case. I documented each interview, CTSG meeting, and participant interaction. Participants shared artifacts like lesson plans, worksheets, and school communications, which I saved and memoed. I detail specific data collection procedures including interview protocol, observations, and diary methods below.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews

Interviews served as preliminary and final sources of data collection for this project. Over

the course of the project, I conducted three one-on-one semi-structured life-world interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018) with each participant via Zoom. The purpose of a semi-structured life-world interview according to Brinkmann and Kvale (2018) is to "obtain descriptions of the life world view of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 8). During an interview, the interviewer uses careful questioning and listening approaches to allow participants to construct knowledge while describing their experiences, activities, and opinions in their own words.

I used Seidman's (2019) three-interview series as the framework for my interview structure. Within this interview framework, a researcher uses the first interview to gain a focused life history. The goal is to "put the participant's experience in context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time" (p. 21). I used this interview to ask participants questions about their teaching histories and philosophies and experiences with musicians' wellness. The second interview allows the interviewees to share the details of their lived experiences regarding the topic of the study. The goal of this interview is to "not ask for opinions but rather the details of their experience, upon which their opinions may be built" (p. 21). I used this interview to ask participants questions about their lived experiences throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and gauge their interest in specific wellness topics for the CTSG. Within the third interview, the researcher asks participants to reflect on the meaning of the experiences they have described in the first and second interviews. The goal of this interview is to address "the intellectual and emotional connections between the participants' work and life" (p. 22). I used this final interview to ask participants to reflect on the impact of the CTSG on their professional and personal lives. See Appendix C for the list of interview questions. According to Seidman, the challenge of working within this three-interview framework is

maintaining the balance between open-ended discussion and focus of conversation according to the structure of the series.

I audio and video recorded each interview, transcribed it, and sent the transcription to each participant for optional review. I conducted the first two interviews during the last two weeks of July of 2020 in order to capture participant perceptions of the end of the school year while they were still relatively recent. Between the second and third interview, CTSG members participated in seven CTSG meetings during the months of August and September 2020 and completed ten weekly check-ins during the months of October and November 2020. I conducted the final round of interviews in the last two weeks of November of 2020 as participants neared the end of their Fall Semesters.

Collaborative Teacher Study Group Meetings

A collaborative teacher study group (CTSG) is a professional development community that allows teachers to share ideas and interact with each other as they systematically investigate teaching practice (Stanley, 2011, 2012). I developed the structure of the CTSG informed by the work of Stanley (2009, 2011, 2012) and Shaw (2020): This CTSG required long-term commitment for relationship building, conversation was oriented around specifically music pedagogy and content, and the members assumed a variety of roles in order to take ownership of the group. Roles included discussion facilitator, note-taker, and timekeeper. Additionally, CTSG members established goals and conversational norms during their first meeting that allowed for mutual understandings and respectful conversations. In these ways, as group organizer, I strove to "find ways to give each member a unique and changeable voice within the group" and "ensure that each person has the opportunity to contribute in various ways" (Stanley, 2011, p. 75).

The CTSG met seven times during the months of August and September 2020.

Participants decided on a weekly schedule during the month of August, before most of them began school, and a bi-weekly schedule during the month of September, once school had begun. For each meeting, I provided CTSG members with one reading that would be the centerpiece of our discussion and additional optional supporting materials like YouTube videos and podcasts. As informed by participant interest, topics included self-care, boundaries, and emotional endurance, social and emotional learning, mindfulness, physical wellness, and music as wellness.

Although I varied the format and order for each meeting, essential elements of the meetings included the opening check-in, the member-led reading discussion, and some sort of collaboration. The opening check-in served as a moment of fellowship, when participants generally shared updates on school openings or closings due to COVID-19 or explained how they implemented wellness ideas in their classrooms or personal lives during the past week. Readings discussions allowed participants to engage with music education wellness literature together, build shared understandings of the topics, and discuss practical implications of the literature. During collaboration sessions, participants shared written work like wellness policies, lesson plans, and personal plans that were rooted in knowledge and understandings gained from readings and discussion. They gave each other positive and critical feedback and shared ways in which they envisioned "borrowing" the materials and enacting them in their own classrooms.

I audio and video recorded and transcribed each CTSG meeting. I collected additional data from the CTSG Google Classroom page, which served as a "home base" for the CTSG (Appendix D). I used this page to post all materials and updates and they used the page to turn in workshop materials and to communicate with each other when necessary.

Diary Methods

In weeks that the CTSG did not meet, I asked participants to record relevant thoughts and

behaviors through diaries and/or journals (Rose, 2020). Diaries and journals may "provide researchers with a highly contextualized and individualized account of the research construct" while minimizing "potential influences of researcher manipulation over the data" (Rose, 2020, p. 349). Additionally, diaries and journals allow the researcher direct access to participants' everyday thoughts and use of language (Rose, 2020).

All participants indicated that they preferred an electronic check-in method for sharing their thoughts, therefore I sent check-in Google Forms on the Mondays in September that the CTSG did not meet and every Friday morning during the months of October and November. I also kept an electronic journal throughout the process to keep track of my thoughts and any occurrences relevant to the process. Within the journal, I used memoing processes, defined by Creswell and Poth (2018) as "preliminary propositions (hypotheses), ideas about emerging categories, or some aspects of the connection of categories" (p. 317). These memos helped me synthesize the data and formulate a sense of the data as a whole. Documentation such as these check-in forms and journals provided a different type of record keeping for the participants and were useful for "corroborating and augmenting evidence from other sources" (Yin, 2018, p. 115) such as interviews and CTSG meetings. I used check-ins and journal entries for triangulation during data analysis, which added to the study's trustworthiness.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout the planning, preparing, enacting, and reporting of this study, I considered Creswell and Poth's (2018) "three principles guiding ethical research: respect for persons (i.e., privacy and consent), concern for welfare (i.e., minimize harm and augment reciprocity), and justice (i.e., equitable treatment and enhance inclusivity)" (p. 151). To respect these guiding principles, I gained informed consent from all participants (see Appendix E for consent form),

was forthright about all goals and outcomes of the study, and protected the privacy and confidentiality of all participants through the use of pseudonyms and redaction of any identifiable information (Yin, 2018). Additionally, I received formal approval for this study through Michigan State University's institutional review board.

Data interpretation is one area for ethical consideration. Although Crotty (1998) empowered those using a social constructivist framework to find a deeper, all-inclusive understanding as a researcher-as-bricoleur, this raises questions. As I research other peoples' lives, interpret their words, and speak with a voice of authority as facilitator and researcher, how can I do so ethically? One way I attempted to ethically represent the participants was by following Creswell and Poth's (2018) suggestion to "rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation" (p. 24). Throughout the findings and discussion chapters, I used CTSG members' words and stories as much as I could so as to allow their perspectives and constructions to guide the conversation. Another way I attempted to respect my participants through the data interpretation process was through my reliance on participant member checks of transcripts, biographies, and participant-specific sections of findings chapters. Participants ensured that I as the researcher represented their sense-making and construct-building correctly.

Another area for ethical consideration is my role as co-constructor throughout the process. Because I acted as CTSG facilitator and researcher, it is possible that my perceptions and conceptions of wellness influenced the participants' experiences. To minimize this influence, I attempted to allow the participants considerable ownership throughout the CTSG experience. I asked participants what topics they would be interested in discussing and exploring and built the agenda around their interests. Following each meeting, I asked for feedback and adjusted plans accordingly. For example, after the third meeting, participants indicated that they preferred

workshop time to unstructured discussion time, so I made sure to include more workshops and limit discussions. Additionally, I invited each participant to serve as discussion facilitator for the week that had the topic inspired by their interest. We also had a "show-and-tell" day where three of the participants shared one of their favorite wellness approaches with the group for 15 minutes each. Finally, as facilitator, I used a semi-structured approach so as to follow interests and topics raised by participants. For example, if it became apparent that I needed to scrap the carefully timed agenda to allow for a participant to vent or cry or celebrate, I allowed those moments to happen. In these ways, I attempted to ensure and encourage participant agency and ownership and limit my influence throughout the experience.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

I used Creswell and Poth's (2018) "data analysis spiral" (p. 186) as a guide for data analysis throughout the course of this study. This spiral began with data organization and management, followed by rigorous reading and note-taking or memoing, code identification, description, and classification into themes, interpretation development and assessment, and data representation and visualization. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that each step of the data analysis spiral supports the others: "The processes of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process—they are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project" (p. 185). Therefore, I collected data, analyzed data, and wrote reports continuously throughout the research process.

I managed and organize the data in several ways. First, I saved and managed all email correspondence in separate participant-specific folders within my email account. Second, I saved all audio recordings, videos, and written data in my MSU student drive as well as on an external hard drive for back-up. Finally, I used the web-based data analysis tool Dedoose to organize

interview and observation transcripts.

Following the organization of data, I read and memo-ed emergent ideas. Bazeley (2013) encouraged qualitative researchers to "read, and read again" in order to "build a sense of the whole" (p. 1010) before proceeding with analysis. As I read, I wrote notes and/or initial memos that reflected "as many ideas, issues, and leads as possible" (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 155). Saldaña (2016) suggested pre-coding strategies of "circling, highlighting, bolding, underlining, or coloring rich or significant participant quotes or passages that strike you" (p. 21). These memos and pre-coding strategies allowed for beginning analysis and synthesis which led to the next loop in the spiral and established leads for future interview or follow-up questions.

Next, I defined codes within transcripts and classified those codes into themes (Appendix F). Within qualitative inquiry, a code is "most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). I used a combination of in vivo, emotions, and values coding. In vivo coding was useful for documenting participant-generated language and terms in order to prioritize participant voice. This method was helpful in providing "imagery, symbols, and metaphors for rich category, theme, and concept development" (p. 76). Emotion and values coding are affective coding methods that attempt to infer subjective feelings, values, attitudes, and belief systems as displayed through interview and observation transcripts.

The final stages of analysis, developing and assessing interpretations and representing and visualizing the data, were interrelated and happened simultaneously. To interpret the data, I coded and recoded through several reviews of the data (Saldaña, 2016). Once I was able to recognize similarly coded data, I organized codes into categories and subcategories. Throughout the process, Saldaña suggested first cycle codes may be "subsumed by other codes, relabeled, or

dropped all together" (p. 12). Once I consolidated major categories in various ways, I was able to "progress to the thematic, conceptual, and theoretical" (p. 14) and develop themes. I then linked the emergent themes to musician, education, and music education wellness research. Throughout the process, I created tables that helped represent and visualize the data for my final report.

Trustworthiness

I established trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) through rigorous data collection as outlined above, thick description, triangulation, member checks, author positionality, and peer-review. Lincoln and Guba explained that thick description is a necessary element of case study reporting as it allows for judgements of transferability: "It is the responsibility of the inquirer to provide a sufficient base to permit a person contemplating application in another receiving setting to make the needed comparisons of similarity" (pp. 359-360). Triangulation is the process of using "multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence for validating the accuracy of their study" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 328). Evidence sources included interviews, CTSG meetings, workshop materials, and journals.

Following all interviews and observations, I offered all participants the opportunity to read through transcriptions to verify, expand upon, or discount any information I collected. Member checks occurred formally and informally throughout the course of the project. I also offered participants the option to review a rough draft of all writing that was specific to them (e.g., biographies from Chapter Four, wellness action plan portions from Chapter Five, practical impacts from Chapter Five) before the conclusion of the project. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained the purpose of a comprehensive member check "is not only to test for factual and interpretive accuracy, but also to provide evidence of credibility" (pp. 373-374). I asked willing participants to confirm data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions, provide alternative

language when necessary, and reflect on the accuracy of the report (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Throughout the data collection and writing process, I endeavored to be clear and explicit about my positionality and biases and engage in reflexivity. This strategy allows the researcher to illuminate any "past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 261). Finally, I consulted with colleagues and requested feedback on analytic interpretations. I sought an external check from a peer reviewer who is familiar with the research and who provided feedback on methods, meanings, and interpretations.

Limitations

Limitations of this project include the lack of generalizability and constraints regarding in-person interviews and observations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was specific to this unprecedented time and conclusions were generalizable only to the participants in this study. The goal is to "understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many" (Merriam, 1998, p. 208). Merriam (1998) suggested that rich, thick description, typicality, and multisite designs — all strategies I utilized — enhance the possibility for "case-to-case transfer" (p. 211) in which the reader decides for themselves what applies to their situations. Schwartz (1996) termed this transferable context "logical situational generalizability." Documentation of this time and explicit acknowledgement of these constraints allowed me to paint a picture of the research climate specific to the Summer and Fall Semester of 2020. Despite the specificity of this study to this time period, I believe the implications from this study can apply beyond this time period considering the holistic and multidimensional natures of wellness as well as the duration and lasting effects of the pandemic. Regardless of teaching time or place, choral music educators face wellness issues and concerns on a regular basis.

Researcher's Lens

My interest in musicians' health and wellness grew not from preventative knowledge and experience as one would hope, but from reactive measures due to my own vocal health issues. During my third year of teaching, a pseudocyst on my vocal fold began causing noticeable speaking and singing voice loss that impacted my ability to teach and perform. I was devastated because I thought I had done everything "right" when it came to healthy singing and did not understand why this injury had happened. Over time I came to learn that the cause of my vocal injury was undiagnosed nasal drip and acid reflux in addition to unhealthy speaking (shouting) habits in the classroom. As part of my pre-surgery voice therapy, my therapist asked me to wear a personal amplification device in the classroom. I stubbornly resisted this for a few reasons: I thought the students would think they could be louder and classroom management would suffer; the microphone would distort my vocal model; the school would never fund a mic for me. Reluctantly, I began wearing the mic in class and discovered that all of my fears were unfounded. Classroom management was easier, my vocal model was just fine, the school paid for my mic, and at the end of the teaching week, my voice comparatively felt amazing.

The summer following my diagnosis, Dr. Bridget Sweet at the University of Illinois offered a course on musicians' health and wellness for the summer master's program. During this class, we explored issues of vocal, hearing, musculoskeletal, nutritional, and mental health for musicians. I learned that I was not alone in my musicians' health issues and found an array of activities I could share with my students to begin their musicians' wellness journeys. I began delving into the musicians' wellness research and literature and found myself constantly asking "Why did I not know this sooner?"

During this musicians' health and wellness course, Dr. Sweet and her guest experts

introduced our class to the Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method, Body Mapping, and meditation techniques. I began thinking of wellness as a proactive and preventative measure and found many ways in which I could incorporate wellness into a choir curriculum. When I headed home at the end of that summer session, I bought all of the musicians' wellness books I could get my hands on. At the time, I worked at a highly competitive private high school where many of my students were spread thin and as a result were stressed and anxious. That fall, I slowly introduced meditation, mindfulness, and body mapping techniques and incorporated yoga stretches into the choirs' daily warm-ups. I found physical and emotional wellness strategies extremely useful for student mindset and well-being. My students and I additionally focused on learning about vocal, hearing, and musculoskeletal health and preventative techniques.

Throughout my doctoral studies at Michigan State University, I was able to continue bolstering my understanding of musicians' health and wellness through research and experience. In 2019, I completed my 200Hr Yoga Teacher Training to ensure I was able to safely and knowledgeably lead physical warm-ups and breathing and meditation exercises and completed a Body Mapping Course with my mentor, Judy Palac. I was able to share yoga, breathing, and mindfulness strategies with music students and teachers in classrooms and at conferences, in person and virtually. These students and teachers shared my concern for musicians' wellness, and their enthusiasm for the topic fueled my continued interest in knowing how music educators and their students interact with their own wellness on a daily basis.

Through this project, my goal was to learn what wellness strategies teachers knowingly and perhaps unknowingly enacted in their classrooms as they navigated a transitional time with their students. I came to this study with an interest in the changing landscape of music education and musician wellness as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a future music teacher

educator, I was curious to know what current music educators are experiencing through this pandemic. I sought to hear and share their voices so that as we continue to navigate through what are universally being called “unprecedented times,” we can establish a wellness precedent for music education.

CHAPTER FOUR: PERCEPTIONS, EXPERIENCES, AND CONCERNS REGARDING WELLNESS IN MUSIC EDUCATION BEFORE AND DURING COVID-19

Within this chapter, I describe the perceptions, experiences, and concerns of wellness in music education that the participants held prior to CTSG meetings as expressed in their initial interviews, CTSG conversations, and weekly check-ins. As I detailed in Chapter One, in March of 2020, the physical threat of COVID-19 infection forced teachers and students around the world to adapt to remote learning. For the teachers in this study, that meant teaching choir and music classes online with synchronous or asynchronous lessons. Participants' first interviews took place in July of 2020, following several months of remote teaching and learning. At this time, most of the participants were unsure of the modality of their teaching in the fall, and questioned if they would teach online, in-person, or hybrid. CTSG meetings occurred during the months of August—when all participants were considering what "back to school" would look like during the time of COVID-19—and September—when four of five participants had begun their teaching for the fall. Through the late summer and early fall, each of the participants in this study experienced multiple shifts in learning plans and teaching modalities as their districts reacted to student and teacher COVID-19 infection numbers within their schools and districts. The context of COVID-19 likely impacted teacher perceptions, experiences, and concerns of wellness throughout this project.

I begin this chapter by sharing participants' professional life histories, including their experiences with wellness and perceptions of the role of wellness in choir. Next, I detail the wellness strategies that participants reported utilizing with their choir students and look at the concerns that teachers expressed regarding wellness for themselves and for their students. Finally, I describe the challenges and frustrations these teachers experienced specific to COVID-19 teaching and learning circumstances.

The Participants

Five choral music educators participated in the Collaborative Teacher Study Group (CTSG) for this study. As I described in Chapter Three, I selected participants using purposeful sampling strategies (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which helped me to find five participants who were interested in wellness and who wanted to explore its intersections with music education. The five participants were Neil, Josie, Merida, Delisa, and Emma (all participant names are pseudonyms). Below, I introduce each participant individually as I share their professional life histories and initial perspectives of wellness in choral music education.

Neil

When this study began, Neil was entering his eighth year of teaching. He identified as a white, cisgender, gay male. After teaching English as a second language in Wuhan, China for a year and K-12 general music and choir at a small rural school for two years, Neil found himself at his current position in a suburban district in the Midwest. Prior to this year, he taught 4th, 5th, and 6th grade general music, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade choir, and musical theater, and led a small chamber group that met before school twice a week. Neil's favorite part of teaching was working with the 7th and 8th grade choirs as these were the students who "want to be there" and are "still willing to learn new things" (Interview One). He particularly enjoyed seeing students progress through the middle school years: "They're still at a stage where they're learning the function of their voice and just seeing them progress through healthy unison singing to the point of singing divisi is just incredible" (Interview One). Neil's passion for music making and care for his students and their musical experiences came through every time we spoke.

Most of the students at Neil's school were from families with high socio-economic status. He described his students as highly motivated to succeed, perhaps due to the expectations of their parents. This learning environment informed the way he approached his teaching:

> One of my philosophies as a teacher is to focus on social and emotional growth, especially during middle school because it is so important and sometimes it is hard to work with parents to understand that grades and academic work aren't the only things that matter at this point. And you can't separate that. (Interview One)

Due to a hands-off approach from his administration, Neil felt he was able to push the boundaries of pedagogy and practice. The school administration especially valued restorative practices and literacy pedagogy, providing professional development, continuing supports, and a strong counseling department. These values influenced the ways in which Neil approached classroom management and pedagogy with his general music and choir students.

For the past few years, Neil's schedule left him feeling burnt out. Busy days and late nights left him "so exhausted that I wouldn't have time when I came home to focus on those wellness activities for me" (Interview One). During the 2019-2020 school year, prior to March, Neil took steps to "really change my work-life balance" (Interview One) by stepping away from his voluntary role in the drama club and adjusting his teaching and travelling between buildings schedule to lighten his load. This left him more time to pursue his hobbies of cooking, running, singing in choir, and participating in a local musical theater, and to dedicate energy to his musical minister position and faith community.

I invited Neil to be a part of this study as he and I have been good friends for at least ten years, and I knew of his interests in musicians' wellness, self-care, and work-life balance. He is a deep thinker and a passionate educator, and I knew he would offer valuable insight to the group.

When I asked him what he would like the professional development to look like, he expressed excitement for

> Just being able to interact with someone in my own field – that's going through the same question [of how to teach during COVID] …I can't have [my students] singing, I can't have them playing instruments. And then if we are – because we don't have any idea of what's going to happen either – if we are going back to online learning, what's that going to look like? Because I would probably have more of a singing component there. But is that really a good experience for kids to be singing into their computers all the time? I don't know. (Interview One)

Throughout the project, he continued to ask these questions for his students and to his colleagues in the CTSG, even as he was unable to return to the classroom in the fall due to his own wellness concerns. Neil is a type 1 diabetic and his doctors advised that it was unsafe to return to the classroom in the midst of a pandemic. His administration refused to make any accommodations, and he was forced to take a leave of absence during the fall semester. Despite his teaching status, he continued to attend and participate in meetings, serving as a valuable group member.

Josie

Josie was entering her tenth year of teaching when we began this project. She identified as a white, cisgender, straight female. Her early years of teaching on the West Coast were rocky. She spent her first three years in the field teaching 3rd to 6th grade general music and 5th and 6th grade chorus. During this time, Josie realized how much she valued the progression of K-8 education, so she moved across town to a K-8 music program at which she taught for the next four years while completing her master's degree during her summers. She described the transition to this job as very intense, as she was the first vocal teacher at the school in decades.

At this school, Josie struggled to find a balance between work and home and felt unsupported by her administration, which led to what she called a mental breakdown, and she felt a change of place might be good for her and her husband, who was also a music teacher. On a trip to the Pacific Northwest, she fell in love with the area and the strong music education advocates in the community and decided "this is where I need to be" (Interview One). After moving to the area, she found her current position, where she teaches K-5 general music and 6-8 choir.

Prior to COVID-19, Josie loved her job and called her schedule beautiful. She described the schools that she teaches at as smaller and in an affluent area, which is different from her previous positions. Josie found that her administration "really cares about the students' wellbeing and what the students have access to" (Interview One). They valued electives like choir in the middle school as the reason some kids come to school, and thus have made accommodations to make the choir schedule work for as many students as possible.

Even before the pandemic, Josie was not afraid to think outside the box with her teaching ideas and strategies. She engaged her students with "Wolf Wednesdays" during which she wore clothing with wolves, Disney Bounding on Thursdays during which she dressed like Disney characters, and teambuilding and musical games on "Fun Fridays." Josie found purpose by thinking of her students as future adults and said her favorite moments of teaching were when her students were able to engage with music without her direction. As she created a facilitative environment for her students, Josie found support from her colleagues with whom she attempted to collaborate as much as possible. For example, during the past two years she collaborated with the teacher of the school's elective "zombie apocalypse class":

> Last year in the Fall we did a 'fall out' concert, so like an apocalypse type thing. It started out all happy-go-lucky and then like apocalypse or a bomb drops and everything's

> decimated. First we did "Thriller" and then like the rain comes down and so we did a song about rain and then like "It's a Wonderful World" after. It was a lot of fun – the kids really enjoyed it. Our zombie apocalypse class is all about survival and different scenarios about why an apocalypse might happen. They were actually on a unit where they were making protest posters about nuclear power – whether to keep it or get rid of it. So we used their posters that they were using for their assignment to decorate our performance space. (Interview One)

Josie used collaborations like these to develop relationships with other teachers in the building and advocate for her program through exposure.

Josie cited a lack of work-life balance as part of the reason she broke down at her previous job: "I think one of the things that led me into that mental spiral before moving up to [my current city] was I had so much of my life just invested into what was going on at school" (Interview One). Grant writing, emails, and fundraising took up all of her time outside of work. Her difficulties at her previous job helped her gain perspective of her role as a music educator:

> Having that mental spiral really put into balance that I was giving way too much of myself to my job and the fact that it wasn't – it wasn't even that it wasn't appreciated, but it was like what is it for? In the grander scheme of things…like why? So [at my new job], pre-COVID it was much better. (Interview One)

In her new position, Josie gave herself time to find moments of rejuvenation through finding "Zen in the moment of chaos" (Interview One). She used meditation, mindfulness, and breathing techniques to reground herself throughout the course of her day. Outside of work, Josie centered herself through hikes with her husband and three husky mix dogs and elaborate game nights, dinner parties, and karaoke battles with her core group of friends.

When she read the call for participants for this study on Facebook, Josie felt this CTSG might be a good place for her to share her toolbox of wellness techniques that she had gained by working through her depression and anxiety. She cited times in her teaching career where she faced moments of student social and emotional turmoil that she was "not trained to deal with. Trained in the sense that it was very heavy for me to deal with" (CTSG Meeting One). She felt that her contributions to this group might allow her to make connections between music and wellness for herself and her students, because "student wellness and my wellness is a really big deal" (CTSG Meeting One).

Merida

Merida was the most experienced teacher of the CTSG, who throughout her twenty-five-year career had taught in what she calls a "massive spectrum of places" (Interview One). After teaching in inner-city, suburban, and rural Midwestern contexts for several years and completing her master's degree, Merida landed at a tiny private school in New England. At the beginning of this study, Merida was entering her nineteenth year of teaching music, movement, and drama Pre-K to 8 at this particular school. She identified as a white, cisgender, straight, female. The community of the school and agency she had in crafting her program worked especially well for her given her strengths and teaching goals.

As the school's performing arts educator, Merida was responsible for teaching K-5 general music and 6th, 7th, and 8th grade choir, with special projects like a K-3 musical and a 4th and 5th grade radio play. Merida called her administration magnificent, citing their trust and support as the reason why her program can be so "robust" (Interview One). She loved teaching in the private school setting because there her students are "allowed to be kids. They are allowed to play, they are allowed to explore, they have the support structure that they don't feel like they

have to be little tiny adults" (Interview One). The opportunity to play occupied a key role in Merida's music classroom, as her students feel comfortable improvising and sight singing: "They see it as exploration – to try things that may be very scary in other settings" (Interview One). Her long-time investment in the community also made her small school a special place for her. For example, Merida mentioned that two years ago, she watched the last child from a family of five graduate: "I had all of them. I had the littlest one from the time she was in a car seat. I watched her come into kindergarten and go all the way through the ranks" (Interview One). She was highly invested in her small private school and found great joy in watching her students' musical and personal development over time.

Merida saw the call for participants for this study on the Orff Schulwerk Facebook page, and felt that she would have a lot to contribute to the group. About two years ago, Merida began a physical and mental wellness journey in response to "massive anxiety" brought about by her divorce, lack of support at school from a previous administration, and generally "not taking great care of myself" (Interview One). During this time, she found a gym and local meditation temple where she participated in rejuvenating activities like sound baths, meditation, meditative movement, and cardio yoga. She explained, "I was very involved in [yoga and meditation] because it was helping me stay calm and Zen in the midst of some stuff" (Interview One). During that time, Merida began thinking about how she could teach meditation to her students. She ended up completing her mindfulness training and learned how to teach meditative movement and cardio yoga. During the year prior to this study, she was able to implement ideas of mindfulness and yoga in her music classroom. Merida shared that musicians in general "get so focused on the product, that we forget that part of the process is staying healthy and whole"

(CTSG Meeting One). She hoped that through her involvement in the CTSG, she might be able to share the wellness components that she had found to work in her music classroom.

Although she took great joy in serving as "coach" and "mother hen" (Interview One) for her students, Merida also felt a constant steady pressure from her role: "I will probably never get over the stress of being responsible for the whole choral program" (Interview One). Utilizing what she called her new mindful, metacognitive approach to teach music, Merida alleviated some of the professional pressure she felt with her students' energy and their smiles:

> Recognizing that sometimes the best thing is not to drill them in rehearsal, but to make them laugh. And to hear that laughter and to know that they can come to me and get that – that is definitely an additional part of my purpose is to make sure that everybody is as bright and as light as they can be in any given situation. (Interview One)

Merida's confidence in her work and her students came through strongly throughout the process of this study. She was often the first person to talk and never hesitated to praise her colleagues in the CTSG or ask to borrow their work. Although she had a lot of knowledge to share, she also acknowledged what she called her "not yet" status as a veteran teacher: "I'm okay with sitting at 'not yet' status…not yet status is just fine" (Interview One).

Delisa

Delisa was entering her tenth year of teaching high school choir at the start of this study. She identified as a Black, cisgender, straight female. After seven years of teaching in jobs that she compared to a toxic relationship, Delisa moved to the Midwest to work on her master's degree. As she completed the degree, in April of 2020, she began her current position virtually as Director of Choirs at a mid-sized suburban high school in south central United States.

Delisa used her outside of school activities to bond with her students. Boxing, DJing, reading educational books, doodling, and website building were just some of the activities that she mentioned throughout the course of this study. Although she had many passions and recognized their importance, she often struggled with creating and enforcing boundaries:

> My fitness stuff is really important to me, but I'm not consistent enough because it is so easy to get buried behind a computer or buried in work. But focusing on health for my own personal reasons and also as a cathartic release is important… But I don't know, it's like everything that I do is somehow like – it's really hard to escape education. And I use that word on purpose. Like in order to be good at this, what the field demands is that we have to kind of just stay plugged in. (Interview One)

In previous teaching situations, Delisa struggled to separate her work and individual needs. It took leaving the classroom and pursuing a master's degree full-time for her to learn how to "turn it off" (Interview One). She realized that self-care looks different for every person and every situation:

> My version of slowing down is the fact that I'm still at home right now. That I just decided that this was more important than me going up to campus and cleaning my classroom. So let me take care of myself. That's a growth. (Interview One)

Over two years prior to this study, Delisa explained, she learned the importance of asking for help, sharing that work may be too much, and calling out things that did not make sense to her. By advocating for herself at work, she was able to make more time for the activities that she found most fulfilling.

Delisa's teaching philosophy focused on responding to the student as a human: "I'm really big on teaching journaling and processing emotions before they get out of hand. I'm really

big on – I'm not afraid to let noise happen" (Interview One). She found her purpose in serving others and described her work as a calling. A lot of her personal fulfillment came from outside of the classroom from publishing articles, presenting at conferences, speaking about racial injustice, and having conversations with people.

I have known Delisa for two years and invited her to join the CTSG following one of our many discussions about self-care and wellness. When I asked her if she had any questions or concerns before our first interview, she said "I just have pure enthusiasm. I'm thinking of this as therapy specifically for my job" (Interview One). This enthusiasm continued throughout the project and positively influenced the attitude of and community building within the CTSG.

Emma

Emma was beginning her second year of teaching middle and high school choral music in the Midwest at the start of this study. She identified as a white, cisgender, straight female. After completing a part time long-term elementary general position the spring semester following her graduation, Emma found her current position in a rural town where she taught four sections of high school choir and co-taught a 7th grade choir class. She loved the opportunity to work with middle school and high school students and called the program ideal for her personally and pedagogically as the style of the program aligned with her teaching goals and training.

As many first-year teachers do, Emma questioned her role with her students as they got to know each other. Throughout her first year of teaching, Emma found that her students fed off her silliness. However, she explained the struggle of "developing relationships with these kids and getting to know them and being a safe space, but also balancing the fact that, no – I am still your teacher" (Interview One). Positive evaluations from administration, conversations with her mentor and other colleagues, support from her family, and group chats with classmates from her

graduating class all helped Emma find the balance she was searching for during her first year of teaching. Looking back over her first year and a half in the field also helped her gain perspective: "I am growing and growing and I need to remind myself of that a lot" (Interview One).

Although she enjoyed her time with her students and the music they made together, she found herself struggling with some of the administrative aspects of her job:

> Parent emails, admin emails, emailing places about concerts, emails about students, just a lot of emails to students. And I feel like I was at some points in the year, I was a broken record. Like I felt like I said the same things in class all the time and then I would get a lot of the same emails. I would ask how many times would I have to repeat myself? That was probably the hardest thing I felt like. (Interview One)

After her first couple of months of teaching, a teacher friend advised Emma to reexamine how she was spending her time: "She was like 'you need to go home and stay home'" (Interview One). Emma realized that she had been putting her work and pride into staying late at school and decided to try to restructure her time. To relieve the stress of teaching and administrative duties, she relied on running, hiking, and meditation. She was able to carry some of these stress relievers into the classroom, as she shared four square breathing, visualization, yoga, and anxiety relievers with her students. "They love it. I love it. I think it's just a great reset button before you start singing" (Interview One).

Emma was the first respondent to answer the call for participants for this study, and I was excited to see her response as I have known her for two years and was her student teacher mentor. As an early career teacher, she was concerned about vocal health for herself and for her students and wanted to "change the stigma and perceptions" (Interview One) of self-care in music education. She saw this study as an opportunity to continue her studies:

> I want to be like the best teacher that I can be – that's one of the reasons that I helped you out with this dissertation. Because I want to learn – I want to be the best teacher that I can be for my students, for my future students. I want to keep studying – that's something that I really miss is studying and researching and all that stuff. So I think doing these things can help me do that.

Next, I turn to a description of the participants' perceptions of wellness and its intersections with choral music education.

Uncertain Connections: Wellness in Choir

Prior to the intervention, CTSG participants had developing concepts of how choir and wellness interacted. Although they recognized the importance of student and teacher wellness in music education, several participants acknowledged a disconnect in their understanding prior to taking part in the CTSG. Josie said "I don't think I ever really put musicians and wellness together. Like there were musicians and then there was personal wellness" (CTSG Meeting One). Neil explained to the group that before their first meeting, he had never considered the interactions between music education, wellness, and injury. After further thought and discussion on the matter, he expressed to his colleagues concern about a mindset in music education that leads to interest in wellness only after injury. Emma attributed this perceived disconnect between traditional music education and wellness to "this gap in my education where we were talking about all the singing and music and stuff, but we didn't really talk about how to meet those needs of not only myself, but my students too" (CTSG Meeting One). The context of COVID-19 school closures and administrator and community expectations widened this disconnect for Emma: "I'm thinking about this next school year and [wellness is] not the first thing on my mind. It's more how am I going to teach? It's more academic" (Interview Two). Due to a lack of

prior education on wellness in music education, these three participants had previously come to think about wellness as a reactionary tool rather than a consistent proactive pursuit for themselves and their students.

Prior to CTSG meetings, participants expressed in their interviews the connections that they could see building between choir and wellness but wondered if or how they could make their students invested in bridging the gap. As Emma reflected on her secondary choral education and her perceptions of wellness at the time, she recognized that she had viewed a focus on wellness as distracting and a waste of potential practice time. Emma found herself asking how she might be able to approach what she perceived as a narrative of musicians forsaking their physical and mental health for their work:

> Mentally and emotionally, I feel a lot of times, especially being professional singers, a lot of times people think that you need to practice three hours a day to get the role and the solo. And in reality that's not the best for your mental health…And then I think just honestly trying to portray that for my students because if I didn't experience that in my education, my secondary education, then how are my students? (Interview One)

Merida felt that the product orientation of music education contributed to a product-focused narrative: "I feel like musicians in general, we get so focused on the product that we forget that part of the process is staying healthy and whole" (CTSG Meeting One). Considering COVID-19 teaching and learning situations, Neil found himself "thinking about really being conscious of taking time to add [wellness] into the curriculum" (CTSG Meeting One).

Wellness Strategies

Members of the CTSG reported employing a variety of wellness strategies prior to the intervention. Participants shared some of these strategies during their initial interviews and

others during early CTSG meetings as they reflected back on wellness strategies that they had used in the past. They utilized these strategies both in and out of the classroom, for themselves and for their students. Areas of focus included physical health, mindfulness and meditation, and self-care and continuing education. Although a few of these strategies are musician- or educator-focused, most of these strategies are general and could apply to most any individual.

Physical Health

Being a choir teacher brings with it many physical demands as illuminated by the following conversation from the sixth CTSG meeting:

> Colleen: What are the physical health hazards of being a choral musician and being a choral teacher?
>
> Merida: Germs! How many people breathe on us? All of them! Germs!
>
> Josie: Yeah, I was about to say. Just get your flu shot.

In addition to the cold and flu concerns music teachers have traditionally faced, teachers at this time were hyper-aware of the potential presence of COVID-19 in their classrooms. Delisa moved the conversation from sickness to common musculoskeletal issues for choir teachers:

> Delisa: The reoccurring injury that I completely forgot about is this really weird standing position you're in when you're playing piano but then trying to do something with this hand at the same time. And then, I don't know if you just heard how my neck cracked, but it cracked something fierce, just making that motion it's like oh! And then you did that 7 times today.
>
> Josie: I just feel like being a choral music teacher is so much more physically demanding. I mean, like what we were saying with the having to model posture and like go through all those things. I mean, the best way they're going to learn is by watching us, so we have to do that 100% of the time. And then, I mean if you throw elementary in there with the – it's just like you are the dog and pony show on top of it half the time.
>
> Merida: I always have to remind myself that good choral posture means that I sometimes need to get down on my knees to get down on the floor to a child or get to crisscross applesauce or comfortable seat rather than try to lean over from a chair. It is so easy for my posture to go south like that because I'm trying to lean over to help a kindergartener.

> Well that was pre-COVID, but now I have to pat them on the back with a mallet from 10 feet away.

Next, I asked the group to consider physical health hazards their students might face, which prompted Emma to bring up vocal health concerns:

> Emma: I've had some vocal health stuff in the past and I mean it's scary, you have one set of vocal cords and I don't know. I teach in a very big space too, so I feel like I need to like fill up that space with my voice because when I sing, I was always taught to fill that space, so why would it be any different than when I'm teaching. And then on top of that you have all these kids socially distanced so they're in all ends of the room in the pandemic. So that's the first thing that I think of.

Delisa then considered the musculoskeletal problems students could face on a daily basis in choir:

> Delisa: A lot of people don't realize that even as we sit, there are muscles that are being stretched and there are muscles that are contracting. So the reason why kids are so annoying when they come back to school is because their muscles are working in the opposite when they stand in class, but then we over work it and then we try to be super demanding and have them stand the whole class, not realizing that the same tension that builds that like couch potato butt that comes from sitting all day, the same thing can happen from standing. And I notice that when I stand all day, when I try to work out after that if I don't stretch really well, it's not the jumping stuff, it's the first time I think about going to the ground, I'm like "Oh my god, I don't know how to do that anymore." I don't know how to contract those muscles to get on the ground without feeling like I'm gonna hurt myself.
>
> Merida: You are singing the song of my people, my friend. As somebody who leaves from a full day on her feet and then goes and teaches yoga for two hours, yeah.

The group then expressed concern regarding auditory and visual health, considering their current teaching situations:

> Neil: And then we have to think of auditory health as well. Because you know, I have days where I just get migraines at the end of the day. I can't do it, it's just too much. And I really worry sometimes, I had a bout with vertigo and I sometimes wonder how that's going to affect hearing and all of those sounds sometimes.
>
> Delisa: And now we have to be concerned with eye health. With the asynchronous and synchronous, they want – they're trying to help us by saying use those videos, but then I think if I can spare these children's eyes and just have them look at paper and board old school style – that benefits me too. I don't want to stare at a screen any longer than I have

> to. And I notice the difference today like how things start twitching, like my eye and my muscles in my face start twitching the longer I look at screens.
>
> Neil: Have y'all done blue blockers [glasses] yet? I highly recommend it.
>
> Emma: Do those really help? Because I want to purchase some, but they can get expensive.
>
> Neil: You can get them on Amazon. I actually got a coating on my glasses just cause like, it was bad.
>
> Emma: Yeah cause my eyes – I feel like my vision gets kind of blurry when I look for too long and then you get a headache, it's just not good.

Physical wellness strategies that participants shared in this conversation included posture awareness, vocal use awareness, auditory health awareness, vision awareness, and the use of blue light blockers.

In interviews, participants cited exercise as a major component of their wellness. Emma said running, going to the gym, and spending time on the trails in her town were her biggest form of self-care. Delisa described boxing and "fitness stuff" as a cathartic release, Josie talked about walks and hikes with her husband and dogs, and Merida cited her gym and trainer as gifts telling her to move forward. Neil would do physical warmups like jumping jacks with students during class time and would often talk about his running or going to the gym in order to model healthy habits for his students. Additionally, Emma and Merida both mentioned using yoga for singers in their classrooms.

Delisa and Neil also mentioned vocal health initiatives in their initial interviews. Delisa had vocal nodules and polyps in the past, and prior to school beginning, attempted to record as many vocal warmups as she could as a prevention tool. She planned to use the recordings rather than leave warmups live when her voice was feeling tired or strained. Neil felt that introducing students to their vocal mechanism using explicit vocabulary when teaching vocal pedagogy to

his middle schoolers was very important: “So trying to talk about tension and raising your soft palate and rolling your shoulders back – that sort of thing. Trying to use explicit language to describe the things that we’re doing in class” (Interview One). By providing students with the knowledge of their vocal mechanism, he hoped to empower them with self-awareness and autonomy to take care of their voices.

Mindfulness and Meditation

All five teachers cited mindfulness as a strategy for self, student, and classroom wellness. At Josie’s school, mindfulness was a full-school initiative, with a counselor sharing mindfulness strategies over the PA system when school was in session. Merida was recently certified as a mindfulness teacher and had just begun developing a mindfulness and yoga class for her school when we began this project. In his choir classroom, Neil and his students engaged in a practice of Mindfulness Mondays: “We would start the days with a focus on an affirmation – like some sort of phrase that we would repeat at the beginning of each rehearsal like ‘It is up to me to be the change in the world’ or something like that. Or ‘I am at peace with not understanding the correct answer’” (Interview One). Additionally, Neil and Emma both used and encouraged their students to use mindfulness techniques to address performance anxiety.

Participants indicated that practicing mindfulness within their practice as teachers allowed them to be more responsive to their students’ needs:

> Neil: And so if you’re dealing with some of those harder situations, like a student who is hungry, being neglected, a victim of racial violence – approaching that in a way that’s constructive and approaching that in a way that’s compassionate, but approaching it in a way that’s just calm and mindful. I feel like that is going to be more productive and more – I don’t know – solution-oriented. Or compassion-oriented.
>
> Merida: I feel like the tag word in that is mindful. Because I think kids can sense when you are looking to talk at them versus listening to them.

> Josie: Yea I definitely agree with that. The idea of listening to understand versus listening to respond I think really plays into that. And when – as Neil said – you're at a point where you are calm and more even-keel, it's easier for you to listen and understand where they are rather than just listen so that you can respond so that you can move on so you can go. (CTSG Meeting Two)

Delisa also mentioned that being mindful when in professional situations allowed her to slow down and allow for "creativity to naturally flow in me" (Interview One). She found that by calming her mind and observing her thoughts, she was able to more productively channel her creative energies when lesson planning or preparing for conference or workshop sessions.

Emma and Josie both used meditation as a management tool for anxiety and shared their strategies with their students. Emma described how she discovered the practice of meditation:

> There was one point – like October, where I was just so anxious. I was like climbing the walls with anxiety. It was not healthy. So every morning I would meditate for like 10 minutes and it's crazy how that [anxious mindset] totally changed. (Interview One)

Following her success, she shared meditative techniques like visualization (i.e., formation of a mental visual image, sometimes imagining a desired outcome) and square breathing (i.e., breathe in four counts, suspend four, breathe out four, suspend four) with her choir students and found that it was a "great reset button before you start singing" (Interview One). Josie found that short mindfulness and meditation videos designed for children worked best for her students, especially in the weeks leading up to a concert. She explained that using the strategies was most effective when she explained why they were doing the meditation and how it might help. For example:

> There have been times where I will tell my students, a week or two before a concert "Friends, I'm going to get stressed and you are going to be riled up with adrenaline about this, and those things don't mix. So let's meditate before we start this rehearsal." (Interview One)

CTSG members reported utilizing mindfulness and meditation personally and modeling it for their students. They also established procedures and precedents for mindfulness and meditation in their classrooms and encouraged their students to consider their own mental health practices.

Self-Care and Continuing Education

Prior to the CTSG meetings, each participant described a different approach to self-care. Emma practiced self-care by focusing on her physical health with running and mental health with meditation, Neil practiced self-care by working out and advocating for a better work schedule so he could have more time for wellness activities, and Merida practiced self-care by getting away from technology and taking long walks at the beach. After taking a self-care inventory at a school professional development, Josie realized that self-care for herself meant a tea kettle in her room and moments planned in her lesson where she could take a second to breathe. At the time of our initial interviews, Delisa was in the middle of a move and struggling to find time to practice a "traditional" version of self-care (i.e., rest and relaxation) amidst the demands of her professional and personal time. She said:

> All I know is that when people text me and they say "Delisa take a break, Delisa rest," I'm like "the things that you do don't allow me to slow down." My version of slowing down is the fact that I'm still at home right now. That I just decided that this was more important than me going up to campus and cleaning my classroom. So let me take care of myself. That's a growth. (Interview One)

Her self-care at the moment was unpacking her bedroom and making a comfortable place at her new home before she did the same in her new classroom.

CTSG members reported that continuing their education contributed to their overall wellness as music educators and their personal satisfaction. Neil described reading as "part of my

mental health and wellness" (Interview One), Merida felt that her yoga and mindfulness training led to "constantly feeling like my brain is on fire in a good way" (Interview One), and Delisa found that reading, learning, and teaching about social justice issues in music education brought her joy. In an effort to challenge herself during quarantine, Josie ordered and read "a bunch of books," took online music teaching classes, and participated in online professional development workshops. She explained that growing and striving for understanding through activities like these provided mental stimulation, adding to her wellness. Emma volunteered to join the CTSG because she missed studying and researching and thought that the project might be a good way to support her craving for continuing education and professional growth.

Wellness Concerns

When I asked participants about concerns they had regarding wellness in music education, their answers fell in two different areas: concerns for students and concerns for self (teacher). Participants shared some of these concerns during their initial interviews and others during CTSG meetings and check-ins as they reflected on wellness concerns. Participant worries about students included the trauma that students were carrying, students' constantly shifting living and learning situations, and students' lack of tools for processing emotions. Regarding their own wellness, participants worried about the emotional weight of teaching, the expectations for giving, the normalization of living in toxic worlds, and the anxiety, exhaustion, and stress that came from their teaching situations. Although many of the participants' wellness concerns were a result of the learning and teaching circumstances required during the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear that the pandemic amplified wellness issues that were already present in music education for teachers and students.

Concerns for Students

Student Trauma

Most of the concerns that CTSG members expressed about their students were a direct result of distance learning and COVID. While balancing in-person and online learning in the early fall, Emma listed the difficulties her students were facing: "Multiple students are dealing with poor mental health due to COVID. Students are simply not showing up to class/not handing in work. I also have a student right now who is terribly sick with COVID" (Check-in Ten). Delisa worried about the stress and anxiety her students displayed as they decided whether to continue working from home or to return to school. She questioned her role in encouraging one student in particular to return to school:

> I can see it in her. She's just burnt out. She's just burnt out. Everything that she's saying, she's just trying to get this off her chest. And I'm like this is what all these students are carrying. And they don't have the tools to take care of themselves, especially when it's their parents who are pushing them into doing this. That's my question. What do I do then? (Delisa, CTSG Meeting Two)

Neil worried about maintaining and strengthening relationships with students as their families dealt with job losses and COVID sickness and deaths: "Everyone is so vulnerable right now" (CTSG Meeting Five). He expressed his belief that students were going to need extra support processing emotions related to their experiences during COVID: "The entire world is going through a traumatic experience right now and it's going to take a while to process this [experience]" (CTSG Meeting Five). Although CTSG members acknowledged that music classrooms were a good place to address processing the experience of COVID, they questioned

how to broach the subject with their students. This concern led me to choose social emotional learning as one of the CTSG's discussion topics.

Shifting Living and Learning Situations

When making phone calls to choir parents at the beginning of the year reminding them about a materials pick-up at her school, Delisa gained a special insight into her students' living situations:

> About ten parents in, I changed my checklist from reminder – you know like pick-up reminder – to wellness check, because every conversation like went off – not the deep end, but just took a tangent and there were a few parents – at least two or three parents who started crying when I called them. Like eventually they just started venting about stuff and I was like "If you need any help with something and if I need to pick up Susan or something like that, just let me know." They have like experienced COVID deaths in their family or friends and now the kid that's in my choir class is actually the grandkid and they lost their job and it's one of those things that we spend a lot time thinking about like – the parents want kids to go back to school, but the teachers need [the safety of working from home]. And in that moment I thought, well the parents want the kids to go back to school AND the teachers are concerned about their health. All of these people are hurting, and that phone call – I did that for about four hours. And I don't say that for a pat on the back, but I say that because that is the most important thing I've done since August 13th was make those phone calls. (CTSG Meeting Five)

Delisa noticed that many of her students were balancing their schoolwork online or in person with instability at home characterized by things like parental job losses, family deaths, or distracting working environments, and this unpredictability seeped its way into their work in her

class. During the first few months of online learning, several students came to Neil expressing anxiety or nervousness about their living situations. For example, he described one student in particular "who came out as gender non-binary and they were very concerned about spending so much time at home with their parents who are very accepting but also don't understand a lot of what's going on" (Interview Two). Neil helped to coach them through some of their fears and concerns, but was worried about the student spending so much time at home in the long run.

Merida worried about the consistency of her students' learning environments. She had several students who "dropped off the radar screen because their internet was inconsistent, or their parents were first responders" (Interview Two). Her school was in a rural area, and although her school sent Chromebooks home with as many students as they could, students still struggled to turn in work. Many of her 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students faced challenging work situations at home:

> [They] could barely get work in because they didn't have consistent enough internet, or they had five people in their house working from home and the internet would drop out or they had five people working from home and only two devices. So, it was like - who does work when? (Interview Two)

Merida told of one student in particular who shared his device with his two younger brothers and was only allowed to use the internet from 6:00 to 7:30 a.m. before his parents who were both teachers began their days of virtual teaching.

Lack of Processing Tools

Delisa was the most outspoken participant regarding concerns for her students. One specific concern was students' lack of awareness of mental and physical health: "The idea is

these kids don't know how they feel – they got gas, they're hungry, they need to fart, or they have a headache – they think it's all the same thing. They don't know" (CTSG Meeting Three). By acknowledging her students' experiences and finding strategies to reach her students, Delisa hoped that she might be able to help them approach their mental and physical health and process their current situations. She worried, though, about the setbacks they would face due to the distance learning they had in the spring: "It's like developmentally, they are not where they are supposed to be. We're worried about academics. They don't know how to be humans" (CTSG Meeting Three). Because of the social and emotional nature of many of the concerns addressed above, the group decided to devote extra time to studying and discussing social and emotional learning and mindfulness strategies for their students.

Concerns for Self (Teacher)

"Emotional Weight"

One major wellness concern the CTSG members expressed was the emotional burden of their work beyond teaching music. For example, by creating safe spaces for and trusting relationships with students, teachers often take on the role of confidant and mentor. Josie described how being a confidant challenged her wellness:

> I was the first step for a lot of students struggling with mental health or gender identity. It's a lot of weight when a student comes up to you and says like "I've been having thoughts about hurting myself." And I'm the first person they're telling and they're kind of just unloading. And I mean like – there's a part of me that feels lucky that they were able to tell me – especially my student who came out as trans – a couple of students that came out as trans to me – and that I was able to reach out to get the help that they needed in the adjustment that needed to take place. But I mean, that's still a lot because – I mean

> first of all there is just that emotional weight that you are taking and processing – and then more paperwork and emails and things like that. (Interview One)

Josie was grappling with the dichotomy between celebrating the success she had in creating a safe space and lamenting the emotional weight that this success generated.

COVID teaching and learning plans amplified the struggle of being a confidant for Emma: "My students are struggling. One came to me expressing suicidal thoughts, that was a really tough day. I am struggling. When my kids are hurting, I am hurting" (Check-in Six). In addition to the struggle of teaching in-person and facilitating on-line learning, Emma took on the weight of her students' mental health struggles.

During our first CTSG meeting, Delisa reflected on the emotional toll of a moment in her teaching career when she realized she might be the only person in her building who had invested in developing skills for dealing with students who were facing traumatic circumstances:

> There was a situation where there was a kid who was in the wrong place at the wrong time at a vending machine and people just assumed that this kid who had transferred from alternative school was doing something bad and next thing you know, they've followed this kid back to the choir room and there's a cop with his hand on a taser and they're about to attack this kid and I have no idea. They just walked into the choir room – I don't even know this kid – and at the end of the day I end up grabbing him and I had him in this – what some people refer to as the Asperger's hold – like when someone's panicking and they really just need to feel human touch.

Delisa's response impressed the school officer, who took a picture of her as she restrained the student and wondered aloud why the choir teacher was more able to deal with the situation than he was. This response concerned Delisa:

> I'm like "That's just such a not productive solution-oriented mindset." That "Oh Delisa has the ability" – musicians, we have the ability to do these things that's not worth investing in. Which is why I think we get burnt out. Because then you realize "I'm the only one in this building who freakin' cares. I'm the only one who is willing to do the work because it's practice." It's when you care about humans and try to make humans musicians and don't try to create these elite robotic artists who just so happen to also be human. That's not the mindset that we need to function in.

It took leaving that job, moving across the country, and starting her master's degree for Delisa to realize that just because she could deal with the emotional burden, she did not have to. It took a change of life circumstances for her to "realize that my level of survival instinct is not normal. No one should have to be this ready for trauma" (Interview One).

Pressure to Give and Toxic Teaching Worlds

Adding to this "emotional weight" is what Emma and Josie both described as a pressure to constantly give when serving as a teacher or director. Emma found that in her first year of teaching as she attempted to provide a safe space for her students, she took on too much: "You take all of that on and you're not pouring into yourself. It's hard to keep your cup full when you are constantly giving and giving and giving. Especially in a pandemic" (Interview Two). As a director, Josie felt that "the expectation is that we have to give up so much" (CTSG Meeting One). The many roles of a music teacher perhaps influenced that expectation:

> I feel that we're in a profession that we are so needed for different things. We have so many different roles – not just the teacher and choir director role, but fundraiser and music advocacy and for a lot of times student advocacy for their needs and just so many different things and it can be really hard to say no to something. Especially because you

> feel so needed and it can be very scary to think about the repercussions of what can happen if you don't follow through with those things… I want to be my best self so I can – just that whole concept of you can't fill from an empty cup type thing. (CTSG Meeting Two)

In the past, Josie explained that she made sacrifices "for my students, so that my students could have the best experience they could" (CTSG Meeting One). At her previous job, Josie viewed her extra work and time invested in grant writing, DonorsChoose projects, and email writing as unappreciated by her school community, which led her to what she called a "mental spiral" (Interview One) or "depression spiral" (CTSG Meeting One). She saw this work as a sacrifice of her mental health, and retrospectively wondered if it was worth it:

> Having that mental spiral really put into balance that I was giving way too much of myself to my job and the fact that it wasn't – it wasn't even that it wasn't appreciated, but it was like what is it for? In the grander scheme of things…like why? (Interview One)

When she moved to her current job, Josie realized that she had left an unhealthy work situation and strove to "leave work at work" (Interview One) with her new job.

Neil and Delisa both expressed concern for living within a professional culture that does not prioritize personal wellness. Neil shared with the group his struggle to take personal time away from work:

> We don't live in a culture or a society that really appreciates taking time for yourself. I mean we as teachers understand that we're expected to be doing something…we have this idea where we need to keep doing something and if we're not busy then we're not useful. And that's such a bad thing. It's not healthy. (CTSG Meeting Four)

Delisa described her realization that it is ok to say "I'm not okay" and felt that it took her so long to reach that point because "we have normalized living in toxic worlds and smiling for no reason" (CTSG Meeting Three).

Anxiety, Exhaustion, and Burn-Out

Participants throughout the study acknowledged the roles that anxiety, exhaustion, and burnout played in their daily lives as teachers and musicians before and during COVID. Several CTSG members traced their anxiety back to performance situations during their undergraduate studies. For example, Emma recalled:

> When you are a Freshman or Sophomore in undergrad music school and you see all these grad students and you're like "Oh my gosh they're so good, they're singing these big arias and here I am just singing the *24 Songs in Italian* book." It's scary – you want to be on their level – they're so talented. I'll never forget I sang in recital hour once and it went fine, but in the middle of it – it was like my Freshman year – I got so nervous. And I think I ended up making up the words to a phrase and it just freaked me out. I totally let it go and no one noticed, but it just freaked me out that my brain did that to myself. And I got so nervous every time I performed after that for the next month. (Interview One)

Other participants described performance preparation anxiety. For example, Merida explained that before she found meditation and mindfulness, before performances she would describe herself as a "massive waterfall where I'm just anxiety laden and I can't sleep and I'm freaking out and I'm getting up at four to make costumes and all that other stuff" (Interview One). Delisa discovered over the past year that what she originally thought was adrenaline was actually anxiety and stress: "I had so much stuff on my plate, I thought I was like 'go go go go go!' but I was really just having low level panic attacks all day to push me through stuff" (Interview Two).

She later surmised that this acceptance of anxiety and stress may be systemic: "Entire institutions of learning are based around a feeling of anxiety that is just coded as 'Well we just push through, and we just don't stop no matter what'" (CTSG Meeting One).

When he began teaching at his current position, Neil quickly recognized that his teaching and extracurricular load was too much:

> I was just feeling burnt out. It was too much. And I had advocated over and over saying "This is too much and we need to do something different" because by the end of those days I was just so exhausted. And then on top of those days, I was staying for rehearsal an extra two to three hours after school. I would be so exhausted that I wouldn't have time when I came home to focus on those wellness activities for me. (Interview One)

Merida described a similar exhaustion in her teaching past, especially when she worked with unsupportive administrators: "There have been times where I've just been so burnt out – I've thought 'Do I want to run away and just become a yoga instructor? Do I want to go into some other type of education?'" (Interview One). The wellness concerns that the participants felt in their teaching positions before the pandemic set the stage for additional challenges as they navigated distance, hybrid, and in-person learning during a pandemic.

A Year of Unknowns

On top of their usual concerns for teacher wellness as I described above, CTSG members addressed new concerns due to COVID-19. Below, I share their amplified feelings of anxiety, exhaustion, and stress, their many back-to-school logistical questions, their reality of constantly shifting learning plans, and the questions they shared regarding how they would continue their work as choral educators. Participants shared these concerns during initial and final interviews, throughout CTSG meetings, and via the check-ins that followed CTSG meetings.

COVID Anxiety, Exhaustion, and Stress

The beginning of COVID brought about novel anxieties and moments of exhaustion and stress for the participants. For example, as a person in a high-risk group, Neil had to worry about meeting his basic needs (i.e., "How am I going to get my groceries? Can I see anybody? Am I going to be able to see my parents?" [Interview Two]), but also had to worry about reliable employment:

> We usually get our contracts in March…and we didn't get our contracts until the beginning of May. So at the back of my mind, I'm thinking "Okay, I'm a specialist, my job has been optional for the last two months, and now I'm not getting confirmation that I'll have a paying job next year." (Interview Two)

As he described his situation, Neil became emotional: "Part of me is like 'I want to cry right now.' It's such a messed-up situation. We have to be flexible, but I don't know how much I can flex with this" (Interview Two). Following the initial switch to online learning, Emma described anxieties that stemmed from concern for her students and their well-being: "I was like are they okay? Are they staying healthy? This kid seemed really quiet on Zoom. Was it because he's not doing well or he's having technical issues?" (Interview Two).

The switch to online learning intensified the participants' workload and led to new kinds of exhaustion. At the end of a virtual learning day, Merida explained "I would leave my days more exhausted than I had ever been in my life and I only had four hours in front of the kids" (Interview Two). Delisa tried to appease the expectations of her students in choir, which led to sleepless nights:

> I went to bed around four o'clock. Cause by the time you get the videos done that need to be done and make sure that you have the tracks uploaded for All-State (because 'All-

> State is life' – no it's not, it's trash.) But there's some children who still very much care about it – and it's emphasis on the Juniors and Seniors. There's what I want to do – the plan that I have – and then there's them still holding on to as much as possible and I don't want to cut the last bit of for lack of a better word – illusion – away from them. So that comes with an extra layer of work. (CTSG Meeting Five)

Josie explained that at the beginning of virtual learning, schoolwork consumed all of her time during and beyond traditional school hours: "I definitely had a few sleepless nights. I don't think I had pulled an all-nighter since like grad school – so I just thought that was interesting that I was doing that again" (Interview Two).

Once the school year began, Emma, Delisa, and Merida all met with students in person and had to contend with the anxieties of interacting with students and other staff on a daily basis and the possibilities of having consistent contact with students, roommates, and family members who tested positive with COVID. For example, in regard to mask wearing, Merida expressed a "gigantic fear about middle schoolers and upper schoolers just trying to push the boundaries" (CTSG Meeting Five). Delisa shared with the CTSG her anxiety as COVID numbers rose in her district: "Every day I drive to work and I'm anxious. Every single day. Because it's a different day and the kids have gone off and they've done other things and then they come back" (CTSG Meeting Six). Additionally, Emma and Delisa both had to balance teaching distance learners online with teaching their students in the classroom. For Emma, this balance meant no prep time during the day:

> I'm teaching like ten classes a day because you have to follow up with the distance learners and the kids that are in class so it's like double the workload even though it's one class period for this synchronous schedule. It's just a lot with the technology and the Wi-

> Fi isn't good in my room so like that's that. And then I have to travel to three different buildings in a given day. (CTSG Meeting Six)

Emma was not sure if the work was worth the exhaustion and stress: "If this is the future of teaching, I don't want to be a part of it anymore. It's just not personable" (Interview Two).

Throughout the course of the study, each of the participants questioned their future in the profession of music education. As she discussed the overwhelming emotional toll of her current situation and her students' struggles, Emma said,

> I never went into teaching to teach online. I have spent almost half of my post grad life teaching in a COVID world. It's weird to think about and definitely has me thinking about the future of my career...good and bad. I don't want to continue teaching if it's going to be like this. (Check-in Nine)

Merida considered running away and becoming a full-time yoga instructor, Delisa pondered leaving her current position and focusing her energies elsewhere in education, and, while he was on leave, Neil looked into real estate management. In the fall, Josie's elementary school principal added additional classes to her workload and required her to serve as a reading assistant for other teachers. After asking her elementary principal for support and to lighten the load multiple times, Josie put in her resignation to her .8 elementary position. He did not allow her to resign and finally started working with her to make her schedule work online, only after she tendered her resignation.

Back to School Logistical Questions

When we began our CTSG meetings in August, none of the teachers knew exactly what their school year would look like. Over the summer, school administrators across the United States planned for multiple teaching and learning scenarios, which left some teachers making

triple the number of plans in order to be ready for teaching online, in person, and/or for a variety of hybrid options. Delisa's school was beholden to their state's governor: "He keeps going back and forth. He just changes his mind and then – like you literally watch the news and the governor says something different and then you get an email from administration" (Interview Two). As the beginning of the school year loomed, many districts had not yet decided if they would enact online, in person, or hybrid learning plans, leaving their teachers in a holding pattern. Late in the summer before he learned he would be forced to take sick leave, Neil was frustrated by his district's lack of commitment to one learning model:

> Our school district put out a matrix saying – okay this is what in-person classes are going to look like, this is what a hybrid model is going to look like, and this is what at-home is going to look like. And so essentially, we are spending all of our time and the district is spending all of this time creating all of these different scenarios. And it's like just stop wasting our time. We don't have time as it is. We're going back to school in a month. (Interview Two)

At that point, he was crafting curricula for three separate scenarios, and receiving no answers from his administration regarding his needs as a high-risk individual. The additional work and uncertainty added to his already present anxiety due to isolation and COVID-concerns.

Because they were a small, private school, Merida's administration decided mid-summer that they would return to school in person. Just a few weeks before school began, Merida had an abundance of unanswered questions regarding back-to-school:

> School doesn't seem to have an answer for that right now – which is unnerving and scary and I really feel like I'm kind of putting myself on the front line with no understanding of what happens if I get sick over and over and over again. (Merida, CTSG Meeting Two)

The lack of procedures for specialists was particularly concerning for Merida, who worried about working with Kindergarten through 8th Grade students in person. Her school planned on isolating grades into pods and having the four specialists on campus travel from pod to pod. The possibilities of getting sick and spreading illness to her students were especially unsettling for Merida, and her administration neglected her concerns when she voiced them:

> Nobody's thinking about the chain reaction for specialists because we see so many kids. What's the chain reaction if I get sick? What's the chain reaction if I've seen a child and get sick? What's the chain reaction if a parent decides the child has to go to school and gives them Tylenol and then they spike a fever and now they're quarantined at school. And I know that there is nothing that I can do except listen to our school nurse. (Merida, Interview Two)

Three weeks after her second interview, Merida brought the same questions about crossing multiple pods to her CTSG colleagues, as the school had still not addressed her concerns and her anxiety about the situation was growing:

> All I want is a protocol. So – I teach for the first two weeks and a 7th grader comes up with COVID and I've been exposed. And now I have to quarantine. And then I go back for four days and a 2nd grader has COVID and I've been quarantined. How the – I'm sorry Colleen you can bleep this – how the ever-loving fuck am I supposed to do this? I mean I teach K to 8. How am I supposed to do this? (CTSG Meeting Two)

Merida's administration eventually answered her questions and established a policy involving remote learning, COVID tests, and specialists defining what "direct contact" meant to them, but the possibility of getting sick continued to be a source of significant anxiety for her.

The administration in Josie's district also made a mid-summer decision, announcing that they would stay online through at least the first quarter (as of the end of data collection they were still online and planning to stay online through the end of January). Although Josie appreciated this choice and was able to plan for just one teaching scenario, she worried that they would continue the trend of excluding specialists that she experienced in the spring:

> Not only were we kicked out as co-teachers from their [virtual] classrooms, we couldn't see any of the announcements, we knew nothing that was going on. I think what's even more frustrating is that during the school year, we had been co-teachers, like during normal times we were co-teachers. But now that we were moving into this on-line only format they were kicking us out. (Interview Two)

When the music teachers from her district brought their concerns to the administration in the spring, the administrators gave "a bunch of non-answers and it was just really awful" (CTSG Meeting Two). Being forced out of the teaching picture challenged Josie's mental health: "I went into a little bit of a spiral because I felt very undervalued. There were a couple days where I just didn't get out of bed because I was like 'What's the point?" (Interview Two).

As she considered teaching high school students in person, Delisa wondered about the practical aspects of teaching in a pandemic that she had never had to consider as a choir teacher:

> Do I now have to make time for them to clean everything they touch? I have to make sure they keep masks on the whole time? What's the consequence if they take the mask off? How do I enforce that consequence? If I ignore it, then everyone takes it off. If I enforce it, what am I going to enforce so that coughing – 'cause you know some kid somewhere is going to cough on someone and say "COVID" and make a joke. That's going to happen – is that attempted murder now? Like honestly? (Interview One)

She knew then that cleaning, masks, and potential illness were going to add new expectations to her and her students' daily routine in and out of the classroom.

A month before school was to start in person, Emma described how the uncertainty was challenging her mental health:

> I wish that I had the peace of mind to know what to expect. I feel like there are so many unknowns and then they released this information like we're going to go back to school. But what is that going to look like? What is personal protective equipment (PPE) going to look like? Are we going to have resources available if we're going to have to sing outside? I feel like we're constantly talking about mental health for students, which is so important don't get me wrong, but no talk of that for teachers. (Interview Two)

Neil observed a similar trend in his district. In all of the communications from his district, they mentioned how "this is going to be the hardest year and you've never worked this hard before," but "not once have they really asked the teachers how they were feeling, how they were doing" (CTSG Meeting Five). The principal at Delisa's school used what she called "toxic positivity" to "make teachers just perk up" (CTSG Meeting Five). She found this attitude especially frustrating:

> No one wants to hear that because it's not real. And I'm a happy person, but I'm an optimistic realist and that's just not healthy. And anyone who thinks that that's a healthy way to go about something is just setting themselves up for the biggest breakdown of 2020. And if you think it can't get worse, it did. So we need to address these things. (CTSG Meeting Five)

She worried that covering hardship with positivity could have negative outcomes in the long haul.

Situations such as the ones I described above could lead one to criticize administrators and the ways in which they handled managing schools during the pandemic, and certainly led some of our participants to question the priorities of their schools and districts. However, during our third CTSG meeting, Delisa shared her perspective regarding administrative failure:

> I realized who the enemy really was in all of this and it's the fact that in all things we are not organized and the people that we trust to carry us are looking above them because those systems above them have failed them as well. People failed our admin and that's why our admin has no option but to scramble and attempt to fix something – it's just broken. (CTSG Meeting Three)

Unfortunately, this broken system was stretched thin during a pandemic and many teachers and students were forced to bear the brunt of this failure. For the teachers involved in this study, that failure meant challenges to their mental health as they navigated their ever-changing teaching situations.

"Constantly Pivoting on A Dime"

Each time the CTSG met, at least one of the participants was experiencing a transition at school due to COVID-19. Merida described the struggle of planning for instruction during the pandemic:

> It was three and a half months of "How do I do this?" And constantly being told "Be prepared to do this" and then things would shift. That's what happened throughout this entire thing. It's been "We're going to do this…no wait we can't do this…okay we're going to do this…oh wait we can't do that." That was my experience: Constantly pivoting on a dime going – "Okay, so this is the new objective" and "How do I accomplish it?" (Merida, Interview Two)

Emma faced similar challenges as she and her students transitioned through four distinct learning plans:

> Emma: It was awful…we sang outside into October.
>
> Colleen: Wow.
>
> Emma: I mean, it was hard. The biggest thing was sound because like, I'll have like 40 kids in one class and the piano is over here, then the basses are way over here, and they can't hear. They can't hear me either, because I have a crappy microphone that I bought for me off of Amazon and the speaker is that big, you know, it doesn't carry well so…
>
> Colleen: Yeah, those aren't meant for the outdoors.
>
> Emma: I know. And then I have a megaphone. They're like, "Oh, we'll get you a megaphone." I then I get—and then some kids are like this (covering her ears). You know, it was just, yeah. It was interesting.
>
> Colleen: What happened when it got too cold?
>
> Emma: So, the Health Department realized that, oh, probably having them outside is just as much of a health risk as it is to have them sing inside. So, they said like end of October, I think it was end of October, you can come in.
>
> Colleen: And then, was it like really spread out?
>
> Emma: So, it actually happened kind of perfectly because - we're on I think our fourth learning plan at the high school now. So, we do like rotating A, B days which aren't great for ensembles, but it did cut down on the amount of people in my room at a time. I just have them spaced like six feet apart and we have enough room to do that - even more - because I have a huge room and there's not as many kids as there were when everyone was face to face. So, it works well. Now we're all virtual so…
>
> Colleen: Learning Plan number four.
>
> Emma: Learning plan number four. Yeah, we started in person full time. And then we were quarantined for two weeks. And then we were hybrid. So this is our fourth and now we're all virtual so… (Interview Three)

At times throughout the semester, Emma had to work within different learning plans at the two schools at which she taught. For example, in October, she saw all of her middle school students

in person, but had to balance face to face students in her high school with online distance learners during the same class period. She called it "an ongoing mind game" (Check-In Seven).

The instability of the calendar was a stressor for Delisa: "I can't tell you the date of [the fall] performance because I don't even know if I'm going to be able to execute the lesson plan that I have tomorrow" (CTSG Meeting Five). Delisa explained that for her, every year followed a map of sorts, guided by checkpoints like decorating the room at the beginning of the year, contest, or singing at a game. The uncertainty of the calendar because of the possibilities of COVID throwing it off left her feeling unsteady: "I just kind of feel like we are in the middle of the ocean and I don't know what direction there's land. 'Cause what's the checkpoint? Am I preparing for a purpose? What actually is the most important thing?" (Interview Two).

For Merida, Emma, and Delisa, learning plan changes could happen overnight, or even during the school day. For example, the faculty at Merida's school were told about a confirmed COVID case at 11 a.m. on a Thursday, they had an emergency dismissal at noon, and all students and teachers were remote learning and teaching the next day. The next week, she was required to teach two grades remotely online while she worked in person with the rest of her students. Delisa and her students also experienced an instant change in plans when they were supposed to have their first choir performance at a spirit night. She had ordered food and kids were staying after school, and then they received the news that the event had to be cancelled because the homecoming court and cheer team had to be quarantined. After staying on campus late and getting all of the students home, Delisa felt "pretty drained…this news and tease to a finish line stole some of my adrenaline and energy" (Check-in Ten). Merida felt a similar depletion of her energy: "I feel like I'm the center spike in a kaleidoscope and I'm really tired of it. My brain is

constantly on high, I just – I can't sleep, I can't think, I can't…" (CTSG Meeting Two). The constantly shifting nature of their jobs left the participants exhausted and drained.

Teaching Choir During A Pandemic

CTSG members struggled with how they could adapt the choir classroom to their current situations, because as Neil explained, "No matter what we do, the students' expectation of a choral experience is not going to be authenticated" (CTSG Meeting Five). Prior to the pandemic, Neil relied on group singing for building relationships with and between students, and wondered how to build relationships with his students in his current teaching circumstances "without expelling spit onto everyone" (CTSG Meeting Five). Emma laid out her planning thought process for engaging her choir students below:

> I guess it depends on what they choose—if we're in person, if it's a hybrid model, or if it's all virtual. If we're in person I'm going to be deathly afraid of getting COVID or one of my students getting COVID. So, health is going to be the biggest concern and that's totally going to mask any kind of content delivery at all. If we're hybrid, still that concern of staying healthy and not getting COVID, my students not getting COVID and then also putting my content in person and online—kind of learning how to do both of those things. And then if we are virtual—creating instruction that is both engaging for students and also creative. I don't want to just give them theory worksheets. I want to sing, but we can't do that over a Zoom call. So, trying to figure out content that engaging and stimulating and that will keep my kids excited about music in general. (Interview Two)

Emma and Neil both questioned how they could provide an authentic choir experience for their students while also facing the novel challenges of teaching during a pandemic.

When I asked her what her main concerns for music teachers and students going into the fall were, Josie said "Not singing…I'm really afraid that they are going to just not be singing" (Interview Two). Neil also grappled with the role of singing in his classroom:

> I can't have [my students] singing, I can't have them playing instruments. And then if we are – because we don't have any idea of what's going to happen either – if we are going back to online learning, what's that going to look like. Because I would probably have more of a singing component there. But is that really a good experience for kids to be singing into their computers all the time? I don't know. (Interview One)

Whether they planned to be online or in person, as the project began, the teachers struggled to articulate the role of singing in their classroom.

Merida's teaching situation and approach to teaching music in the fall was distinct from her CTSG colleagues. When her school went online in the spring, Merida explained "my biggest grapple was how do I keep kids singing?" (Interview Two). However, as they headed back to school in the Fall, Merida was told explicitly by her administration that she wasn't allowed to sing with her students, so she adopted a full Orff approach with her choir students. Thanks to generous funding from her school, she was able to purchase additional instruments that allowed her to try "all the things I've ever wanted to do with kids. Bucket drumming, body percussion, certain songs from the Schulwerk books…this is my year to just embrace it and go for it" (CTSG Meeting Five). She used this opportunity to focus on the process over the product.

Neil and Delisa both saw COVID as an opportunity to "just switch up everything" (Delisa, Interview Two). Neil wanted to do this through examining popular music that might have been considered inappropriate for school:

> We could even look at something that's maybe not school appropriate and talk about it, break that down, talk about why it isn't school appropriate, why is this art, and start having some of those more deep connections so the students can really reflect on the media that they're consuming in their lives and relate it back to say like "okay, what key signature is this in, what time signature is this in?" Look at the fundamentals and relate it back to something that they would've never made that connection. And so, once we do get back into that situation where they're able to sing and we're making music, they find more purpose in that. (CTSG Meeting Five)

Similarly, Delisa wanted to "rethink how choir goes" (Interview Two) by relegating Western music to only contest music and creating a pop, a cappella, non-classical unit for her students: "I'm going to make the best out of the situation that I have, and my best allows me to actually rethink and revamp some of the toxic setups that we have in music education in the first place that are a part of the normal" (Interview One). As she thought about how choir might function in her classroom in the fall, Delisa emphasized the problematic nature of the idea of returning to normal:

> I'm trying to revamp my own content to make sure that I reiterate that it's okay to not be okay and that you're not weird – you're not weird, you're not stupid, you're not dumb. You might be depressed – that's very real… So, my concerns are that – the fact that there are still so many people who are saying "when things calm down, when things go back to normal." And I'm like it will never be the same again. It will never be the same again. And like I say with all things, what are you holding on to? It wasn't that great in the first place. These kids were burnt out to the max. We were burnt out to the max. So, so let's

> have this as an opportunity to get real and get on the same level as much as we can and talk about how we are not okay. (Interview Two)

Delisa planned to use the unique teaching circumstances brought about by COVID to reexamine her approach to music education and find new ways to support her students online and in person.

Chapter Summary

The participants in this study represented a range of experience, education, location, and teaching context. Participants had between two and 25 years of experience in the classroom and three participants held master's degrees. All participants taught in different states and represented experience teaching in a variety of educational backgrounds including rural, urban, and suburban. One teacher taught in a private school, while the other four participants taught in public schools. Despite the variety in their experiences, the participants quickly found they had more similarities than differences, and that connection played a key role in building trust and creating community.

CTSG participants entered the professional development experience uncertain of the role that wellness could play in choral music education. They perceived a lack of connection between traditional music education strategies and wellness strategies. Strategies of wellness that participants had used prior to the pandemic included physical health strategies like exercise, stretching, and vocal health, and mental health strategies like mindfulness, meditation, self-care, and continuing education. Participants used these strategies personally and shared many of these wellness strategies with their choir students during ensemble time.

Wellness concerns as shared by the participants included concerns for their students and concerns for self (teacher). Participants expressed concerns about student trauma, living situations, and lack of emotional processing tools. They wondered how they as choir teachers

could address the deficit of social and emotional processing that their students were experiencing. Additionally, participants worried about the emotional burden they carried as teachers, the toxicity of teaching environments, and the anxiety, exhaustion, and burnout that they felt as music educators. The pandemic brought about a variety of new and amplified concerns, including COVID anxiety, exhaustion, and stress, back to school logistical concerns, constantly shifting plans, and priorities in choral music education when singing is a challenge. The events of a year of unprecedented uncertainty took a toll on the participants' overall wellness and left them reexamining their approaches to choral music education.

CHAPTER FIVE: CTSG IMPACTS ON PRACTICE

The CTSG met seven times during the months of August and September of 2020. Participants decided on a weekly schedule during the month of August, before most of them began school, and a bi-weekly schedule during the month of September, once school had begun. For each meeting, I provided CTSG members with one reading that would be the centerpiece of our discussion and additional optional supporting materials like short YouTube videos and podcasts. As informed by participant interest, topics included self-care, social and emotional learning, mindfulness, physical wellness, and music as wellness (see full list of materials in Appendix G). Although I varied the format and order of activities for each meeting, essential elements of the meetings included the opening check-in, the member-led reading discussion, and some sort of collaboration. Throughout the seven meetings, participants took turns serving as discussion facilitator, note-taker, and timekeeper.

In this chapter, I examine the ways in which CTSG experiences impacted participants' professional practice. I begin the chapter by sharing policies and activities that participants created and implemented as a result of their time with the CTSG. Then, I detail the ways in which participants reported changing their professional practice as a result of the CTSG, including personal wellness choices (e.g., meditation, journaling, self-care) that participants explored in and out of the classroom in an effort to amplify their personal wellness and professional effectiveness.

Wellness Workshops: "I'm Going to Steal That"

Throughout the course of the project, the CTSG members participated in four workshops. Within these workshops, participants shared their work with their CTSG colleagues and gave each other positive and constructive feedback. With the inclusion of these four workshops, and

collaborative planning time in the other three meetings, my goal was to have participants leave their experience with the CTSG with practical ideas that they could immediately implement in their classrooms. During these workshops, participants shared wellness policies, student self-care activities, SEL or mindfulness activities, and final wellness action plans, all of which I detail below. These workshops were a favorite element of the CTSG meetings for many of the participants, and several participants cited the collaboration during the workshops as their favorite part of the project. Throughout the workshops, it was common to hear participants asking one another "Can I steal…?" or "Do you mind if I borrow…?" as they complimented their colleagues' work. I think it is important to share all of the work participants created for these workshops because it displays the practical impact that studying and discussing wellness concepts had on these teachers' professional practices.

Wellness Policies

For the second CTSG meeting, I asked participants to create a wellness policy for their classroom that they might include in a syllabus or on a website. I encouraged them to make their wellness policy work for their specific context and community and provided several examples of wellness policies and resource pages for their reference. During the meeting, each participant introduced their policy and the other members of the CTSG shared encouragements and constructive criticisms.

Josie crafted a wellness policy for her middle school choir students that she planned to include in her syllabus and post at the front of her classroom. The policy reads as follows:

> *We are better able to become our best selves when we individually prioritize our own well-being. This means taking care of our physical health (including hearing and vocal health), our emotional health, and psychological health. We can prioritize our wellness*

by implementing our individual self-care plans. These self-care plans can also include strategies for intellectual wellness, occupational wellness, social wellness, and spiritual wellness. (CTSG Meeting Two Workshop Artifacts)

Following the policy, Josie included links to resources for self-care and wellness which included district-, city-, and state-specific resources. Josie explained to the group that as a result of our discussion of dimensions of wellness the week before, she intentionally included "different aspects of wellness" (CTSG Meeting Two). She planned to help her students create a self-care plan in the second or third week of school "after we've done some team building and broken down some walls" (CTSG Meeting Two). Following her presentation of her material, I prompted the group to problematize the idea of "best selves" and consider alternate vocabulary in its place (e.g., thrive, prosper, and succeed).

Neil wrote his wellness policy for his middle schoolers with the intention of "highlighting that these [wellness ideas] are healthy highlights for a lifetime of singing" (CTSG Meeting Two):

While the primary goal of Choir is an understanding of vocal technique and performance, students have the ability to create healthy habits for a lifetime of singing. Students will learn about and practice good auditory, physical, and emotional health in their rehearsals through appropriate vocal warm-ups, awareness of musculoskeletal alignment, emotional reflection and awareness, and best practices in healthy vocal production. Physical and emotional well-being, and wellness activities will be taught in conjunction with repertoire. Students will have an obligation to work with [their teacher] in monitoring their own well-being. Singers are encouraged to maintain healthy life habits, (e.g., good hydration, sufficient sleep, healthy diet, rest when sick or overworked), and to seek help with questions or when concerns arise. [The teacher] will work with

students, parents, and other health professionals, (speech pathologists, ENTs, psychologists, etc.) to create a safe and healthy learning environment. (CTSG Meeting Two Workshop Artifacts)

As he drafted this statement, Neil "wanted to have something in there where the students felt that they were also working *with* me" and intentionally gave concrete examples "like getting sleep and eating healthy" (CTSG Meeting Two). He also was purposeful about including the role of other professionals: "I think it was important for me to say – it's not just me. Like I'm not going to be the end all of all wellness in this situation, it's gotta be working with other professionals that are going to help" (CTSG Meeting Two). Josie praised Neil's conceptualization of wellness and healthy habits as something that can be developed in the classroom and implemented into daily life. She especially appreciated the aspect of collaboration and said, "I'm probably going to be stealing some of those [ideas] and modifying my policy a little bit to include some of those things" (CTSG Meeting Two).

In an effort to make her wellness policy accessible to students in Kindergarten through eighth grade, Merida rooted her wellness policy in student performance objectives:

Hearing - Students will understand...

- *That they should always be able to hear the outside world, even with earbuds in.*
- *That they have the right to wear something to protect their ears, especially if they have sensory issues.*
- *Wearing earplugs does not mean they can ignore the teacher or their directions.*

Posture - Students will understand...

- *The reason behind good choral posture and why I ask them for it.*
- *The physical benefits to using good choral posture.*
- *How they can use this choral posture to help themselves in other points in their lives.*

Vocal - Students will understand...

- *My outline for what is yelling and what is good singing.*
- *That I will never put them "on the spot," I will ask them to consider their actions and mindfully change them.*
- *I am always there to help them to make good habits.* (CTSG Meeting Two Workshop Artifacts)

Merida explained that she planned to add the three major categories of hearing, posture, and vocal understandings to a recommendations sheet that she gives to students and their parents twice a year. On this sheet, she writes "I notice…" and "I wonder…" statements like "I've noticed that this is going on, I wonder if you can help me with this or if they are willing to change or if they understand how to grow" (CTSG Meeting Two).

Emma created a musicians' wellness policy for her middle school and high school choir syllabi. As she worked on the policy, Emma wondered if she had provided enough information or if it was too "surface level": "There are so many things that you can include and I didn't know where to stop" (CTSG Meeting Two). Within the document (Appendix H), Emma referenced intellectual, physical, and psychological health, and linked websites and resources for her students' use. She felt that it was important to introduce "different kinds of health—to make kids and students aware" (CTSG Meeting Two). Emma also included addresses and phone numbers for local health specialists and counselors, and invited her students to talk to her about any concerns they may have regarding their wellness.

Delisa did not complete a wellness policy for the workshop. She struggled with the wealth of information available and needed a starting point: "I was like I don't know where to begin. I think it's also because I need to work on my own wellness policy and the amount of content that I'm looking at right now is overwhelming" (CTSG Meeting Two). She looked to her colleagues' wellness policies for inspiration.

Through this workshop, participants displayed a range of understanding of the role of wellness within their classrooms. Merida's student performance objectives were strictly physical, focusing on hearing, vocal, and musculoskeletal health, and were structured around student understanding of teacher expectations. Neil, Josie, and Emma took a more holistic approach, referencing multiple dimensions of wellness and emphasizing self-care with the assistance of a teacher.

Student Self-Care Activities

During the third CTSG meeting, participants shared a student musicians' self-care worksheet or activity. I asked participants to be creative and craft their activity to their students and their specific context. Once again, during the meeting, participants introduced their work and their CTSG colleagues gave feedback and asked questions.

For her general music and choir classes, Merida created a wellness check-in (Appendix I) that focused on student mindfulness and breathing. She envisioned using this document at the beginning, middle, and end of her class period to evaluate her students' baseline wellness and the effectiveness of their breathing activities. Merida also noted extensions to her baseline wellness check-in that would be appropriate for her older students and may lead to deeper connection to the breath.

Josie designed the outline for a self-care activity that could span a series of lessons over time (Appendix J). The meeting before, I shared a self-care pyramid graphic that she "took and started running with it" (CTSG Meeting Three). Her idea was that her middle school students would create their own self-care plans and illustrate those plans on pyramids. Students would begin discussions as a class, and then move to smaller and smaller groups until they were working on their plans individually. Josie noted that it "definitely goes across class boundaries –

it's not choir-specific at all," but that "doing something like this would not be far off from what I typically have them do" (CTSG Meeting Three). Neil appreciated how the series of activities allowed for students to become aware of their needs and create an individualized plan. Delisa hypothesized that the student-generated plans could serve as problem-management materials for substitute teachers:

> Can you imagine the folder for the sub? Where they are having a problem with Tony and then they look at the back of Tony's information and his contact stuff and there's his pyramid that he made with how to deal with him before someone would react to his actions…that's where you could put "this is the teacher he is comfortable going to" or "this is the thing that he can do." I'm like oh that can be – I mean it would be work, but it would be good work. (CTSG Meeting Three)

Josie was excited by Delisa's idea, particularly because she saw potential for this activity to take work off of her plate in the long run. Rather than struggling to discover approaches that work for the students, she saw this as an opportunity for students to share what they already know about themselves and their needs: "To have that information there is so valuable" (CTSG Meeting Three).

Emma crafted a chart for her students to use that included daily questions they could ask themselves (Appendix K). Her goal was to create "something that I can give to the kids that's relevant to starting school in a pandemic" by using "questions that I personally have been asking myself during this time" (CTSG Meeting Three). She asked basic questions regarding physical and emotional health and "envisioned either giving this to my kids and talking through it or putting it on my door of my office or the door of my classroom when school starts" (CTSG Meeting Three). Emma saw potential for allowing time for students to personalize the chart and

create a self-care checklist. Merida immediately asked permission to use the chart and said, "I needed that today, because I don't know how to teach this" (CTSG Meeting Three).

Delisa designed two student wellness worksheets for her students to use in her classroom (Appendix L) and discussed how she would use the worksheets in a series of lessons. To begin her first lesson, she would introduce the six dimensions of wellness using the wellness framework slide that I had shared in the first CTSG meeting. Next, she would ask students to list examples of wellness expressions within each dimension. In a separate lesson, Delisa would ask students to create a personal wellness plan with self-care options for each wellness dimension. She saw this series of lessons as a good opportunity for students to "practice speaking about themselves" and "build confidence in saying [their wellness needs]" (CTSG Meeting Three). When her CTSG colleagues complimented her on the scaffolding of the lessons, Delisa explained how important it was for her to "design stuff so it's the same lesson multiple times taught in a different way" in order for her students to "go with the pace that [they] need to go in order to do it right" (CTSG Meeting Three).

Neil created a weekly wellness check-in Google Form for his middle school choir students (Appendix M). His goal was to give his students "a way to start to become aware of how they are feeling in the moment" (CTSG Meeting Three). This check-in would be complementary to his weekly reflections and would allow for a more simple and organized way for students to share examples of how they are feeling and why they feel that way. Josie loved the idea of using a Google Form and appreciated the fact that he included "I don't know" and "maybe" options for those students who didn't know how they felt. Merida saw Neil's check-in as a good way for music teachers to support their students and acquire concrete information if they were concerned enough about a student to reach out to someone like a school psychologist.

Neil agreed, but wondered how to tell students he might follow up without making them "feel like they wouldn't be able to share" (CTSG Meeting Three).

Social Emotional Learning and Mindfulness

During the sixth CTSG meeting, the participants workshopped materials that Emma, Merida, and Delisa shared. The prompt that I provided for this workshop was to create a lesson, assignment, activity, or unit that focused on one or more aspects of social emotional learning (SEL) and incorporated a mindful moment. I explained that it could be in any format; the goal was to have something they could use in their classrooms with their students.

Emma began the workshop sharing a list of mindfulness activities that she used in warm-ups and during rehearsal:

Warm-Ups

- *Blind counting 1-10.*
- *Breathe in 4, Out for 4.*
- *Meditation activity (Calm App, Headspace App, etc.)*
- *"Picture This" activity*
- *Body Scan*
- *Alexander Technique*
- *Listen to the person singing next to you*
    - *Something positive*
- *Look/listen for any new sensations in the way you are singing*
- *Take a breath/close your eyes in between each vocal warm up*

Repertoire

- *Water breaks*
- *Stretch breaks*
- *Meditation breaks*
- *Look/Listen for new sensations in the way you are singing*
- *Add physical movement to the music*
- *Check Ins*
- *Talk and Turn* (CTSG Meeting Six Workshop Artifacts)

She described the list as her developing toolkit of go-to activities: "It's not real big, but you know – it's what I got" (CTSG Meeting Six). Emma saw potential for adding to this list over

time, especially as she and her students became more comfortable with yoga and mindfulness. Her CTSG colleagues encouraged her to add kinesthetic learning options to both her warm-up and repertoire strategy lists.

Merida shared the intention setting procedure that she used during choral warm-ups and planned to use with her elementary and middle school students as they worked with Orff instruments that semester:

- *Students stand next to their desks. Placing their hands on the bellies, invite the students to close their eyes and think about what will make them feel successful during rehearsal. Remind them that it can be a musical goal (example - playing a melody that has been frustrating them) or a focus goal (example - don't let others distract them from their work). Take three breaths from the belly as they are considering what they want to accomplish.*
- *On their next inhalation send hands to Tadasana (Mountain Pose). Perform a Half Sun Salutation. When coming to Halfway Lift ask the students to consider if they have set a good goal for themselves. Perform Halfway Lift twice, then sweep hands over head and bring them to heart's center. Invite students to set their intention in their minds, and to invite their emotions to support them during class to reach their goals.*
- *Throughout the class have students check in with themselves about how well they are achieving their goals. (*CTSG Meeting Six Workshop Artifacts)

Merida felt that using this movement and intention-setting at the beginning of class helped her students to "refine what they want to get done" (CTSG Meeting Six). Throughout the class period, she would check in with her students:

> I will stop after each song or after each activity and say, "Okay check in with me: Yep I'm on target, I'm somewhere in the middle, or I need to get going." So, it really helps them understand their learning style and when they have a day where they're right here *(thumbs up)* the whole time, they really feel successful. And right now, part of being

mindful is understanding when you're being successful. (CTSG Meeting Six)

Delisa was enthusiastic about the element of accountability in this activity as students create expectations, set goals, and assess themselves. Exercises like this one, Delisa said, "prepare [students] for healthy human interaction" (CTSG Meeting Six).

Delisa shared a worksheet (Appendix N) that she created in an effort to "put the learning in the children's hands" and promote a mindful choral education in which students mindfully engage with classroom repertoire (CTSG Meeting Six). Delisa was inspired by professor and composer Lee Kesselman's Four Ts for score study that she had learned at a workshop years ago. She expanded it to "The Five Ts": tessitura, text, time, texture, and tonality. On the worksheet, which Delisa used with her high school choir students when she introduced a new piece of music, she left opportunities to reflect on each of the elements. Merida envisioned adapting the worksheet for her students:

> I could literally turn this into a morning meeting worksheet by refining the language for younger people where they can work together as a team to learn about a song. They can all answer together…Even a 1st grader with some guidance could walk through this with his or her peers and do this. (CTSG Meeting Six)

Emma, Josie, and Merida all asked to borrow this activity for their own classrooms and Neil suggested "thought" as a potential addition to the worksheet that may allow for more journaling options.

Wellness Action Plans

For the final CTSG meeting, I asked participants to create a wellness action plan. I shared with the group that my goal for the action plan was for participants to have attainable goals and results from the CTSG for themselves and for their students and strategies for keeping

themselves accountable. I provided a document of possible options (Appendix O) and invited participants to do what worked for them. Emma and Josie created personal self-care plans, Neil and Merida chose to keep wellness journals, and Delisa designed a series of wellness lessons for her students. I detail each of their final products below.

Emma

For her final workshop product, Emma created a personal wellness plan that she called "The First Fifteen" (Appendix P). To start off each day of the new school year, Emma planned to start her day with five minutes of "devotions or reading or praying" in order to attend to her spiritual health (CTSG Meeting Seven). Next she would complete five minutes of meditating to help herself "calm down and organize," followed by five minutes of journaling to "write and articulate what I know I want to say now" (CTSG Meeting Seven). After trying to follow the plan herself, Emma said, "I'd love to share it with my students and have them create a self-care check-list" (CTSG Meeting Seven).

In the few days that she had tried her plan, she noticed some benefits: "I think this just really helped slow me down and I can think through things easier in the day and just the things that would stress me out before doing this don't like they used to" (CTSG Meeting Seven). Neil complimented the simplicity and consistency of the plan. Delisa asked to use the plan, and considered how she might use different five-minute wellness activities with her students:

> Like a make your own! It's a choose your own journey of wellness! And then you can have a wellness cup in your classroom or maybe like a virtual – like a Kahoot [online game-based learning platform] wellness thing and then like the kids could vote on their morning wellness thing. (CTSG Meeting Seven)

Seven weeks later during her final interview, Emma reported that personal and professional

challenges had thwarted her dedication to her plan, but that she was still trying to do one thing for herself a day.

Merida

Merida shared during the final workshop that she had chosen to reinstate her use of a wellness journal for her wellness action plan. Several years before at a summer retreat that she attended, a wellness workshop director encouraged participants to begin their day with 30 seconds of brainstorming answers to the prompt "If I can be five percent more authentically me today, I would…" (CTSG Meeting Seven). Following her journaling, Merida would "do a drop open of this book [of yoga meditations] …and read one and see how it impacts my day" (CTSG Meeting Seven). Themes that she noticed in her journaling included the happiness that music, movement, and yoga brought her and the feelings that she had not dealt with regarding her depression and panic during remote learning.

Merida shared that she had taken her wellness journal to school and shared it with several students that she mentored with their academic organization. She hoped to start with them an academic wellness journal in the near future, using the prompt "If I could be five percent more academically successful, I would…" (CTSG Meeting Seven). Josie saw potential for taking the "authentic self" prompt "in so many different directions" with her middle schoolers: "Middle school students…are trying to figure out who they are and that changes every day – what your most authentic self is – especially at that age level" (CTSG Meeting Seven).

Adding her morning journal back into her routine helped Merida re-center herself after the tumult of pandemic teaching:

> What I realized is that I have all of these things in place and COVID knocked me off my center and I need to come back to it. I need to come back to doing the journaling every

> day. Just quick in the morning when I'm eating breakfast. I need to come back to doing the drop opens of *The Radiance Sutras* [a yoga meditation text]. I need to just – I have the tools, I just got so wigged out by this damn virus that I have – I walked away from it and it's time to come back to it. (CTSG Meeting Seven)

Merida hoped that by reaching for some of the wellness tools she already had in her toolkit, she might be able to "be a good model for my students" (CTSG Meeting Seven).

Josie

For her wellness action plan, Josie created a spreadsheet that would serve as her wellness toolbox (Appendix Q). Within the toolbox, she listed six dimensions of wellness (physical, emotional, mental, occupational, social, and spiritual) and strategies for addressing each of those dimensions daily, when working, on the weekend, and monthly. For example, for her mental wellness strategies, Josie listed "hobby/exploration" as her weekend strategy, "create something" as her workday strategy, "outdoor time" as her "any day/everyday" strategy, and "day trip" as her monthly strategy.

The second part of Josie's plan was a wellness questionnaire that she adapted from a professional development that she had attended a few years before. The results of the questionnaire would help her "just objectively see where I'm at" and "see where it is that I need to focus on my plan" (CTSG Meeting Seven). Josie acknowledged that her plan needed to evolve over time:

> My plan is essentially, every month or so or, if I just start feeling out of whack, just kind of doing a really quick reassessment so I can see what area it is that I need to give a little bit more care to. (CTSG Meeting Seven)

Merida requested a copy of the questionnaire and Delisa proposed that students might benefit

from a student adaptation of the current questionnaire.

Neil

Because Neil was not specifically working with students at the time of the final workshop, he decided to "take a different approach" by "looking at myself, what I can do for wellness personally, and then kind of taking that back to my school district" (CTSG Meeting Seven). The district Neil worked in required all teachers to include a literacy component utilizing a specific system that, Neil shared, did not allow for much free writing. He wanted to give students "an option to just journal or talk about what's going on in their lives," so he "decided to write my own journal where I'm just talking about what's going on in my life" (CTSG Meeting Seven). Neil felt that he could take the model that he created back to his students as an example of informal writing that could also impact their social emotional learning.

Within this journal (examples in Appendix R), Neil included his daily meals, workouts, musical activities, an evaluation of his mood and musical activities, and "anything that I feel like I need to get off my chest, or I feel like I need to talk about" (CTSG Meeting Seven). The self-evaluation aspect of Neil's journal model resonated with Josie:

> I really love that you have those different areas that you want to check in on yourself that you're kind of focusing on and then at the end of the day, you're able to say whether or not you are happy with your decisions on those. So, when you're like outside of the situation – cause you're like yeah, I'm glad I ate this donut, but then like ten hours later, are you still glad you ate that donut? That type of thing. (CTSG Meeting Seven)

Looking back over his previous days of journaling helped Neil gain perspective of what parts of his life were contributing to his mental health positively and negatively. After keeping the journal for a few weeks, Neil reported that he was able to "see the benefit of [wellness practices]

physically and emotionally, and mentally" and wanted to add more meditation and yoga into his daily routine (Interview Three).

Delisa

For her final workshop product, Delisa shared with the CTSG an assignment that she created for her students (assignment description in Appendix S). To introduce her project to the group, she shared a metaphor that she learned from music educator and speaker Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser:

> He's like, "If you plant bananas, what do you get? Bananas." And you do a call and response with the kids. "If I plant potatoes, what do you get? Potatoes. If I plant nothing, what do I get?" And often kids say "nothing," which is not true, what you actually get is weeds. So, I was like, what if we have a concert called…wait for it… "What We Plant." And talking about what we plant in ourselves and in our spirits and in our minds and in our hearts and all that different stuff. (CTSG Meeting Seven)

First, Delisa asked students to create a wellness plan that would be a continuous living document that they could update throughout the year. She made a video to explain the dimensions of wellness and provided sample grids for her students in which she listed wellness strategies and matching songs for each dimension. For example, for her physical dimension of wellness, she listed boxing, stretching, and time in the sun as her wellness strategies and "Never Give Up" by Neffex as her physical wellness song. As she completed her wellness grid, Delisa noticed that she struggled to complete some of the categories:

> I realized there were one or two categories that I hadn't found a musical connection to it, which was probably why, since music is so important to me, that's probably why I was having a disconnect to the word and having a hard time actually following through with

the things that I need in my wellness plan. (CTSG Meeting Seven)

Delisa hoped that by making that musical connection to wellness with her students, she might help them to see their own wellness in a new light.

Finally, Delisa asked students to pick a song that was on their list or not and to sing the song "in performance of that aspect of wellness and tell me why" (CTSG Meeting Seven). For her example, Delisa shared a video of herself singing Adele's "Hometown Glory" and provided the following explanation: "I love the text of 'Hometown Glory' because it reminds me that even though I have lived in many different places, it's the people that make a place home, not the location" (CTSG Meeting Seven). Delisa's goal was to have a virtual end product that included poems, a script, the student solo songs, and unison pieces that they were working on in choir. Although she provided a due date for the videos, Delisa left the final date for the full project open-ended in an effort to eliminate pressure for herself and for her students.

Emma viewed Delisa's assignment as a positive disruption to the flow of a traditional choral school year: "I think so much in the school year we're like 'concert, performance, festival, solo and ensemble' all these things. So, to teach music – that it can be a form of wellness – is so important" (CTSG Meeting Seven). Neil praised Delisa for her musical connections: "What better way to engage your student population than to say, let's focus on the music that's important to you" (CTSG Meeting Seven). Josie asked to "steal" the wellness layers image, and Merida envisioned "borrowing" the assignment for her Kindergarten through third grade performance in the spring: "What I'd love to do is kind of tweak it so that it can focus around our core values at my school and help the kids to really understand them and they can create their own performance" (CTSG Meeting Seven).

Practical Impacts: "You Can Do This in Your Class"

Each CTSG member applied wellness constructs from the CTSG in their classroom in different ways. Participants utilized elements of social and emotional learning (SEL), especially the key element of self-awareness. They also used yoga, mindfulness, and breathing techniques, helped their students create self-care and wellness plans, and searched for ways to prioritize students' needs. Below, I detail the practical personal and professional impacts of the CTSG as reported by each participant in their final interview.

Neil

Neil found solace in the professional outlet that the CTSG provided as he was unable to be in his classroom during the entirety of this project: "I think mental health-wise, I've been really struggling lately. And this really helped me kind of get out the rut, like every two weeks, we get together and we talk about something that's really important, and it's constructive" (Interview Three). Being a part of the CTSG presented frustrations because he wasn't able to immediately implement new ideas, but also gave him "something to look forward to, while I haven't been in the classroom" (Interview Three). As he worked with his CTSG colleagues, Neil discovered a "sense of fulfillment of just doing something with education for the past 12 weeks" (Interview Three).

When Neil and I completed his final interview in November, he was two weeks away from going back to teaching. Although he was nervous to be back in the classroom, he looked forward to approaching wellness in music education "in more of a renewed and a more meaningful way" (Interview Three). As he considered teaching his students face-to-face and with a ban on singing due to COVID concerns, Neil planned to incorporate musicians' wellness into his upcoming instruction:

> We can't sing. But we can breathe behind the mask. So doing some breath exercises, practicing yoga, and then later on, when those students come back and we talk about those things, it's not going to be new. It's not going to take away from the musical experience that they're having. (Interview Three)

Neil also looked forward to incorporating elements of social and emotional learning into his choral instruction. For example, when discussing the "aesthetic emotional experiences" of choral music with his students, Neil hypothesized "If wellness can be a part of that [emotional understanding], then I would feel like I was making an impression on them. (Interview Three)

Neil's biggest takeaway from the CTSG was a drive to be "more explicit about wellness within the classroom" (Interview Three). He realized that he was practicing some of the wellness techniques that we discussed, but that he could provide more structure for student learning and understanding:

> Giving students more of a framework to work within, and not just saying "Okay, well you should be breathing here. Let's do some breathing exercises." I think taking the time and spending that 30 minutes just teaching them: "Okay, this is what you should be feeling when you're breathing, here, let's do yoga as a class for just one class period." Like that sort of thing. I think being more explicit and giving more opportunities and discussion and allowing students to create their own like wellness plan too, I loved that aspect of it. (Interview Three)

Neil's situation was unique from his CTSG colleagues' experiences in that he was unable to directly point to impacts of professional practice due to his time away from the classroom. However, during his time with the CTSG, Neil was able to reflect on his goals as a teacher and his philosophy for teaching. This reflection "renewed my want to get back into the classroom and

to provide some of those opportunities for students to understand wellness in a more kind of broad sense" (Interview Three).

Josie

Josie viewed the "different areas and strategies for wellness and the steps to get there" as most impactful to her teaching practice (Interview Three). Working with music colleagues to analyze wellness tools and techniques made it easier for Josie to conceptualize how wellness fit in her choral curriculum. The strategy that she found most helpful was to do all of her wellness and SEL activities (e.g., class check-ins, self-awareness activities, self-care plans) *with* her students:

> I don't think they realize that I'm doing it with them, but it's just really beautiful to learn [wellness and SEL strategies] with them and kind of feel more connected to them in that sense, and then you know, have those strategies there for us to develop the overall wellness. (Interview Three)

Josie's goal was to find a balance between the wellness and SEL activities and her traditional choral instruction. Although at first, she described trying to find this balance as "overwhelming," Josie shared that breaking down the dimensions of wellness and wellness strategies with her CTSG colleagues "helped make that happen easier" (Interview Three). She hoped that she might be able to use the wellness strategies that she learned from the CTSG to "build up the curriculum" and allow a focus on wellness to support but not supplant her regularly planned curriculum.

As a result of her time with the CTSG and specifically the discussions on social emotional learning, Josie added class check-ins and activities that focused on student self-awareness. She wanted her students to "realize where they are and be okay with where they are"

(Interview Three). As Josie's instruction was completely online, she was able to engage her students in a lot of creative, technology-based wellness instruction. Students made Google slides of "things that make you happy" and of songs "that make you feel powerful" (Interview Three). She compiled the songs that students submitted and created a "hype song" playlist. This type of instruction made Josie reflect on the role of music class: "[Teaching with a wellness focus] reminds you what the purpose of music making really is. It's that it's not just to create sound. It's because it helps you with things and makes the world better" (Interview Three).

Another example of a project Josie used in order to promote student self-awareness was her superhero theme song project. Students created a superhero or alter-ego that they shared with the class virtually. Then, they decided musical elements that would be present in their character's theme song and composed a theme song either by parodying another theme song or writing their own music. Through instruction like this, Josie hoped to empower her students, to make her classroom "more student-centered," and to shift the learning to be "more student-led rather than being the person that's telling them what to do all the time" (Interview Three).

Merida

Merida's time with the CTSG reinforced her dedication to the use of yoga and mindfulness in her classroom. She explained, "The one thing that I find myself consistently using is some of the breathing exercises that we've all done with one another and some of the 'how do you see yourself' activities" (Interview Three). While teaching in a pandemic, she found these strategies particularly helpful for her fifth through eighth grade students:

> This is going to be a year that looks nothing like anything they've ever done. So, to help them through some of the activities that I've learned from this group, kind of be aware of

> where they're at in their bodies and in their minds so that they can kind of challenge themselves to grow, has been really, it's been cool to watch. (Interview Three)

For example, Merida relied upon mindfulness questioning when one of her students was struggling with her mallet work in class:

> I have one eighth grader who's regularly saying, she says "I can't do it." No, let's stop. Is that a good mindset for you right now? You're learning something new. Of course, it's not going to come easy. So, to be able to help her with some of the tools I've learned from this group, to be able to help her as a musician go "Nope, this is a 'not yet.' And how do I work through it? What tools do I need? How do I need to ask for help?" (Interview Three)

Merida viewed the mindfulness tools she was providing for her students during the pandemic as just as important and impactful as the musicianship tools she regularly provided.

Discussions with her CTSG colleagues throughout the professional development helped her to recognize that "wellness is actually unintentionally embedded in music education because we're always talking about how to breathe and how to work through things and how to recognize what's going well and what isn't" (Interview Three). These ideas seeped into conversations with her band colleague:

> The other day, my band director and I were talking about the fact that he said, "I don't feel like I'm very mindful." And I said, "Have you ever taped your own rehearsals? Because I see a ton of mindfulness in you saying to kids 'Are you aware of what's going well? Are you aware of what isn't going well? How are you going to approach that? Is it stressing you out? Okay, how do we remove the stress so that you can be successful?'" And I said to him, "It's unintentionally embedded in there. We just have to embrace that

> it's embedded in there and use it as it's meant to be, which is mindfulness and wellness rather than just saying, oh, it's just a rehearsal technique." (Interview Three)

Discussing mindfulness techniques with her CTSG colleagues reminded Merida that "[mindfulness] *is* really important" (Interview Three), which encouraged her as she taught mindfulness lessons to her school community.

Delisa

Delisa took a practical approach to all of her work with the CTSG: "Everything that we have done, I've immediately dusted off in my brain and thought, you can do this in your class" (Interview Three). She called the group her "bedrock" during pandemic teaching, as it made her "hyper-aware of wellness issues and how social emotional learning is not a gimmick and can be applied in all aspects of things and be woven into lessons" (Interview Three). The CTSG meetings helped Delisa to create a "logical game plan" and grasp onto "the tangible aspects of [wellness]" (Interview Three) as she worked with her high school choir students in person and virtually. Delisa hoped that by "talking the talk" and "walking the walk" and tripping and getting back up might help her find balance, build routine, and develop the wellness tools that she and her students need.

When I asked Delisa what she had tried out in her classroom as a result of her time with the CTSG, she responded, "Everything. It's ridiculous" (Interview Three). She added daily temperature checks to her students' routine, either verbally, using index cards, or in their Google Drive. Students created wellness plan charts that Delisa had already been able to rely upon when students were struggling:

> It's starting to come full circle when kids are like, "I'm just tired and I don't know what to do with my emotions" and I go, "Well, what do you do for your emotional wellness?" "I

> don't know." "Yeah, you do. Because you did a whole document on it. So either you … lied to yourself on the document or you're not going back to it." So one of these things, no matter which one it is, we actually can still move forward and fix it. So they have a wellness plan chart that I made that stays in their Google Drive. (Interview Three)

Additionally, Delisa added Wednesday yoga to her classroom routine, which she noticed helped her to better sleep, breathe, and vocally demonstrate. Delisa also wanted to teach her students that wellness goes beyond fitness. During pandemic learning, she was especially concerned about hearing and visual health for her students: "Sometimes the expectations of the assignment is that they don't use a screen so that they can get that break and that we go outside" (Interview Three).

Throughout the process of the CTSG, Delisa began to question some of her traditional choir expectations:

> Kids sitting on the floor and singing should never happen in my opinion, and they should all stand on the risers, the whole time. This is the first time in my life, outside of the elementary kids [at my last job], that I've had full rehearsals with kids on the ground.

Her students sat on yoga mats and held their music high, and felt comfortable in the space to do so. The fact that students still wanted to rehearse in this non-traditional way led Delisa to "question my why's" and become more flexible in the ways she engaged her students:

> Why do I make them stay in the chair or why do I make them stand up? Because that's what I was told. It was just what I'm told to do. But we sat crisscross applesauce in [my college ensemble] or did yoga and stuff like that and we were college kids. You know it can be done if you teach them why the breathing mechanism has to be tall. Oh, so I [as

> teacher] have to be really on my shit with my words, just like I am with discipline [expectations]. Same thing with the music. (Interview Three)

Delisa realized that she needed to be prepared with well thought out explanations for *why* she taught certain things certain ways, including wellness, discipline, and music literature. Although she felt a dissonance between her traditional expectations and new perspectives, Delisa reported that her students were "thriving," which encouraged her to be more flexible in her classroom.

As she taught wellness concepts to her choir students, Delisa discovered that certain students tested her professional boundaries by requiring unreasonable amounts of energy from her. She referred to these students as "vampires" who sucked her energy dry:

> Believe me, it's not all perfect, because at the same time, the other things that I have gotten from [teaching wellness] is learning my limits and I have students who are vampires. They're also the students who haven't completed their wellness plan or don't want to do the temperature check or who don't want to do the yoga. And so, whether it's the intrinsic or an aesthetic value of it all—whatever the motivation is, because they're behind in that department, they also don't see how their need for attention or their need to speak with someone can be draining. That they're not actually looking for solutions, they're looking for a dumpster. They're looking for a place to put it.

The presence of wellness in Delisa's classroom opened her eyes to the absence of wellness elsewhere in her school:

> And so sometimes people will come to me with stuff and I'm just like, oh my god. Like, I forgot that my classroom was like this peaceful oasis or this place where like real conversation is happening. And there are kids who go the other six periods of the day where the teacher doesn't even talk to them. They play a video, and they do their

> asynchronous homework even though they're face to face. And so, anxiety and negativity and things that are brewing and those storms can find their way in my classroom and thus in my energy and that's exhausting, and I don't know the solution to that yet, but I think I have the tools. I just don't know what I need to do yet. (Interview Three)

Delisa hoped that by weaving wellness through her curriculum, she might be able to help students identify the wellness strategies they needed in her classroom and beyond.

Emma

The practical implications of the CTSG meetings upon Emma's professional practice included a "focus on mental health and well-being and teaching to the student as a whole" (Interview Three). Emma reported that following the project, she "constantly" sent out temperature checks to her students, took more time during class to "talk about our feelings and why we feel that way," and added mental health activities or mental health days each week (Interview Three). For example, one "mental health" day she led her high school choral ensembles in fifteen minutes of yoga, fifteen minutes of mindfulness and meditation, and ten minutes of vocalizing. Emma also utilized discussion prompts from the CTSG's SEL discussions like "I think…I feel…because…" to encourage students to share their feelings and build self-awareness skills (Interview Three). Emma reported positive feedback from her students following these activities: "They loved it. My kids are begging for more yoga. Every day. They love it. They live for it" (Interview Three).

Emma also noted that she hoped that down the road, her students might take addressing their mental health "more seriously than what they are" (Interview Three). As Emma and her students experienced shifting learning plans, addressed competition expectations, and engaged in regular choir curriculum plans in addition to wellness strategies, Emma shared, "I think right

now there's so much going on that I feel like [the students] think I'm just crazy sometimes" (Interview Three). She explained that wellness strategies like meditation and mindfulness were her "saving grace" and that she "didn't think I needed [the strategies] as much as I did" and hoped that wellness strategies might "keep my kids going" through the rest of the year (Interview Three).

One aspect of the CTSG that Emma particularly appreciated was the opportunity to "pull from others' ideas" (Interview Three). For her mental health day described above, she used a yoga video that Delisa shared with her and a meditation app that Josie shared with her. She used Delisa's "5 Ts" lesson plan from the SEL/Mindfulness workshop (Appendix N) and breathing exercises that Merida shared with the group. Learning from her colleagues' experiences, she explained, "has made me think differently about some of the things that I introduce" (Interview Three).

When her district switched from in-person to online learning in November, Emma described herself as "in survival mode" (Interview Three). She struggled to think about how she might address wellness for her students, especially because she struggled to assess their well-being virtually:

> I even told the kids, "When you walk in the room, I am like 99% sure how you're feeling that day, based on like how you're holding yourself, what your expression is on your face, all that stuff. And when I just join a Zoom or Google Meet, I can't tell. I can't see your body. I can't see—you know like all these factors that communicate to me how you're doing." (Interview Three)

During the interview, she brainstormed ways she might be able to address these concerns through leading yoga and mindfulness activities virtually and having open conversations about

mental health. Specifically, Emma wanted to find ways to normalize the presence of emotional struggles: “I know a lot of my kids when we share ‘good things’ are like ‘there's nothing good. The world is so bad right now.’ And normalizing that that's okay if you don't have anything good to share” (Interview Three). She envisioned using a self-awareness activity that Delisa shared during the fourth CTSG meeting and finding other “creative ways” to address her students’ needs.

Summary

This chapter was an examination of how participants were impacted professionally by their CTSG experiences. Wellness workshops were a participant favorite as they shared work with their colleagues and explored different practical ways to implement wellness strategies in their classrooms. Products from these workshops were wellness policies, self-care activities, SEL and mindfulness activities, and wellness action plans. Participants encouraged and inspired each other throughout each workshop, and frequently requested to borrow or steal each other’s ideas. Notable examples include Emma’s self-care question chart (Appendix K), Neil’s wellness check-in Google Form (Appendix M), and Delisa’s student wellness assignment (Appendix S).

Each participant utilized the knowledge and resources that they learned from the CTSG differently in their professional practice. However, common themes included the utilization of social emotional learning strategies, mindfulness practices, and self-care techniques. Neil found a sense of professional fulfillment through his interactions with the CTSG while he was away from the classroom due to health concerns. As a result of her time with the CTSG, Josie focused on self-awareness for her students and shared the importance of doing all of her self-care and wellness exercises with her students. Merida’s time with the CTSG helped her to refocus on her dedication to yoga and mindfulness in the music classroom after the challenge of the pandemic.

Delisa infused her daily professional routine with wellness activities that she discovered or created as a result of her work with the CTSG like temperature checks, wellness plan charts, and classroom yoga. The practical resources that Emma acquired from her CTSG colleagues were especially helpful as she shifted her focus from traditional choral ensemble expectations to mental health and well-being for her students by adding mental health activities and discussions to her daily plans.

CHAPTER SIX: CTSG IMPACTS ON PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

In this chapter, I share how experiences within the Collaborative Teacher Study Group (CTSG) impacted participants' perceptions of and expectations for wellness in music education, as informed by CTSG meetings, check-ins, and final interviews that occurred in November of 2020. First, I discuss new general wellness perceptions and strategies that participants derived from their experiences with the group. Second, I share their new perceptions of wellness specifically in choir and some of the questions they have going forward. Third, I present participant thoughts regarding normalizing and prioritizing wellness for educators and musicians as a community effort. Finally, I detail participants' perceptions of the CTSG as a form of professional development.

New Wellness Perceptions and Strategies

As a result of the work they shared in the CTSG, participants identified new ways to think about the role of wellness for their students and for themselves. Participants were particularly concerned about tuning in to their students' wellness needs, practicing wellness and establishing habits for professional longevity, and establishing boundaries that lead to sustainability in the field. Their new personal priorities of wellness (i.e., for themselves) included mindfulness and self-care. Participants shared that although these strategies were especially pertinent during the time of COVID, the importance of these strategies would persist in a post-pandemic future. Participants discussed utilizing three different applications of wellness: wellness strategies (i.e., plans of action for addressing wellness), wellness habits (i.e., settled or regular wellness tendency), and wellness practices (i.e., routine ways of addressing wellness).

Wellness as a "Tangible Start": Tuning in to Students' Needs

Participants perceived a necessity to tune in to their students' wellness needs. For

example, in late October, Josie's middle school announced that a quarter of students were failing. When she heard the news, Josie expressed a feeling of "pressure to try to take care of my students' needs before I can start teaching them" (Check-In Seven). During this time, Josie prioritized her students' physical and mental state over her traditional music class objectives. Similarly, Emma shared "I definitely now am more concerned with their well-being, their at-home life. What are they bringing into my room when they walk in in the morning?" (Interview Three).

In her final interview, Delisa explained that wellness had become "a limelight focus" and "part of her daily vocabulary" (Interview Three). For Delisa, a focus on wellness allowed her to gain an understanding of her students and find what she called a "tangible start," or a baseline of sorts, to understanding her students and their needs:

> You have to teach the child to care about themselves, because you can't motivate someone who doesn't think they're worth anything. And so maybe telling the child that they're beautiful or that they're important or that they matter – that's not enough, because it's not concrete enough. That's not tangible…Wellness has created a tangible starting point for the conversations I'm having in my classroom. (Interview Three)

A focus on wellness provided Delisa a way to connect with her students beyond music making. She realized that some students needed someone to coach them through understanding their wellness needs:

> I can do the hugs, all the fluffy stuff, but I can also say "You're not feeling good today. You're sad today. Did you eat? Did you sleep? Well, you didn't do these things. That doesn't help. Let's start there. Let's start with a meal. Let's start with a nap in the practice room. Let's start with a journal. The temp check. Let's start with – you're a person of

> faith. Have you prayed? If you say it's important to you, then it must be something that fuels you. Have you had a conversation? When's the last time we talked to that friend? That's what it is you're missing. You're longing for someone. Okay." So it's given me a tangible start. (Interview Three)

By becoming aware of the depth and breadth of her students' needs, Delisa found a starting point for understanding how she could support her students' musical and wellness goals.

Merida and Josie expressed a shift in perspective when considering lesson priorities in the classroom. As she discussed her goal to empower her students to be "healthy emotional learners," Merida shared questions that had been guiding her teaching: "How do you put the power in the kids' hands? How do you guide them to be better learners?" (CTSG Meeting Seven). Merida hoped that by combining ideas from the metacognition training she had experienced at school (she described metacognition as students understanding themselves as learners [Interview One]) and ideas from the CTSG, she might be able to understand how to help her students with their social and emotional needs during music class. In her virtual classroom, Josie prioritized the self-awareness component of social and emotional learning with the goal of students "realizing where they are and being okay with where they are" (Interview Three). Josie explained that "in the pre-pandemic" she would keep a strict schedule and require the students to keep up with her, but now "I'm trying to go at their pace" (Interview Three). Josie's perceptions of her and her students' priorities in the classroom shifted, allowing for student musical or wellness needs to outweigh her traditional classroom expectations.

Practicing Wellness, Establishing Habits

Throughout the CTSG, participants continually acknowledged the importance of creating wellness habits for themselves and for their students. During the second CTSG meeting,

participants workshopped wellness statements that they might add to their syllabi. Neil shared the challenges he encountered while crafting his statement:

> See I really struggled at the beginning – I had this phrase where I put it in: "The ultimate goal of choir is a performance." But then at the same time, I was like "No, that's not really the ultimate goal of choral singing, especially in middle school and high school." It's about creating those habits and I want the students to be healthy. (CTSG Meeting Two)

Within his wellness statement, Neil expressed that helping students to establish and practice wellness habits was a priority in his classroom. During the workshop, Josie communicated her appreciation for this prioritization of healthy habits:

> I really loved how you were talking about developing healthy habits in the classroom and in the rehearsal and how that's specified in there. Because I think it also does a good job of modeling for the students of what personal wellness can look like and how you can just so easily implement it in your daily life. It's not necessarily this added layer of exhaustion that you have to put yourself through. It's quite the opposite – it's just you know integrating it into everything that you do. (CTSG Meeting Two)

Josie also praised how through the statement, Neil made it clear that establishing musician wellness habits in his classroom would be a collaborative effort between teacher and student.

Merida expressed the importance of music educators developing a wellness practice (i.e., a routine way of addressing wellness) early in their career:

> Developing a wellness practice while you're educating yourself about becoming a music educator is a wonderful way to make sure you have a long and healthy career that doesn't burn you out and send you out of the classroom. I was dangerously close to being burnt

> out and wanting to leave education before I started my meditation practice which led me on a completely different path, as you know, four years later, and here I am. I wish that that had been emphasized to me by some of my music educators – the people that taught me. That this can be, it is an extremely rewarding career, but you also have to be aware of burnout. And one of the best ways to help yourself is to really think about a good practice that will keep you mentally healthy so that when that stress shows up, or that first concert shows up, or that administrator who doesn't believe in music shows up, or whatever in your life, that you have your own tools to fall back on so that that doesn't gouge you emotionally and make you feel like you're not doing your job. (Interview Three)

Through the development of a personal wellness practice, Merida felt that she lengthened her career in music education and established habits to rely on in times of stress in the classroom. Neil explained that the CTSG, and especially the focus on the six dimensions of wellness, made him "more self-aware of my own wellness and what I'm doing in my classroom to either model that or implement that into my lessons" (Interview Three). He saw his own wellness practices as a way to potentially introduce his students to their own wellness.

Boundaries and Sustainability

Participants expressed the difficulty of establishing personal and professional boundaries as they considered their own wellness. Merida explained that she felt specialist teachers have a unique challenge regarding boundaries because they know their students so well. She described her challenge of drawing boundaries with students when she saw them going through a rough time and had the knowledge to help them, but knew that it wasn't her place as music teacher: "You know we all see things, we all feel our kids, we all understand that and at the same time, we have to find our lines where it's like 'aaaand, no.' It's hard." (CTSG Meeting Three). In this

instance, Merida was describing emotional boundaries between students and teacher.

The introduction of virtual learning to CTSG participants' teaching practices challenged not only the physical boundaries between home and school, but also their preferred boundaries regarding job expectations. These challenges led a few participants to question the sustainability of their current circumstances. Delisa expressed her frustration with the expectations she perceived of teachers during COVID:

> That's the overall arching theme is boundaries and sustainability. This is not – I genuinely believe that education has morphed into this thing where teachers are frontline pawns. And that we are just supposed to be ready for whatever. We've said it forever as a joke that we are the therapists and we are the counselors and we're the nurses, we're the doctors, we're the coaches. And now we're bacteria puppets? Come on. Now we're tech wizards? Now we're platform designers? We're recording engineers? (Interview One)

COVID teaching circumstances opened Delisa's eyes to what she perceived as unreasonable and unsustainable practices for teachers and students that challenged her preferred boundaries. The expectations of her job (e.g., counseling students, tutoring in subjects beyond music, and designing a class website) crossed the boundaries of what she thought should be expected of a music teacher. One way that Delisa attempted to create boundaries for the sake of sustainability was by "carv[ing] out alone time" and practicing saying, "I can't right now" (CTSG Meeting Two).

During the second CTSG Meeting, participants collaborated to establish one boundary that they might be able to utilize in the coming weeks of school. Examples of boundaries they shared included Neil's decision to "not be available after or before school hours," Merida's resolution to "stay physically healthy at all costs," and Josie's determination to "have no more

than three [emails], or one week's worth – whichever comes first – of back and forth [email communication] with a student before 'laying down the law'" (CTSG Meeting Two). Reflecting back on this exercise of establishing boundaries, Josie shared how her thoughts on boundaries were constantly shifting:

> I think I've gotten a lot better with boundaries. I think one thing that I need to do with my boundaries, though, is make it more like a line in the sand, rather than the "Wall of Jericho," and be a little bit more flexible with that. Not just for others, but for myself, because I'll be like, "Oh, I have to do this right now, or I'm going to feel awful later." And then I still feel awful because I forced myself to do something that I didn't need to do…I think I realized that, when I was making my wellness plan, okay, I need to constantly reassess this and I'm okay with that. I'm okay with it changing. (Interview Three)

Josie viewed boundaries as a flexible and evolving element of her wellness plan.

As a new teacher, Emma struggled to define and establish boundaries, and in fact expressed that "I always feel guilty when I take the time to do things for myself" (CTSG Meeting Seven). Following discussions with the CTSG, she began to see the value in creating time for herself by establishing a personal wellness action plan that she called *The First 15* which she described as "kind of like my new year resolution for the school year" (CTSG Meeting Seven). Within this plan, she committed to setting aside fifteen minutes each morning to pray, meditate, and journal (See Emma's workshop submission in Appendix P). Although during her final interview, Emma shared "I've been so bad about [following my plan] with everything changing," she was able to find ways to prioritize her mental health:

> I told myself, one thing for myself a day, and I think I wouldn't have thought that way

> before the CTSG. Whether it's like reading for five minutes or doing a 10-minute yoga session or a meditation or working out. Like, I think that just holds a lot of impact for where I'm at mentally. (Interview Three)

In a mid-November check-in, Emma shared her “triumph” of taking a personal day for herself:

> I took a personal day this week because I had a lot going on (car problems, doctor appt, etc.) WOW, I have NEVER done that before. It was the best day ever. Just to have a day for "me" holds so much power. I don't think I would have had the courage to take that day before our CTSG meetings. Taking time for yourself is a true necessity. (CTSG Check-In Eight)

Throughout the process of the study, Emma embraced establishing personal and professional boundaries that allowed her to take time for herself and nurture her wellness.

The participants shared different understandings of boundaries. Merida established boundaries between herself as teacher and her students. Delisa drew boundaries regarding the reach of her position as music teacher. Neil and Emma both drew boundaries between their work time and their personal time. Josie established flexible boundaries that she hoped would help her work more efficiently. Several of the participants considered boundaries a part of their wellness plans, especially considering the challenges to boundaries resultant of COVID teaching conditions.

Prioritizing Mindfulness and Self-Care

Participants repeatedly brought up mindfulness strategies in their discussions throughout their seven meetings. Approaches to mindfulness were varied, including mindful techniques to respond to student needs, mindfulness for personal (teacher) wellness, and everyday mindful moments during class time. For example, Neil, Merida, and Josie had the following exchange

when discussing the advantages of teachers having mindfulness strategies at the ready during high-stress situations:

> Neil: If you're dealing with some of those harder situations, like a student who is hungry, being neglected, a victim of racial violence – approaching that in a way that's constructive and approaching that in a way that's compassionate, but approaching it in a way that's just calm and mindful. I feel like that is going to be more productive and more – I don't know – solution-oriented. Or compassion-oriented.
>
> Merida: I feel like the tag word in that is mindful. Because I think kids can sense when you are looking to talk at them versus listening to them.
>
> Josie: Yea I definitely agree with that. The idea of listening to understand versus listening to respond I think really plays into that. And when – as Neil said – you're at a point where you are calm and more even-keel, it's easier for you to listen and understand where they are rather than just listen so that you can respond so that you can move on so you can go. (CTSG Meeting Two)

These teachers viewed mindfulness as a tool that would allow them to be more present and responsive to student needs, rather than reactive and passive.

During the fourth CTSG meeting, Delisa served as discussion facilitator and moderated a discussion about mindfulness and its potential uses for teachers and students. First, she asked for a volunteer to define mindfulness. Josie defined mindfulness as "being aware and identifying the various sensory stimuli without necessarily putting a value judgment on it" (CTSG Meeting Four). Delisa then asked for an example of a moment from that day when someone was mindful. Emma enthusiastically gave the following answer:

> I'm so glad you asked me because I have one. So, I have a lot of anxiety with driving because I got in a really bad car accident the past year, it was horrible, it like – I can't even like think about it for too long otherwise I get like very – it's kind of one of those things that you just block out in your brain because you can't think about it otherwise you get super anxious about it. So today I made the drive from my place on the East side of the state to the West side of the state to just spend a few days with my family before we

> go back to school and I was driving, and I was in between two massive semis on the road and like semis just give me anxiety too. And I have been meditating more this week because of our discussion and I was feeling anxious, but then I thought about how I felt when I was meditating this morning, and I was like "You have the power to go back to that safe space and the feeling of being calm, the feeling of being at peace," and then immediately as I said to myself "You have the power to go back to that space," the anxiety just kind of passed like a cloud. It was so cool because I haven't really been like – I haven't used it on the road yet because I haven't been driving a lot recently – it was awesome. I'm so glad you asked me that! (CTSG Meeting Four)

After giving Emma "love and claps and joy," Delisa shared her understanding of what might have happened in that moment, and how she would discuss it with a student:

> I thank you for sharing the process of what your body went through when you said "I need to be conscious of this and be focused and move forward" – it's that feeling of anxiety. I like to take very serious things and then turn them into metaphors that I can explain to children. So, what is that feeling that you feel in your heart? It's actually your body saying, "We've been here before and there's a series of levers that I pull when you are in this situation." So "Oh no I see the semis. We've been here before. This is the part where we get really emotional and we cry." And then mindfulness says, "No. I'm going to choose a different path." So, I think that's something that is important to mention why some of our students are also struggling with mindfulness because their bodies actually go into a different default setting. And telling them when we encounter trauma or we encounter something that makes us panicked or nervous that we actually have the ability to choose to be mindful, to make a good choice, to take a different path. (CTSG Meeting

Four)

Delisa then asked why students or their parents might resist mindfulness. Neil posited that many parents might not understand what mindfulness was:

> I think most of our parents would agree that it's important, but they don't understand why we would spend this time…But like, I think it's mostly just – like just being unaware of the benefits that it could bring to the classroom and their students as a whole. And I think, you know we don't live in a culture or a society that really appreciates taking time for yourself. (CTSG Meeting Four)

Emma agreed with Neil and suggested that lack of awareness leads to misinformation. Delisa likened the misunderstanding of mindfulness to the stigma that she perceives surrounding therapy:

> There is a stigma in the Black community when it comes to mental health that comes from generations and generations of things before any of us were even born and so the only way to break a cycle is to admit that there's a cycle. So, I was like – what if I just started this new job talking about therapy? Like "Oh well this thing I learned from my therapist." And the kids that I have seen with my mask on are like "Oh that's cool – my mom takes me to a therapist." I'm like "Oh! Does it help?" They're like "Yeah it helps." I'm like "That's good!" They spend so much time whispering about it – so if we go about it the same way when it comes to mindfulness in our classroom – this is just something that we do, and it comes from this and we educate just like we would educate about a quarter note. (CTSG Meeting Four)

Delisa saw potential for mindfulness to be an everyday element of choral music education, just as she had recently "normalized" therapy in her classroom.

Following the CTSG meetings, Merida shared that the most impactful element of her experience was "being mindful about my mindfulness" (Interview Three). Although she was already using mindfulness in her classroom before the CTSG meetings, Merida explained that "When we met it reminded me that you have to know it's something that you have to think through and you have to engage on a daily basis." Following our meetings, she noticed that she felt "liberated" to restructure her instruction "in such a way that it's more about the process and I'm more excited about what they're creating rather than feeling like I have to squash that creativity because we need a refined product" (Interview Three).

As a result of their time with the CTSG, each participant shared new ways in which they practiced self-care. Delisa preventatively attempted to take care of herself and avoid stress by committing to "the work while you are at work" (Interview Three). When her district, in lieu of professional development time, gave their teachers time to focus on their own wellness, Josie focused on self-care by spending time with her husband and dogs (Check-In Eight). Emma committed to a self-care routine involving meditation and running (CTSG Meeting Three). Neil kept a self-care journal ("my get-your-shit-together journal") in which he kept track of his meal plans, workouts, and musical activities (CTSG Meeting Seven). Merida explained that her time with the CTSG "really has just solidified that self-care right now is the best way for me to be at the top of my game for everybody else" (Interview Three). She shared the following example of prioritizing self-care during a stressful time before a virtual musical production:

> By talking through how I'm taking care of myself and how I'm helping my kids take care of themselves and how the mindfulness and wellness is really helping all of us get through this "shenanigan," as I've taken to calling it [COVID]- it's solidified my own practices. Like yesterday, I should have done a bunch of chores. But I also recognized

> that because this week is going to be nuts, getting the show off the ground, that the best thing I could do for myself mentally was to say, "You know what? Those chores are going to be here tomorrow when I get home from school. And what's a better thing for me to do is go take a hike and play with the guinea pig." (Interview Three)

By utilizing mindfulness and self-care, the participants perceived positive contributions to their mental health. For example, after following her self-care plan, Emma said "Honestly, I just sleep way better at night. I feel like after I do [my self-care plan], my mind is just so much clearer and I'm getting all my stuff done" (CTSG Meeting Three).

New Expectations of Wellness in Choir

CTSG members shared ways that their perceptions of the role of wellness specifically in choir had shifted as a result of their time with each other. It is important to note that pandemic teaching conditions also played a part in many of these shifts in perception. Below, I detail how participants considered their evolving expectations of choral education, acknowledged their role as a model of wellness, identified singing as an approach to wellness, and recognized the importance of expression, reflection, and processing in choir.

Evolving Expectations of Choral Education

Due to the unprecedented circumstances surrounding COVID-era teaching (e.g., virtual and hybrid teaching, mask requirements, and bans on singing and performances), the participants spent a significant amount of time discussing how their expectations of students and of themselves in a choral ensemble setting were consistently evolving. Neil shared "I just keep going back to the fact this year that no matter what we do, the students' expectation of a choral experience is not going to be authenticated from here" (CTSG Meeting Five). Rather than view this fact as a disappointment, Delisa saw it as an opportunity to step away from the traditional

performance- and competition-driven choral expectations and attempt to incorporate more elements of wellness in her curriculum: "I would rather live in the anxious exciting fear of trying something that at least I want to try than have the stress of having to repeat this shit over and over again" (CTSG Meeting Five). Neil added that a focus on student wellness during COVID teaching times would only help teachers in the future as they help students process stressful life events in their classrooms: "I think the more that we implement [sharing emotional processing tools] into the curriculum that we already have, the more it's going to seem natural as we move on in a post-COVID world" (CTSG Meeting Five).

As a result of her time with the CTSG, Emma embraced what she called the "more emotional side" of teaching (Interview Three). During the fifth CTSG meeting, Emma led a discussion on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in music education. She explained that prior to her reading for the meeting,

> I always thought SEL was kind of like that thing that you just kind of incorporate in the classroom. It's not something that you can actually put together with your content instruction… Honestly, I never put the two together. I just kind of had a [music] SEL activity, and then "Okay, we're gonna sing now." But in reality, I like combining the two. (CTSG Meeting Five)

Reflecting back on this meeting during her final interview, Emma said "I think I've just changed my framework of teaching... [SEL] has helped me design and had me kind of thinking more creatively" (Interview Three). This new framework helped her in early October when her high school shifted to remote learning and her students were struggling:

> It is very hard for the students to deal with the back and forth of in-person and distance learning. I really focused on SEL instead of music-making this week. My kids are having

> a really hard time and just want to be at school. (Check-In Four)

By adding group discussions and class check-ins to her teaching routine, Emma felt that she was able to tune in to teaching "the whole child rather than just learning the notes and the rhythms accurately on the page" (Interview Three).

During Emma's SEL discussion, Delisa shared a memory from a rehearsal with a group of Freshman treble singers that illustrates her perception of the importance of SEL in choir:

> The song was talking about having this boyfriend and he loves her a lot. She was not really giving him the time of day and then ol' boy leaves her for another girl and she now regrets what has happened and [the students'] automatic reaction was "I can't believe he did this to me." And I was like "did what? What did he do to you? You did it. Your absence of attention brought this on and you were just using him and abusing him." (CTSG Meeting Five)

Over the next few weeks, Delisa and her ensemble continued their discussion of this piece. One day, when they were discussing the form and function of the composition and the ways in which the composer evoked certain feelings, one of her students said something that left a lasting impression on Delisa:

> She didn't raise her hand – she just goes "Miss Delisa, you make me miss a love I never had." And I was just shocked that - that's what empathy is…I was like "yes we did it!" The song taught effectively that they can feel feelings that they never actually had and now that I say that out loud, I realize in order to do that, that child has to also realize that whatever love she has experienced, it's not the kind of love that we're talking about. They think they know what these heartaches are, but they realize "Oh that pain feels like this. Oh so what I'm going through, I'm gonna make it through. That's like hard, adult

> stuff, but this is something that I will grow out of." (CTSG Meeting Five)

As she concluded her story, Delisa noted that this experience was an example of how a choir teacher might incorporate SEL into their planning:

> [SEL includes] using music to teach empathy and not like "here's a lesson about how to take care of each other and now let's prepare for festival." But we can just pick repertoire that – where we're like "What can I use this for, what concepts outside of just the black and white on the page can I get across?" (CTSG Meeting Five)

For Delisa SEL was an approach to teaching that could not only help her students gain social and emotional skills, but also help them grow a deeper appreciation for and musical understanding of their repertoire.

Emma described wellness as "inherently a part of music education," although she had not always felt that was the case in her education:

> I was taught that you work hard for a result or for awards - for good festival scores. That kind of stuff. And that's very much the culture for 6th through 12th music choral education. So it's definitely a cultural shift to put mindfulness, mental health into music education because I feel like this culture that we've created 6th through 12th is so performance-based and so award-based. (Interview Three)

Emma perceived that the changes necessitated by COVID teaching conditions challenged the performance-based nature of choral education:

> I think right now like with kids like they're realizing "Oh no festival? Why am I in this class?" You know? So I think it's about changing the culture and it's about adding in those aspects of mental health, of mindfulness, of physical wellness - all those things - into music education so they can see it benefiting them as a whole. And just to promote

> an enriching, fulfilling life. You know? Instead of just a [top score] at festival. (Interview Three)

Emma saw her current teaching conditions as an opportunity to reevaluate her priorities in choral music education.

Choir Teacher as Wellness Model

During their final interviews, Merida, Neil, and Delisa each independently expressed a realization that one of the best ways they could promote wellness for their choir students was through modeling their own wellness. Merida explained that during the fall, "embracing and modeling good wellness for my students has turned out to be a huge benefit for them" (Interview Three). She continued:

> One of the best things I can do is model [wellness] for students. Model how to breathe, model how to use a two word check in, model how to approach something that's aggravating me. To model those things for students and to not be afraid to model them. (Interview Three)

Additionally, Merida explained that utilizing breathing and self-care was a necessary element of her being able to "impact my community in a positive way." Working with the CTSG during the time of COVID, she shared, helped to strengthen her commitment to her wellness and ability to model that wellness for her students:

> What I've really enjoyed about being a part of this group…is that it has reinforced during this crazy, destabilizing time, it has really reinforced that all of that wellness starts with me. And that if all of us can hang on to that thought process, to breathe for myself, breathe in compassion, breathe in cooperation, and then send it out in waves to my families, to my friends, to my students, into my community. I really needed that

> reinforcement going into this school year and it's been wonderful to think it through, and have a think tank to be a part of. (Interview Three)

Merida perceived that her personal wellness was an essential starting point to her success in the classroom. Once she focused on her wellness, she was more efficiently able to share wellness strategies like breathing and mindfulness with her students.

Neil suggested that students are more likely to grasp on to wellness techniques if their teacher has a personal relationship with the technique: “As long as you're invested in it, they'll be invested. As long as you show them [your investment]” (Interview Three). For example, because he has a personal yoga practice, Neil explained:

> I can say “I do this, and it really, really helps me and I want to show you this because I want you to get the same benefits that I get.” I think changing your perspective on “Hey, I'm doing this to show you how you can be better.” And to really get them involved, say like “Isn't this cool, we're doing something super weird. You've never done this before. Isn't that great?” (Interview Three)

And if a student does not trust a teacher enough to follow their wellness advice, Neil proposed they consider bringing in a staff member from the building whom the student might trust and follow.

When I asked Delisa what advice she might have for a teacher considering adding wellness to their choir curriculum, she focused her response on the importance of modeling:

> If you're thinking about adding [wellness to your curriculum], if I were going to give advice I would say one piece at a time. I would say practice. You have to be the model of it. The best way to do it is to model it. If they're going to do a temperature check or wellness card or a self-awareness card when they come in, you have to model, just like

> you would model as an educator, as a musician, as a music educator, then you need to model that wellness for the kids. (Interview Three)

For example, Delisa shared with her students that part of her wellness plan was to walk outside every day for at least 15 minutes:

> And keeping that promise to myself teaches my students more than I can teach them when I show them a skill. They remember that. And that's the lasting impact.

Delisa shared another moment in which she modeled processing emotions and her students returned empathy that she had modeled for them previously:

> I was crying when I got to school today and all the kids wanted to come up to me and hug me and I was like, "No, no, no." Because for me that actually stops me from crying and I needed to cry because I wanted to, like I needed to, have that release. And I went in my office and was like (*crying sounds*). And then I came right out. And I was like, "All right, let's sing." And they were patient with me, which is that empathy because I had taught them. (Interview Three)

As she reflected on that experience, Delisa expressed how important she now thinks it is for her students to see different expressions of emotions:

> I want them to realize it's okay to express all sorts of emotions, whether it's the childish-like play, you know, or having to take a minute in my office with no shame to have those tears. And it's not the first time that I've had those tears in front of those students. They just came for different reasons, and I taught them that that's all right. And now I'm reinforcing it myself, that that's okay. (Interview Three)

Delisa hoped that through transparently modeling wellness techniques for her students and by providing them with wellness tools, she might be able to help her students to develop an

understanding of how a focus on their wellness in choir and in general might help them now and in the future.

Singing as Wellness Technique

Through the process of the intervention, Josie, Neil, and Merida identified singing in choir as a form of wellness. Josie shared her struggle of not having access to choir during a pandemic: "In the past, a big part of my wellness has been making music with other people, so like being in a choir and things like that. And I can't do that right now…COVID's hard, man" (Interview Three). Josie found that she needed to approach her musical wellness creatively and in ways that differed from her traditional musical outlets.

Merida similarly expressed the impact not singing at school during COVID had on her everyday sense of wellness:

> I think one of the things that many of us who sing in the classroom are struggling with is how much singing, at least for choral people, is a form of wellness. And you know, I know that there are some schools who have said, you know, singing six feet apart with masks on is fine. I know other schools have said, absolutely no singing. I happen to be a choral director in a situation where they have said no singing this year. Period. Unless you are outside and six feet apart. I'm hoping that once this is all over that we don't take for granted how beautiful a wellness practice singing is…Singing is a form of personal wellness. And for those of us who are not allowed to do it, but we've always done it, it really has had an impact and I can't wait until the day comes when I can sing with my kids again. I'm going to try and make sure that I remember what this feels like so that I don't take for granted the wellness aspect of singing in a group and building that energy and feeling that sense of accomplishment and that sense of wholeness. (Interview Three)

In particular, Merida missed the teamwork, music making, and emotional connections of choral singing, and she perceived that this had a direct impact on her wellness.

Following the CTSG, Neil described wellness in choral music education as “way more important than anybody has ever told me before” (Interview Three). Although his school district had a wellness initiative, Neil found that he was lacking support in how to incorporate the wellness ideas he received from the district into his music classes. Through his work with the CTSG, Neil recognized that choir teachers can be “another reinforcement of the importance of wellness. Because, you know, at its heart, singing is just healthy for you” (Interview Three). For Neil, the social and emotional components of singing made it healthy for a singer. Considering the absence of the health and wellness benefits of singing, Neil explained that when he would go back to the classroom in December, he wanted to give students an opportunity to pursue additional wellness avenues in his class:

> Kids aren't performing, so I think giving them a chance to just to be open, allowing them to share their feelings, provide a time for them to just breathe, incorporate that into some breath support that can be you know implemented later in their learning, and to just give them a space to be okay. (Interview Three)

He felt it was important for choir teachers to teach their students the social and emotional wellness benefits of singing in addition to the wellness techniques that can assist them in the long run.

Importance of Expression, Reflection, and Processing

When focusing on their students’ emotional wellness during the time of COVID, several participants perceived an increased relevance of expression, reflection, and processing in choir. Prior to the intervention, Merida worried about her students’ access to emotional outlets as they

learned at home in front of computer screens:

> So many of my kids use music and movement and drama to express what is going on…I feel like it's my responsibility through music and movement to be on the lookout for kids that may not be expressing things that are going on at home that are scaring them. (Interview Two)

One way that Merida encouraged her students to use music as an expressive tool this school year was through grade level composition projects. She hoped that guiding each grade level through writing, composing, and performing a piece would provide them with "a sense of unity when unity is in short supply right now because we all have to be so far apart" (Interview Three). Her goal for the composition project was to have students share their emotions and come together because "some people are just emotionally far apart after some of the divisive things that have been going on in our country right now" (Interview Three).

Delisa and Neil also viewed expression as an essential element of choral education. When I asked Delisa what she saw the goal of choir being during COVID, she answered "In one word, I would say expression. Expression of emotion, of art" (Interview Three). Answering the same question, Neil shared his dedication to "providing an outlet for the emotional trauma that [students] are currently going through. I truly want to create a space where they feel comfortable saying what's on their mind" (Interview Three).

Prior to the intervention, Neil shared that he felt his focus for the year in his ensembles would be "reflection and processing, because I think that's going to be really important as the school year begins" (Interview Two). Whether school was in person or virtual, he anticipated "a lot of confusion and concern and anxiety" (Interview Two). He later shared with his CTSG colleagues his emphasis on processing emotions: "I am a firm believer that we're going through

– the entire world is going through, a traumatic experience right now and it's going to take a while to process this [experience]" (CTSG Meeting One).

Delisa suggested that reflecting upon and processing the meaning and perspectives of choral works could be one way to approach processing the confusion and anxiety of back-to-school in a pandemic:

> If you ask a kid "What is this song about?" and you realize they have been so stuck in notation that they haven't processed poetically what is happening. And if they haven't gotten there, then they definitely haven't put themselves in that position of the artist, of the composer, in the story, and thus they haven't had time to find that intrinsic connection themselves. And if they would do that in our class for music, they are probably walking through life doing the same thing with these blinders on – like "I just need to get from 1st to 7th period. And if I can get through that, then I can go home and take care of my siblings. And then I do my homework and then I go to sleep" and then they just repeat the same process over and over again. And that's why they're so high strung. That's why they're so wired because they're not having time – *we* aren't having time to process the day and to actually digest – that's the word I want to use – to digest the day and say "Okay this is what was good from it, this is what I need to let go and throw away"…and moving forward to consume more. (CTSG Meeting One)

Delisa connected the skills of reflection and processing musical or poetic intention to the skills of reflection and processing personal experience and emotions.

Normalizing and Prioritizing a Community of Wellness

Participants often reflected upon pressure they perceived for teachers and musicians to push through stress and uncomfortable situations, and the ways that they felt they could shift the

narrative by normalizing and prioritizing wellness within their communities. Approaching wellness in music education and balancing it with other demands of the job, to Josie, felt "just so overwhelming," especially during a pandemic: "It's like, great. My mind is breaking, and you want me to think about all of these things on top of it" (Interview Three). Similarly, the demands of Emma's job left her wondering if she could find time to commit to her personal wellness:

> I said I was trying to meditate more this past week, but I found myself being like "Oh my goodness, 15 minutes? Where am I going to fit that in? I have to separate the chairs, I have to bring the dresses to the dry cleaners, I have to do this and this and this." (CTSG Meeting Four)

Only when she considered how she might advise others to take care of their needs, was Emma able to convince herself to put her needs first:

> I was like "Well what would I say to my student?" You know? It's powerful to take those ten to fifteen minutes for yourself so you can get to all of those things. So you're less stressed and you can go through your list. (CTSG Meeting Four)

Because wellness was not a part of Emma's every day during her secondary and tertiary education, she proposed that prioritizing wellness did not come naturally while working. When I asked her how secondary educators might be able to shift that narrative, she suggested the following:

> [Wellness] needs to be in the classrooms. It needs to be something that is talked about. We didn't talk about it the classroom. Every single professor, every single teacher needs to be on board…otherwise, it's not gonna go anywhere. (CTSG Meeting Two)

To Emma, wellness should be a community effort involving all of educators in a student's life.

Delisa illustrated the importance of wellness as a community effort by sharing a painful

experience in which her wellness wasn't prioritized by one member of a community:

> I had a professor [during my master's work] tell me when I came back from a funeral – say "Well how long ago was it that you traveled for the funeral?" and I said, "Two weeks" and their response was "Well you should be over it by now" in response to how I performed. (CTSG Meeting Two)

During the moment, Delisa knew she was processing a tragedy and that the professor was being insensitive. The strong assertion from a professor in a position of power stuck with her though:

> The teacher in me and the things that I have done were like "You know that's not right. You know that's not right. Don't soak that in. Don't soak that in." But of course, my soul just attached onto those words. Like maybe my pain is irrelevant. Maybe how I feel is not important because this person that I value who holds my talent or my theory or my instrument or whatever in their hands, just told me that I just need to buck up. That's my problem – that I haven't processed this pain fast enough for them and I have stuff to do. (CTSG Meeting Two)

In the moment, Delisa's professor prioritized performance over student wellness, making an already painful experience even worse. Luckily, Delisa had the presence of mind to slow down, address her pain, and make a plan so that she might be able to process her tragedy.

Educational moments like the one Delisa described above have the potential to shape how a pre- or in-service teacher approaches self-care in and out of the classroom. Teachers putting wellness first, Josie hypothesized, "is going to take a long time." Music teachers, she asserted, "put their wellness on the back burner so much…they always put themselves last when it comes to their jobs and getting things done for their students" (Interview Three). Merida proposed that some teachers feel pressure to cover up their imperfections and only show students

their best: “I know some teacher friends of mine feel like students shouldn't see anything except you being organized” (Interview Three). This approach to teaching did not work for Merida, and she suggested may be detrimental to a student’s learning:

> As a musician, sometimes you don't know what's going to come, you don't know what's going to crop up in a rehearsal. You don't know what's gonna, you know, give your students fits or give yourself fits. And to model how to work through it in a mindful and thoughtful and compassionate way is a great thing for kids to see. (Interview Three)

To Merida, it was important as a teacher to show her students the messiness of anxiety and stress and to model healthy ways to process those feelings.

Delisa similarly observed colleagues who were “so used to doing things a certain way” that stress was just an accepted part of their daily existence (CTSG Meeting Three). When teachers envision education in a certain way, Delisa proposed, they find themselves stuck in a system they are not prepared for:

> I realize how many fires everybody's trying to put out and that at the same time as I'm realizing the difference between that anxiety and what that passion is, I have to realize that everybody else around me also grew up on *The Magic School Bus* and they grew up on the Mr. Rogers and they grew up on LeVar Burton and all these people making these magical education communities and we all got caught in the same trap. (Interview Three)

A commitment to wellness, Delisa suggested, must be a community effort:

> It's a community build, and we just slowly but surely just have to decide - and it can't - it doesn't happen overnight, because we are fighting, as we fight most things in a world, we are fighting a system that has been made. Coded as we push through and we're going to do anything to help the kid, and anything could be at my sacrifice. (Interview Three)

As she talked, Delisa noticed that she had recently accepted that she had made the shift to prioritizing her wellness over her work: “That I think is the one of the biggest things that I've come to grips with: in taking care, in putting myself first, it doesn't make me selfish in a toxic way.” She realized that she could take care of her students while also caring for herself.

According to Neil, communities that have the potential to support teacher and student wellness extend beyond the walls of the music classroom and school building. Neil suggested that teachers looking for wellness inspiration look to the music education communities easily available online:

> I would look at social media first. I would put it out there and say, ‘Has anybody…’ - like in the choir teacher’s Facebook, social justice music educators’ pages, that sort of thing. Just say, ‘Hey, I'm looking to add this into my classroom. Do you have any resources?’… Once you reach out in those social media circles, try to find people who are doing research and have access to medical journals and things like that. The stuff that we don't [have access to] …because those articles [that we used in the CTSG] were incredible. (Interview Three)

Neil then proposed that music teachers look for supports and build new communities within their own building:

> My second place would be like my school psychologist or if you have a wellness committee, go ask them what resources they have. I know when I've done meditation and breathing exercises before, our physical education teachers were incredible with that. (Interview Three).

For Neil, a students’ school wellness community could include everyone from the music teacher to the school psychologist to the P.E. teacher, and beyond using online forums and resources.

New Perceptions of Professional Development

Participants expressed their appreciation for the format of the collaborative teacher study group as a form of professional development. The teachers valued the support and validation they felt through conversations with other like-minded teachers. They also appreciated the long-term nature of the CTSG and variety of age and experience amongst their cohort, which they felt allowed them to delve deeper and in a more meaningful way into the idea of wellness for their choir students. Throughout the course of the study, the professional development served several roles, as a space of community, commiseration, and collaboration. In addition, the CTSG format allowed participants to adopt a variety of roles, which contributed to group dynamics throughout the professional development.

"I'm Not Alone"

At the end of the first CTSG meeting, Merida commented on the most impactful realization she had that day:

> I think the thing I am taking away from today is that I'm not alone. It doesn't matter what the school system is – private, public, high [socioeconomic], low [socioeconomic] – it doesn't matter… we're all going through the same things…I'm in a very unique situation, so it's just, hearing everybody saying we're all going through the same thing really means a lot to me. (CTSG Meeting One)

Merida was comforted by the fact that her CTSG colleagues were experiencing similar struggles as they thought about teaching through a pandemic. Commiserating with the group, for example, helped Merida realize that she was not the only music teacher grappling with messages from administration that music teachers have to teach, but that their jobs might be altered because music is not core curriculum.

Neil responded to Merida's statement by sharing the solace he found in the similar experiences he and his CTSG colleagues discussed during the first meeting:

> I think it was nice to hear and kind of get confirmation that we as music teachers are sometimes seen as a safe space for students and we see that across the spectrum. And it's nice to see that the values that I hold true are kind of similar to my colleagues' and I think going forward, we can really harness that for change. Especially – and I think – definitely in music – wellness is important, but wellness as a whole needs to be really talked about and we just need to share. Going back to I think Merida – you were talking about like you're not alone. And we aren't. We aren't alone. (CTSG Meeting One)

Reflecting back on this conversation, Merida explained that at that time, she was so worried about how she was going to continue teaching her students effectively in person during a pandemic:

> We were trying to figure out how to handle and how to cope with during all of this and I know I was feeling like I was gonna have to reinvent the wheel. And to be a part of that group and know that we were all feeling that way, and we were all finding different ways to cope with it really helped me to remember that I wasn't alone and that it was okay. (Interview Three)

Merida found not only a wealth of professional wellness strategies, but also the comfort of knowing that other teachers could relate to her experiences and provide support.

Prior to the intervention, Neil shared that he hoped he would find support and comradery with his CTSG colleagues for his own wellness: "I think that's a huge part of wellness is to know that you are not alone, and everyone is having these same concerns. Not to diminish your feelings but to just confirm them" (Interview Two). He found that support with his CTSG

colleagues:

> It's really helped me professionally to talk to other teachers in similar situations. I mean, it's just kind of like that confirmation of, yeah we're all going through this and we can all see the importance and need for wellness and just health in general, whether it be physical or mental health in this time. (Interview Three)

Neil found time with the CTSG especially comforting when he was forced to take sick leave and not go back to school in the fall. He explained that the CTSG gave him "something to look forward to while I haven't been in the classroom" (Interview Three). Although he and his colleagues were in different teaching situations, he found it comforting "to hear the fears and the discomforts that I have about going back to work during a global pandemic, it's everyone. And so that sort of support group type of mentality has been really helpful to me" (Interview Three).

The exchange from the third CTSG meeting below is an example of when the support group mentality described by Neil was particularly evident. Merida asked to side-track the conversation and have all of the members share what their back-to-school plans were:

> Merida: Are you hybrid? Are you online? I just – I'm wondering because I'm really scared about going back full-time and traversing multiple pods on my school and everything else. I'm just wondering where everybody else is as we talk about the stress of doing social and emotional learning with our kids in the midst of COVID.

After each of the participants shared their teaching situations with Merida, visibly shaken by her teaching situation, Merida apologized saying the following:

> Merida: I'm sorry – I'm sorry, Colleen. I didn't mean to hijack that. I just – it's something that we all need to talk about which is all of us are – none of us are protected right now. I mean – none of us – none of us are protected right now and it's really scary

and it doesn't matter where you are – none of us are protected right now. It doesn't matter if you are online and you are trying to – none of us are protected right now and it's really scary. So I apologize. I'm gonna just slink off into a corner.

Delisa immediately jumped in:

Delisa: Stop apologizing. Stop it. We cannot have that kind of energy here. You are speaking facts. We have normalized living in toxic worlds and smiling for no reason and we have not had a real conversation that we are having right now.

She then began to talk about the value of verbalizing that you are not okay:

Delisa: I can smile and say [I'm not okay] because it feels good to tell you the truth and I know that saying I'm not okay does not take away my value. So many people think that – it's okay (to Merida who started to tear up) – I had to do a lot of tears by myself first…This is the most important conversation I've had today. This is the most important conversation I've had the past three weeks because no one is talking about it. I'm back. I'm at school right now. There are kids in this building and we have 3 new COVID cases in our district since we've been back.

Merida: Ohhhh Delisa, I'm sorry.

Delisa then discussed the value of "rolling up my sleeves and getting in there":

Delisa: You find people who are like minded – thank you Colleen again – who have a purpose of helping each other. And look at what we did already in looking at each other's work. We're not even done. Looking at each other's working going "Oh can I steal – oh ohhhh." That this is not extra work, this is *the* what matters. Anything else we do is a bonus. If I teach a single note and I'm in a state where contest is life—all of these contest people are crumbling because they've never invested in the humans in the room. They are

crumbling. This ain't on the plan. We're making the plan. You are a hero. I know you're afraid. That is valid. There's no but. That is valid and you are also a hero.

Merida: Delisa, thank you. You made me feel validated and you made me feel like I can just stand up and do this. Thank you.

Delisa: Yes, you can. (CTSG Meeting Three)

Merida left the exchange supported and validated by her colleague, and her vulnerability opened up further conversation during that meeting regarding professional wellness concerns.

A Long-Term Commitment to a Varied Cohort

Unique to this professional development, the participants shared, was the long-term commitment and variety of experience amongst music teacher participants. In previous professional development experiences, Josie realized there was rarely ever a follow-up. She appreciated that the CTSG meetings were "more consistent and spread out…a little bit more of the long game rather than quick fix" (Interview Three). This format allowed her time to discuss wellness strategies, practice the strategies, and then check back in with her colleagues over time. Additionally, Josie noted how "very nice" it was "to be able to have colleagues who have varied experience but are still passionate about the idea of wellness for not just ourselves, but also for our students" (Interview Three). One of Josie's struggles with past professional developments in her district was having to figure out how to transfer ideas to the music classroom. With this group, Josie appreciated having a place to meet with just music teachers and "bounce ideas off of each other because, you know two heads are better than one and I mean, in this case, six heads are amazing" (Interview Three).

Emma shared that she looked forward to the weekly meetings where she had "a safe space to share my concerns and questions" (Interview Three). She described the CTSG as a

“community and support system” (Interview Three), where she was able to identify positives and negatives of her teaching practice through conversations with her colleagues:

> I've identified things that I want to do more in the classroom. I've identified some more of my goals for my future after talking to a lot of these people, so it's really opened my eyes to just good things and bad things though too. Like things that I know I want to change about myself as a teacher and also just as a human being. (Interview Three)

Most impactful to Emma was the opportunity to open up and realize that other people were also struggling:

> I'm one of those people that thinks, like, oh, like if I don't express my feelings and if they don't express theirs then this is just normal right? Like everyone is just fine. But really, it's just nice to have a space to talk about how - okay we're not fine and that's okay. And this is how we're going to deal with this and just to have that safe space to share those things is really helpful.

Emma appreciated the opportunity to have honest interactions with experienced teachers who valued her thoughts and feelings as an early-career teacher.

Delisa described professional development with “people outside of my direct discipline and grade level” as “the kind of professional development that people need” (CTSG Meeting Seven). In traditional professional development and conferences, Delisa explained, the first and easiest division between educators is by grade level. Following her experience with the CTSG, she asserted that the kind of professional development that music educators need was “this kind where the first aspect of segregation doesn’t begin with what grade level to teach…Who’s to say that there was nothing for me to learn from my elementary peer, my middle school peer, and vice versa?” (CTSG Meeting Seven). Delisa contended that working with teachers who had the same

degree as her but varied experiences with her was “very enriching” and “clearly what was needed” (CTSG Meeting Seven). Reflecting upon her time with the CTSG, Delisa shared her pride in “making new buddies across the country because of this project:”

> The fact that there's a folder now that Neil has of my resources and I have all of this vocal stuff from Josie and I've had these side conversations with Merida, like all of these things that have occurred for us to grow together is pretty sick. (Interview Three)

Delisa was particularly proud of how she and her CTSG colleagues interacted as they met virtually and shared their experiences: “We were learning and modeling productive ways to learn and to exchange information” (Interview Three).

Community, Commiseration, and Collaboration

The CTSG functioned as a space of community, commiseration, and collaboration. For all of the participants in this study, this CTSG was their first encounter with professional development that facilitated direct interaction with a community of specifically music teachers outside of a large-scale conference. Despite their differences (e.g., years teaching, geographical location, grade level taught), participants quickly established a community. This community was rooted in their common experiences of teaching choir, interests in teaching wellness, and experiences teaching through a pandemic.

Participants commiserated with each other throughout the course of the study. The structure of the CTSG allowed participants to vent on different days about different topics if necessary. For example, Merida vented about her feelings of uncertainty regarding going back to school, Josie vented about music teachers being left out of district decisions, Neil vented about lack of support from his administration when he felt unsafe going back to school, Delisa vented about students engaging in unsafe behavior when COVID numbers were on the rise, and Emma

vented about middle school students being unkind to her. Each time participants vented, their CTSG colleagues provided them with validation and commiseration. After receiving a pep-talk from Delisa, Merida said "You made me feel validated and you made me feel like I can just stand up and do this. Thank you" (CTSG Meeting Three). Merida saw her venting of emotions and validation from her CTSG colleagues as a valuable coping strategy.

Participants enjoyed the collaborative nature of the CTSG as they created and shared understandings, wellness strategies, and pedagogical ideas. Workshops were a favorite element of the CTSG as participants shared their ideas, gave feedback, and considered how colleagues' work might fit into their own classrooms. Participants often asked to "borrow" or "steal" work that inspired them. Through collaborations, Delisa developed a "logical game plan" for implementing wellness techniques in her ensembles: "Everything that we have done, I've immediately dusted off in my brain and thought, you can do this in your class."

CTSG Group Roles and Dynamics

As CTSG organizer and facilitator, I observed the participants taking on a variety of roles throughout the course of the professional development beyond their assigned roles of discussion facilitator, note-taker, and timer. Participants fluidly moved between roles like mentor, expert, novice, and champion. Josie and Delisa stepped into the role of mentor at times, especially in their conversations with Emma. For example, during the first CTSG meeting, Josie explained to Emma the importance of advocacy for music education and how rejection might affect one's occupational wellness, and during the second CTSG meeting, Delisa shared with Emma the value of establishing alone time as a form of self-care. Throughout the professional development, Merida positioned herself as yoga and mindfulness expert, inserting her yoga and mindfulness experience into most workshops and discussions. During the fourth CTSG meeting, Delisa acted

as expert when she shared her tree activity, a journaling activity for students. During the same meeting, Neil acted as expert as he shared his experiences with restorative practices, an initiative his school used to improve and repair relationships between students and community, and how he viewed restorative practices interacting with wellness concepts like mindfulness and SEL.

All participants spent time in the role of novice at times throughout the seven CTSG meetings. For example, all participants shared that they were novices when it came to teaching in a pandemic and Emma positioned herself as novice in the field of music education and often asked for advice. Delisa in particular acted as a champion of wellness in music education, as she supported the cause of wellness for herself, her students, or for her CTSG colleagues. This role was particularly evident in the conversation she had with Merida above in which she validated her feelings and rose her spirits.

All participants were vulnerable with each other throughout the process and began sharing personal stories and experiences regarding wellness and teaching during COVID beginning during the first meeting. They quickly bonded over the similarities in their experiences regardless of age, time in the field, and teaching placement. The participants saw the variety in their CTSG as a strength and explicitly mentioned it in several conversations:

> I have not had this much collaborative work with people outside of my direct discipline and grade level and so that in itself has been very revealing…To be with so many different minds and experiences, is the kind of professional development that people need. (Delisa, CTSG Meeting Seven)

Despite the variety in their experiences, the participants quickly found they had more similarities than differences, and that connection played a key role in building trust and creating community.

CTSG Critiques

Although participants enthusiastically shared overall benefits of the professional development during their final interviews, they also noted that some elements of the CTSG were less impactful to their practice. Neil mentioned that he already knew much of the vocal health material, but that it served as a "good refresher" (Interview Three). Josie shared that some of the materials did not initially seem helpful, but that "it wasn't like it was irrelevant" (Interview Three). Merida explained that sometimes when she was bogged down with schoolwork and yoga teaching that she "found myself annoyed" with the additional work for the CTSG. At those times, Merida shared, she used mindful tools to embrace the feeling and move on. Delisa found some readings to be a bit much at times and explained that she was "more successful with stuff when there was a product that you were asking for" (Interview Three). Emma mentioned that sometimes "the conversation would get a little off topic," but noted that "it wasn't a big deal." She explained that she would have liked to have dug deeper on certain wellness topics: "If anything, I just wanted *more* of specific things" (Interview Three).

Chapter Summary

This chapter was a description of how participants' perceptions and expectations of wellness in music were impacted by their participation in the CTSG. As a result of readings, conversations, and shared experiences, participants perceived a necessity to identify their students' wellness needs and acknowledged the importance of creating wellness habits for themselves and for their students. They searched for ways to establish personal and professional boundaries and committed to prioritizing mindfulness and self-care. Following their experience, CTSG members categorized wellness knowledge and strategies now as foundational to teacher and student success in a post-COVID future.

Specifically within a choral context, CTSG participants perceived a shift in their perception of the role of wellness. First, due to COVID-era teaching circumstances, participants noticed a shift in expectations regarding ensemble experience away from traditional performance-driven expectations. This shift allowed participants to incorporate more social and emotional learning elements in their ensemble teaching. Teacher participants realized the importance of modelling their own wellness techniques and strategies for their students and identified singing as a wellness technique. Without being able to sing as much (or at all) in their classes, participants found they needed to find additional wellness avenues for their students and for themselves. During the time of COVID-19, CTSG members perceived a heightened significance of expression, reflection, and processing in the choral ensemble. Through utilizing choral activities that connected to reflecting and processing personal experience, participants were able to address some of the relevant social and emotional challenges their students were facing.

Throughout the intervention, participants reflected upon the expectations they felt teachers and musicians faced regarding withstanding stress and discomfort for the sake of the performance or musical product. Delisa suggested that wellness as a music and education community-wide effort to prioritize wellness was long overdue, but not likely to happen due to systemic priorities such as student performance and competition. Neil proposed that new technologies and social media communities had potential to provide teachers the materials and support they might need to prioritize wellness for themselves and their students.

Finally, I shared participant perceptions of advantages of the CTSG professional development format. Through conversations on wellness and teaching during a pandemic, participants identified similar teaching situations and worries, while supporting and validating

their colleagues within the CTSG. Participants valued the consistent meetings and long-term commitment to the professional development that allowed for time to practice strategies and follow-up with colleagues. They also appreciated the variety of teachers in the cohort and the varied teaching and life experiences each participant brought to the group. Participants contributed to meetings with a variety of roles including mentor, expert, novice, and champion and they established positive group dynamics through vulnerability and bonding over common experiences. When I asked participants for critiques of the professional development, they shared constructive suggestions regarding topics, materials, and time commitments.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In the preceding chapters, I presented findings from this study through a social constructivist lens. In this sense, my analysis sought to recognize the individual nature of each participants' experience while simultaneously searching for a comprehensive understanding. This lens allowed me to weave together the constructions of all five participants as I endeavored to make sense of their current realities. In this chapter, I summarize the study and offer a thorough discussion of the findings. Finally, I share implications for the field of music education and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of choir teachers in a Collaborative Teacher Study Group (CTSG) as they met to discuss wellness in music education and collaborated to include principles and strategies of wellness in their teaching amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Research questions included:

1. How do music teachers describe their perceptions and experiences of wellness in music education?
2. How do CTSG experiences impact participants' professional practice?
3. How do CTSG experiences impact participants' perceptions of and expectations for wellness in music education?

Methods

This project was an instrumental case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018) that examined the experiences of five choir teachers who participated in a CTSG with the focus of wellness in choral music education. Participants discussed wellness in music education and collaborated in an effort to include strategies of wellness in their personal lives and in their teaching. The

bounding factors for this case study were the profession of K-12 school choral music educator, the time period inclusive of the summer and fall semesters following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the topic of wellness for music educators, their students, and their profession. Through this study, I intended to add to the music education professional discourse regarding educator and student wellness, and an instrumental case study methodology allowed for the rich, thick description that can lead to practical implications for the field.

The participants were five secondary choral music teachers—Neil, Emma, Delisa, Josie, and Merida—who varied in age, experience, teaching assignment, backgrounds, and geographic location, but shared an interest in the topic of wellness in music education. Using Seidman's (2019) three-interview series as the framework for my interview structure, I completed interviews one and two in mid-to-late July 2020. During the first two interviews, participants shared with me a focused life history regarding their teaching histories, philosophies, and experiences with musicians' wellness, their lived experiences throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and their preferred discussion topics for CTSG meetings.

The CTSG met seven times during the months of August and September 2020, meeting weekly during the month of August before most participants began school, and bi-weekly during the month of September, once the school year had begun. For each meeting, I provided CTSG members with one reading that served as the centerpiece of our discussion and additional optional supporting materials like YouTube videos and podcasts. As informed by participant interest, topics included self-care, boundaries, and emotional endurance, social and emotional learning, mindfulness, physical wellness, and music as wellness. Although I varied the format and order of activities for each meeting, essential elements of the meetings included the opening check-in, the member-led reading discussion, and some sort of collaborative activity.

Following the seven CTSG meetings, participants completed weekly Google Form check-ins during the months of October and November 2020. We completed final interviews in late November, during which participants reflected on the impact of the CTSG on their professional and personal lives. Data included transcripts of all interviews and CTSG meetings, all materials submitted for workshops, participant check-ins, and my researcher memos. Using in vivo, emotions, and values coding, I analyzed the data and grouped codes into themes and categories. To establish trustworthiness, I completed rigorous data collection, triangulation, and member checks, shared my positionality, and utilized thick description throughout.

Summary of Findings

In this study, I used social constructivism as a framework through which to examine participants' construction of wellness understandings before, during, and after their time with the CTSG. Throughout the process, participants made sense of the intersections of wellness and music education through interviews, interactions with materials, and discussions during meetings. Through collaborations and studies, participants broadened their definitions and interpretations of wellness in music education and shared these constructions with each other, with their students, and in some cases with colleagues and administration. Utilizing the social constructivist framework in conjunction with a case study method allowed me to represent multiple constructions of realities and share the constructions with thick, rich description (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

Prior to the intervention, participants shared that wellness was important to them personally and professionally and utilized wellness strategies both inside and outside of their classrooms, but did not know how to best use wellness for themselves and for their students. Previous strategies of wellness that participants had utilized in their ensemble classrooms

included primarily physical health strategies like exercise and stretching and mental health strategies like mindfulness, meditation, and self-care. They worried about their wellness and its impact on their pedagogy and longevity in the classroom, and worried about their students' abilities to process emotions, especially considering the context of COVID which amplified their wellness concerns. These amplified wellness concerns, in conjunction with unprecedented teaching situations characterized by online learning and socially distanced rehearsals, led participants to examine their approaches to choral music education and question their priorities in the classroom.

Participants left the CTSG with practical wellness strategies that they learned from materials, discussions, and workshops that they shared with their colleagues. Workshops, which occurred during four of seven CTSG meetings, were a favorite element of the participants as they were able to view their colleagues' work, offer encouragement and constructive criticism, and find inspiration from each other. Participants particularly grasped on to the utilization of social emotional learning strategies, mindfulness practices, and self-care techniques. Additions to participant teaching practices included student temperature checks, self-awareness journals, yoga and mindfulness activities, and personal self-care plans.

Following the CTSG, participants shared that they had begun to view wellness as a way to get to know their students and respond to their individual needs. New priorities for self and students included mindfulness, self-care, and the establishment of a variety of boundaries. Participants came to view wellness as a community effort and began to question the values of performance and competition in music education. Finally, they saw the CTSG as a personally and professionally meaningful form of professional development and appreciated the varied perspectives and experiences of their cohort-mates.

Discussion

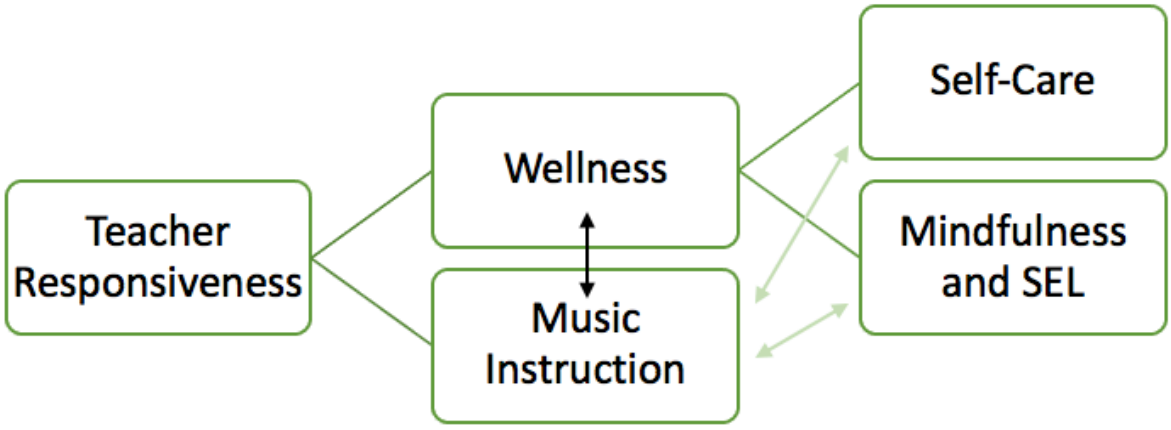
During this study, five participating music teachers grappled with the intersections between wellness and music education as they constructed understandings and strategies and shared their constructions with each other. Although previous researchers have investigated individual elements of wellness for music educators (e.g., Bernhard, 2016; Brown, 2020; Hancock, 2016; Hedden, 2006; Kilic, 2018; Manternach, 2015; Shaw, 2016), and scholars have promoted the use of wellness strategies in music education (e.g., Diaz, 2020; Norton, 2019; Palac, 2008; 2015; Pellegrino, 2011; Pierce, 2012; Salvador, 2019; Taylor, 2016; Varona, 2018; Wijsman & Ackermann, 2019), no studies have explored the intersections of wellness in music education holistically (i.e., considering multiple dimensions of wellness). Below, I discuss participants' constructed understandings of the intersections of wellness and music education, foundational understandings of wellness, and perceived barriers to holistic wellness in music education. Next, I discuss the influences of the context of COVID-19 upon this study. Finally, I discuss what the findings suggest about the CTSG as a form of professional development.

Intersections of Wellness and Music Education

To introduce the concepts of wellness to the CTSG participants, I used Hettler's (1976) Framework of Wellness. Within this framework, wellness is comprised of six interconnected dimensions: emotional, occupational, physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual wellness. Throughout the course of the CTSG, participants addressed each of these dimensions of wellness through reading, discussion, and collaboration. Participants viewed the framework as a way to examine their own wellness in a multi-dimensional way and identify areas of strength and those areas that need attention. The National Wellness Institute (2020) asserted that by applying Hettler's wellness model, a person may "become aware of the interconnectedness of each

dimension and how they contribute to healthy living" (p. 2). Neil's experience utilizing the framework supported this assertion: "Breaking it down into those different [dimensions] really made me more self-aware of my own wellness and what I'm doing in my classroom to either model that or implement that into my lessons" (Interview Three). The framework served as a simple and impactful way for participants to make sense of the intersections of wellness and music education for themselves and for their students. Utilizing this wellness framework allowed participants to acknowledge the variety of wellness needs and strategies and construct understandings of wellness as unique and individual.

Figure 2: Participant Constructions of Music Education and Wellness



Note. Participants grappled with the relationship between wellness and music instruction. Branches of wellness that participants found worked particularly with music instruction included self-care, mindfulness, and social emotional learning. Participants found that wellness focuses combined with music instruction led them to be more responsive to their students' needs.

Despite the framework dealing with a broad range of wellness concerns, and despite the physical wellness focus of the majority of extant literature, participant concerns of wellness in music education were primarily regarding the emotional and social domains of wellness. CTSG

discussions often drifted to the intersections of mindfulness and social emotional learning (SEL) with music education. It may be that the dimensions of the framework are not all equally relevant to music teachers, especially during a pandemic when participants and their students were facing unique personal and professional/educational challenges. Intersections of wellness and music education that participants constructed included intersections of mindfulness and music education, intersections of SEL and music education, intersections of self-care and music education, and intersections of wellness and teacher responsiveness (Figure 2).

Intersections of Mindfulness and Music Education

Participants valued mindfulness as a support for teaching and discussion in their choir classrooms. Meiklejohn et al. (2012) defined mindfulness as formal or informal "intentional cultivation of moment-by-moment non-judgmental focused attention and awareness" (p. 291). The CTSG offered participants a place to construct an understanding of the elements of a mindful choral education through interactions with reading materials, workshops, and discussion.

Much of the mindfulness research in education and music education research has centered mindfulness as an occupational stress reduction technique for educators (Frank et al., 2015; Harris et al., 2016; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Varona, 2019). Although participants used mindfulness as a strategy for addressing their own occupational stress, they were more concerned about sharing mindfulness strategies with their students. This concern for practical pedagogical use over personal use carried over into discussions throughout the course of the CTSG as participants discussed self-care, physical wellness, SEL, and music making as wellness strategy.

With the exception of Merida, who had participated in a mindfulness training program for teachers, participants lacked practical mindfulness resources and strategies to share with their students. They instead labeled activities that they already did in their classrooms as "mindful,"

regardless of connection to formal mindful practices. This supports Varona's (2019) call for advocacy organizations like the National Association for Music Education to make music teachers aware of available mindfulness resources and for music teacher educators to create space for mindfulness and wellness conversations throughout a students' education.

Although participants shared a priority of mindfulness for their classrooms, many of the activities that participants shared as "mindful" were only tangentially related to formal mindfulness strategies like mindfulness-based stress reduction (Frank et al., 2015; Harris et al., 2016) and mindfulness-based wellness and pedagogy (Institute for Mindfulness-Based Wellness and Pedagogy, n.d.). For example, participants valued the use of non-judgmental awareness during interactions with students who needed compassion and understanding. By listening to understand students' needs rather than listening to respond, participants hypothesized a music teacher could be more responsive to their students' needs. This is but one of the many elements of mindful education, some of which include embodiment (i.e., body awareness and comfort), focused attention through breath and sound, heartfulness (i.e., identifying and feeling emotions, strengthening beneficial emotions like joy), and interconnection (i.e., integrating awareness into everyday life) (Rechtschaffen, 2014).

Intersections of SEL and Music Education

Another intersection of wellness and music education that participants were enthusiastic about was social and emotional learning (SEL). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL; 2021) define SEL as "the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" ("SEL

is…" section). Findings from this study support Kupana's (2015) claim that music education and SEL "naturally complete each other" (p. 83). Participants, especially Emma and Delisa, made sense of the intersections of SEL and choral music education, and constructed understandings of how to design choral instruction, choose repertoire, teach empathy, and enhance music making and teaching through the use of SEL.

Intersections of music education and SEL according to Kupana (2015) include the uses of music for emotional stimulation, aesthetic experience, relaxation and imagination, self-expression, and group experience. Of these five intersections, participants of this study were most interested in self-expression. Josie, Delisa, and Emma added self-awareness checks that allowed for student expression to their regular teaching routines. This seemed to be particularly important to the participants in countering the loss of personal connection with students during distance learning.

Although participants noted the natural intersections of music education and SEL, it is important to remember that arts educators cannot assume that their students' SEL needs are automatically being met by being in an arts classroom. As Farrington et al. (2019) noted:

> Educators need to be intentional about the holistic development of their students. While the arts can provide a wealth of opportunities to encourage the development of social and emotional skills, our research highlights the important role an arts educator plays in drawing out the potential of these opportunities. Arts education is not a "black box" that magically confers social-emotional competencies, and arts educators who treat it as such are missing the chance to leverage the learning opportunities that the arts provide. (p. 37)

In order for music instruction including SEL to be successful musically and social-emotionally,

music teachers must be intentional as they leverage social emotional teaching strategies. Because they found that most of the National Core Arts Standards align only indirectly with at least one SEL key component, Omasta et al. (2020) similarly encourage arts educators to explicitly address SEL competencies (i.e., self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision making, relationship skills [CASEL, 2017]) if they wish students to simultaneously develop their art and their SEL: "Without conscious effort educators are unlikely to create lessons that help students achieve both arts and SEL goals" (p. 9).

The participants' work around incorporation of SEL demonstrates what happens when teachers go beyond a blanket assumption that music classrooms automatically support social and emotional development. Delisa's final wellness unit for her students (Appendix S) is an example of intentional instruction focused on the holistic development of music students. The project enabled students to create wellness plans that challenged their self-awareness and self-management while also making connections to music performance and music consumption. Delisa intentionally combined SEL and musical performance teaching goals when she assigned the students' final performance: a musical expression of an aspect of their wellness as informed by their wellness plans. Within this example, Delisa utilized SEL to enhance musical instruction and music to enhance SEL instruction, displaying the potential for the intersection of SEL and music education. Instruction like this requires intentional and careful planning, which can be difficult and time-consuming.

Participants, especially Delisa and Emma, saw potential for SEL as a framework for classroom pedagogy. For Delisa, SEL was "not a gimmick," but rather a pedagogical tool that could be "applied in all aspects of [teaching] and be woven into lessons" (Interview Three). As music educators continue interacting with SEL, they will need to contend with critics of SEL

who call it a fad or trend (Greene, 2019) or who question if it is used as a form of policing, requiring non-white students to adhere to "white-washed" social norms (Kaler-Jones, 2020). Edgar and Morrison (2020) argued that SEL emerged in the mid-1990s and is therefore not likely to disappear. Furthermore, they argued that the social-awareness component of SEL combats structural inequality through development of empathy and diversity appreciation. Classroom and school culture perhaps play a role in the effectiveness of a music teacher utilizing self- and social awareness to address issues of inequity and inequality in their music classroom.

Intersections of Self-Care and Music Education

Self-care, deliberate action taken to care for one's mental, emotional, and/or physical health (Kuebel, 2019), was a theme throughout the course of the CTSG. During CTSG meetings, participants sense-made ideas of self-care and constructed understandings of self-care in music education settings. Although research on self-care for music teachers has been sparse, there are several practitioner articles focused on self-care for music educators. For example, Kuebel (2019) called music teachers to develop and implement self-care plans and Salvador (2019) encouraged music teachers to care for their bodies, minds, and emotions in order to revitalize their teaching practice.

Prior to CTSG meetings, participants took different deliberate actions in order to care for their health—working out, meditation, breaks from technology, breathing, and establishing comfortable environments at school or at home. McKay (2019) suggested that as educators discover their professional identities, they must discover the role of self-care within their professional lives. During CTSG workshops, participants shared self-care activities that they had designed for their students and self-care plans that they had designed for themselves. Self-care, for the CTSG members, required practice, just as singing and preparing for music performances

requires practice. As a result of their self-care practices, participants perceived positive contributions toward their mental health and recognized that self-care allowed them to be more effective educators.

These findings support McKay's (2019) findings that when educators care for themselves, they enhance their productivity and happiness. Similar to the participant in McKay's (2019) study, participants in this study recognized that it was not selfish to take care of themselves, but rather that practicing self-care supported their teaching practice. Not only is self-care an activity that can benefit one's teaching, Miller and Flint-Stipp (2019) assert that self-care is a "coping mechanism that could be integrated into traditional teaching processes to offset the emotional stress" (p. 40) associated with working with students with trauma. Participants noted that their students were experiencing elevated amounts of trauma due to the pandemic, so self-care activities integrated into their teaching processes may be even more necessary as students begin to share their trauma.

Throughout the course of the study, participants came to recognize music making as a self-care strategy. Due to social restrictions during the pandemic and a lack of social music making, participants felt a negative impact upon their wellness. Josie, Neil, and Merida in particular missed singing with others, either as teacher or as a choir member, and Josie missed the meditative aspects of singing. These findings support Pellegrino's (2011, 2014) findings that music-making for music teachers can be connected with teachers' well-being, beliefs, identity, and social connections. Participants in Pellegrino's (2014) study experienced "excitement, rejuvenation, and inspiration" (p. 143) as they made music outside the classroom. One might think that musical obligations like singing in a choir or practicing an instrument at home might contribute to a music teachers' sense of stress and work-life balance, but the social and emotional

benefits may outweigh the time and effort required by additional musical responsibilities.

Although participants verbalized that they valued self-care, they also acknowledged a perception of a cultural leaning away from self-care in the music education community. Pierce (2012) attributed musician personal and professional physical and psychological challenges to a "historically pervasive attitude of the culture in which musicians currently are trained and work" that promotes a "survival of the fittest" mindset and "places an unbalanced focus on challenge and competition" (p. 157). As participants attempted to add wellness or self-care strategies to their routines, they often allowed professional demands to overshadow their personal efforts. If a musicians' formative years are spent in a world with "cultural attitudes of self-sacrifice and secrecy" (Pierce, 2012, p. 156), it naturally follows that these attitudes may carry over into a career as a music educator. It is important to note that self-care alone cannot remedy these cultural attitudes as well as the overextension and deprofessionalization that many teachers experience (Wronowski and Urick, 2019). However, a dialogue of self-care for music teachers and their students may contribute to what Pierce (2012) called a "healthy paradigm shift" in music education (p. 159).

Intersections of Wellness and Music Teacher Responsiveness

Overall, participants expressed that a focus on student wellness helped them to be more responsive to their students' needs in an instructional sense. In CTSG conversations, it became clear that wellness strategies like yoga, mindfulness, and SEL in conjunction with music teaching were conceived of as avenues to better understand students' needs. This can be thought of through the lens of teacher concerns (Fuller & Bown, 1975). Fuller and Bown identified three developmental stages of teacher concerns: self-survival concerns, task concerns, and student impact concerns. Throughout the course of the CTSG, participants traversed the three teacher

concerns as they worried about their own wellness concerns, collaborated to create wellness-focused tasks for their classrooms, and considered how the integration of wellness strategies in their music curriculums might affect students.

Fuller and Bown (1975) hypothesized that through a teacher's career, they transition from inward-focused concerns like sense of self and adequacy as a teacher to outward-focused concerns like the actions of teaching and effect of those actions upon student learning. More recently, researchers have found that teacher development is not necessarily as linear as the Fuller and Bown model suggests (Conway & Clark, 2013; Miksza & Berg, 2013). CTSG participants modeled this non-linearity as they worked together to address a variety of inward- and outward-focused concerns throughout the course of this study. Wellness learning seemed to be mapped onto all three parts of Fuller and Bown's model.

Miksza and Berg (2013) suggested that concern stages (self-survival, task, and student impact) are overlapping and that contextual change may significantly impact teacher development. Participants' teaching contexts significantly changed with impacts of pandemic teaching like online, hybrid, and socially distanced teaching with questions about the safety of singing, and many participants reported feeling like they were reestablishing themselves as educators. Conway and Clark (2003) argued that as teacher concerns move outward, as suggested by Fuller and Bown (1975), their concerns also move inward, which leads to heightened reflexivity and self-regulation. Participants modeled this as they considered the ways in which they as educators could respond to their students' wellness needs (moving outward) and simultaneously focused on their own priorities and approach (moving inward).

Foundational Wellness Understandings

Throughout the course of the CTSG, participants conceptualized several key

understandings as foundational to their efforts to include wellness in their music curriculums. If a music teacher is to include wellness in their music classrooms, participants came to understand that the teacher must be a model for their students, think of wellness as a collaborative effort, establish and maintain boundaries, and appreciate the evolving nature of wellness. Below, I discuss each of these ideas that provided a foundation for participants' utilization of wellness strategies.

Teacher as Wellness Model

Throughout the course of this study, each of the participants noted the role of music teacher as model of wellness. For example, Neil decided that if he expected his students to keep a wellness journal, he should try keeping a wellness journal so he could share his experience with them. When Delisa assigned her students a musicians' wellness grid, she provided a model of her own musicians' wellness strategies. Anytime Josie led an SEL or mindfulness activity for her students, she participated with them, so as to demonstrate their importance and contribute to her own wellness. In addition to modeling wellness strategies, teachers in this study also reported modeling honesty as they discussed their wellness struggles with students, vulnerability as they shared stories from counseling and therapy, and compassion as they acknowledged their students' needs and adjusted their teaching practices.

Delisa explained "You have to model [wellness] just like you would model as an educator, as a musician, as a music educator, then you need to model that wellness for the kids." As Delisa alluded, musical modeling is a core practice of music teaching (Meissner & Timmers, 2020; Millican & Forrester, 2020), so it is a natural transition for a music educator to teach wellness through modeling. Modeling is the first component of Noddings' (2005) framework for developing an ethic of care in the classroom (the other components are dialogue, practice, and

confirmation). Watts et al. (2020) suggested that music educators are "uniquely suited to be a caring presence in the lives of students in both artistic and practical senses" (p. 51). When a teacher models behavioral traits or skills, Watts et al. assert, "Students are more likely to receive this as the way they should conduct themselves" (p. 53). Neil supported this assertion when he shared, "As long as you're invested in it, they'll be invested. As long as you show them [your investment]." He believed that when he enthusiastically modeled wellness techniques to his students, they shared a similar enthusiasm.

Modeling wellness for students is important, however, implicit messages that music teachers share with their students have the potential to overshadow music teacher demonstration efforts. Norton (2019) encouraged music teachers to examine how wellness fits into their planned and hidden curricula (i.e., lessons students learn implicitly from academic, social, and cultural messages). She asserted that often a teacher's planned curriculum is undermined by what they say and do in the classroom (e.g., demands for excellence and perfection, "no pain, no gain" attitudes, performance- or competition-driven curriculum). Modeling wellness strategies or acknowledging and discussing a lack of wellness strategies, in addition to planned wellness activities can help a teacher to align what they say with what they do.

Wellness as a Team Effort

Participants discussed the necessity of a collaborative approach to wellness. Delisa described a commitment to wellness as a "community build." This community might be one of the choir classroom, the music program, the full school, or music education in general. Although she perceived facilitating wellness community within her classroom with her students, Delisa noted a lack of wellness community within her school and within her state. She explained that administration and state music leader focus on performance and competition, as well as a lack of

social and emotional engagement elsewhere in the building were barriers to building a larger community wellness focus.

Music teachers play a role in counteracting what Wijsman and Ackerman (2019) called a "cycle of injury and lack of health awareness" in the music education community (p. 871). Students of music, according to Chesky et al. (2006), need to know *when* and *where* they may go for help regarding issues of musicians' health. Palac (2015) suggested that music local multidisciplinary health networks could help solve issues of musicians only seeing health professionals following injury. Networks could include credentialed and wellness-oriented music teachers, professional musicians, health practitioners, and somatic educators. Neil explained that music teachers are just one component of a students' wellness team. Other players on the team may include the school psychologist, speech pathologists, or ear, nose, and throat doctors. This collective approach might not be possible in certain school settings or local communities. Music teachers might encounter challenges such as accessing such specialists or differing views of music teacher role in student wellness.

Most importantly to Neil, the music student should be a key player in their own wellness, as they create their individualized musicians' wellness plan. By allowing students time to check-in, become aware of wellness concerns, and create personalized wellness plans, participants in this study became what Norton (2019) called "allies of prevention" (p. 15). However, Palac (2008) warned music teachers against diagnosing students' wellness concerns. Rather, they can rely upon their knowledge of school and local specialists who are prepared to deal with a broad range of musicians' wellness concerns. CTSG members came to understand their roles in their music students' wellness journeys as those of ally, teammate, and community member.

Boundaries as Nuanced and Necessary

As participants sense-made their wellness strategies and constructed their understandings of professional wellness, each participant shared a nuanced construction of their understanding and use of boundaries. Boundaries CTSG members discussed included boundaries between teacher and student, boundaries regarding personal time and professional time, and boundaries surrounding the job expectations of music educator. Participants considered boundaries a necessary component of their wellness plans that allowed for restoration and balance. Due to the caring nature of the teaching profession, Nilsson et al. (2017) asserted that work life balance is especially challenging for teachers. Teachers often physically and mentally bring work home, leading to intermingled work and personal lives and a lack of psychological detachment from work (Nilsson et al., 2017). For example, Emma expressed that she felt "guilty" taking time for herself, and Delisa described late nights of working and getting little sleep in order to meet her students' needs.

CTSG participants perceived that they had the agency to draw boundaries personally and professionally, and the act of drawing boundaries came more naturally to the more experienced teachers of the group. These findings support Shaw's (2014) findings that participants of his work-life study perceived that they were mostly in control of their overall balance and found balance to be a learned process. In order to take control of their overall balance, participants of Shaw's study needed to experience "a series of failures and successes" (p. 76). CTSG members Josie, Delisa, and Emma similarly experimented with different boundaries throughout the course of the study and learned the importance of flexibility with students and self when establishing boundaries. Emma in particular struggled with identifying boundaries that she needed to establish in her first two years of teaching, and expressed great relief when she established and

successfully upheld a boundary. Working during a pandemic and teaching online additionally challenged participants' boundaries and brought their attention to teaching practices that they perceived as unreasonable and unsustainable. New challenges to boundaries brought about by teaching through a pandemic included teaching choir students online and in person simultaneously, being asked to traverse multiple quarantine student pods to supervise non-music classes, creating practice and audition recordings for competition, and continuous cleaning and sterilization of classrooms.

Wellness as Evolving

Participants discovered throughout the course of the study that their wellness needs and uses of strategies evolved over time and with experience. This evolution was due to a variety of factors. For example, Emma's wellness plan evolved when her school transitioned to online then to hybrid learning plans, which resulted in her doing less of her wellness plan than she originally intended. Josie's plan for boundaries evolved when she realized that her boundaries were too strict and were not serving her as well as she had hoped. Merida recognized that due to the pandemic, her wellness strategies had evolved and that she had abandoned elements of her wellness plan like journaling and meditation. During the study, she returned to utilizing these strategies. Delisa recognized that if her wellness needs were evolving, then her students' wellness needs must also be evolving. Therefore, when she created her wellness self-awareness worksheet, she intended to return to the worksheet periodically throughout each semester so students may be able to address their evolving needs.

CTSG members experiences of change during this project aligned with Prochaska and DiClemente's (1982) Stages of Change Model. The stages of change in this ever-progressing cycle are precontemplation, contemplation, preparation/determination, action, maintenance, and

relapse, which leads to precontemplation and so on. Gilbert (2019) asked high school teachers to identify their wellness intentions or uses of wellness using the Stages of Change Model. Most of the teachers in Gilbert's (2019) study said they fell in the stages of precontemplation or contemplation: "This indicated that while teachers wanted to make changes to their wellness behaviors, they did not have specific plans or time frames in which to do so" (p. 173). Unlike Gilbert's participants, participants in this study all seemed to enter the CTSG in the preparation stage of this model, intent on collaborating to address wellness in music education. Throughout the course of the study, participants all progressed through the stages of change with a variety of wellness strategies at different paces and with varying outcomes. Relapse, or falling into previous wellness patterns, was not uncommon as participants encountered professional challenges like pandemic teaching circumstances, and experimented with new wellness strategies. Given the difficulty of maintaining wellness goals, it may be that the sustained nature of the CTSG helped participants navigate through the early stages of the cycle of change so as to avoid unwanted relapse.

Roadblocks to Wellness in Music Education

As they made sense of their relationships with wellness in music education, CTSG members constructed understandings of roadblocks that they encountered that challenged their use of wellness strategies in and out of the classroom. Although prior to CTSG meetings, participants were self-assured about their inclusion of wellness in their lives personally and professionally, they recognized that they lacked the education necessary to support their students' wellness needs. Additionally, participants identified issues of the music education profession that challenged their individual wellness like anxiety, stress, and potential burnout. Below, I discuss these roadblocks in detail.

A Knowledge Gap

Participants perceived a lack of wellness training in their undergraduate music educations. Emma called this a "gap" in her education and felt ill-equipped to meet the non-musical needs of her students. Although each participant practiced some wellness strategies before they joined the CTSG, several participants struggled to conceptualize how to use wellness strategies in their music classrooms and ensemble settings (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Participant Baseline Understandings of Wellness for the Classroom

Much of what music educators know about wellness comes from experience (Taylor, 2016). To an extent, that was true for these participants, as was most evident when Emma, the least experienced teacher of the participants, shared her developing kit of go-to mindfulness activities. Upon viewing her list, her CTSG colleagues contributed ideas that they had gained throughout their years of teaching. Another example of this knowledge gap due to experience was Emma's desire to learn more about vocal health. One of Emma's discussion topic requests before the CTSG was vocal health due to concerns for her vocal health. When participants reflected on their experience, several members mentioned the vocal health discussion as the least impactful, because they already were familiar with the information. Emma, however, mentioned that she wished the group had spent more time with the topic and had gone deeper.

Through experience, Emma's CTSG colleagues had already devised their vocal health habits as music teachers. These findings support Hackworth's (2009) findings that teachers with

more experience have a deeper understanding of the effect of vocal health activities than preservice and early service teachers. This experience was not always positive though, as several of the CTSG members had experienced vocal health disorders. Other participants had silently suffered from anxiety and depression before discovering helpful wellness strategies, including working with a therapist or counselor. Although each participant came to the CTSG with personal experience regarding some wellness strategies, they noticed deficits in experience with other areas of wellness. Considering the vastness of wellness strategies, activities, and challenges for music education, music teachers cannot necessarily rely upon personal experience to be prepared for the variety of wellness experiences their students will encounter. In this case, the CTSG provided a place for members to hear from others, which in turn shaped their constructions of wellness in music education as they addressed their own wellness needs.

Another educational roadblock was a lack of formal training in specific wellness techniques, and a lack of access to and time for professional development related to wellness. For example, all participants reported utilizing wellness strategies like yoga, mindfulness, and meditation within their classroom, but only Merida had formally trained to facilitate these activities. Further, no participants had trained in trauma-informed practices and were not prepared to deal with potential adverse effects of utilizing contemplative practices like anxiety, depression, and suicidal behaviors (Farias et al., 2020). Through their time with the CTSG, participants began to learn more about wellness strategies, which caused them to realize how much they still needed to know in order to comfortably address the gamut of their and their students' wellness needs.

Professional Roadblocks

As they sense-made their relationships with wellness, participants constructed

understandings of roadblocks to wellness they encountered as a result of professional expectations from the field of music education. Although CTSG members acknowledged that focusing on their wellness holistically was one way to address the stress and anxiety they felt as a result of their job, they also questioned some of the systemic issues of their profession. Delisa felt that "entire institutions of learning are based around a feeling of anxiety" and expect those within the institution to "just push through and…don't stop no matter what." The feeling of anxiety Delisa described may have been a result of role stress, defined by Mulholland et al. (2013) as a phenomenon that arises when a teacher "perceives the everyday demands of work to exceed their personal and professional resources" (p. 4). Examples of stressors for teachers in Mulholland et al.'s (2013) study included workload, curricular change, and a lack of discipline. Workload and curricular change were two major stressors for CTSG participants, especially as teaching circumstances changed often due to the pandemic.

For Josie, those "just push through" professional expectations began during her undergraduate education, where she recalled taking extra courses for little to no credit just so she could fulfill the expectations of her degree program. She drew a direct connection from her overload as an undergraduate music education major to her overload as a practicing music educator:

> Why is there such a high and heavy load? Like I understand – yes [these classes] need to happen. But why is [the extra work] not acknowledged the way that it should be? And how come in the school setting – as I was mentioning, we're not just a teacher and a choir director, we are a fundraiser, we are an advocate for music education, we are all these different things. Why is that not acknowledged? (CTSG Meeting Two)

As she took on the roles of choir teacher, fundraiser, and student advocate, Josie felt her extra

work went unnoticed and unappreciated, which at times led to anxiety and depression. These findings echo Mérida-López et al.'s (2017) conclusions that there is a strong relationship between work-related roles stressors like role ambiguity and conflict and teacher depression, anxiety, and stress.

Delisa observed that many of her colleagues in music education were habitually stressed and had accepted a lack of wellness as a necessary part of their profession. This observation compliments Schmidt and Morrow's (2015) findings that music teachers view job related voice wellness problems as "something they merely needed to endure, an occupational hazard that needed to be accepted" (p. 119). CTSG members each recalled times they had "pushed" through and endured unhealthy teaching circumstances for the sake of the job or for the sake of their students. Josie hypothesized that music teachers putting their wellness before their jobs and expectations is a challenge because they "put their wellness on the back burner so much…they always put themselves last when it comes to their jobs and getting things done for their students." It is possible that some teachers who are willing to reject their own wellness needs are easily taken advantage of by students, administrations, and the system of education because they think of teaching music as a calling or a vocation (Estola, 2003; Hansen, 1994).

A teaching system that implicitly or explicitly asks teachers to endure rather than thrive promotes an ascetic ideal of teaching, described by Higgins (2003) as a teacher's self-sacrificing devotion in the interest of the good of their students. Although Carr (2006) rebuffed Higgins' interpretation of ascetic ideals and claimed that ascetic ideals and teacher burnout could be matched with a "sane and sensible balance" (p. 180) of personal and professional, if a system does not teach or encourage that balance, teachers will continue to burnout. For example, Delisa shared that over her years of teaching, she had to identify the difference between anxiety and

passion. She discovered the distinction on her own through experience, and only after she endured years of anxiety in the music and music education communities.

Several participants noted times where their stress and anxiety led them to feel burned out and ready to leave the profession of music education. Burnout is a state of exhaustion and extreme stress that results in a loss of job interest, passion, and satisfaction and a sense of negative self-concept and hopelessness (Kilic, 2018; McLain, 2005; Paetz, 2021; Zysberg et al., 2017). Music teacher participants in Bernhard's (2016) study perceived high levels of burnout that correlated with increased hours of teaching, additional jobs, and less relaxation and sleep. CTSG members of this study experienced each of these factors during the times they reported nearing burnout. Merida explained how a lack of wellness tools in the past led to her being close to burned out and ready to leave education and suggested that other educators prepare strategies and tools in order to avoid burnout. Merida's suggestions echo Bernhard's (2016) call for mentorship, administrative support, continuing education, lighter teaching load, and teacher health and work-life balance resources to counteract burnout symptoms. Although participants specifically used the word "burnout," I suggest that what they experienced was perhaps demoralization (Santoro, 2011; 2019) or compassion fatigue (Koenig et al., 2018) that could have eventually led to burnout, which I explore in more detail below.

Participants viewed what they perceived as a performance- and competition-rooted culture of music education as another roadblock to incorporating wellness. Miller (1994) called competition in music education "dysfunctional" and band teacher participants in O'Leary's (2019) study reported the tension that "permeated [their] experiences competing" (p. 51). Delisa and Emma both noted the importance of competition at their schools and Merida mentioned the looming nature of performances at her position. All three shared stories of the stress and anxiety

that permeated their teaching experiences due to competitions and performances and wondered if others might view integrating wellness techniques as distracting to performance and competition goals.

In essence, music education itself may present the biggest challenge to wellness in music education. The performance and competition orientation of music education poses a significant challenge to music educators who want to prioritize wellness for their students. Is wellness simply a strategy to manage performance anxiety surrounding concerts and competitions? Do administrators, students, or parents view class time devoted to musicians' wellness as a distraction from preparing for competition? Or can a music teacher take the time to embed wellness throughout the curriculum, model strategies for their students, bring in experts to talk to students about areas of musicians' wellness, and work as an ally for their students' wellness within music?

The COVID-19 Detour

The context of COVID-19 influenced CTSG participant sense-making and constructions of wellness throughout this study. Due to the constantly shifting teaching conditions present during the COVID-19 pandemic, participants experienced heightened perceptions of emotional burden, compassion fatigue, and demoralization, which perhaps influenced their wellness needs and perceptions. Participants questioned their teaching goals with their choir students and changed up the ways in which they approached choir. The wellness issues associated with pandemic teaching and learning and social isolation (e.g., loneliness, depression, and anxiety) likely influenced participant willingness to address wellness during their ensemble time.

Emotional Burden and Compassion Fatigue

CTSG members noted an "emotional weight" or burden as they engaged with students

throughout the course of the pandemic. Worrying for their students' wellbeing and facing their own teaching realities, CTSG members perceived more feelings of stress and anxiety than they were used to. Similar to the teacher participants in Kim and Asbury's study (2020), CTSG members expressed concern for vulnerable students during the pandemic, "particularly those known to be unsafe in their own homes. This issue appeared to generate more anxiety and sadness in teachers than any other" (p. 1072). As CTSG members struggled to reach students, they, like Kim and Asbury's participants, felt "powerless to help those who may need them the most" (p. 1076). For example, Delisa worried about the stress and anxiety her students experienced as they decided whether to return to school or continue learning in sometimes unhealthy or unsafe home environments; Neil worried about his students whose parents had lost jobs or whose families had experienced COVID sickness and deaths; and Merida worried about her students who "dropped off the radar" due to inconsistent internet or a lack of parent support due to mounting pressures from COVID.

The similarity of CTSG members' experiences to Kim and Asbury's (2020) teacher participants from England speaks to the emotional burden that many teachers took on during the time of the pandemic. Additional emotional stress and anxiety has the potential to affect a teachers' emotional wellness. Because the dimensions of wellness are interrelated (Hettler, 1976), a toll on a teachers' emotional wellness may take a toll on their overall wellness.

As participants focused on creating safe spaces and fostering social and emotional learning in their classrooms, they took on an additional emotional weight from what they learned from their students. When they took on the roles of confidant and mentor, they opened themselves up to compassion fatigue, the emotional and behavioral reactions resultant from "exposure to someone close who is experiencing a traumatic event, combined with the stress

caused by the desire to help the traumatized individual" (Koenig et al., 2018, p. 262). Emma clearly illustrated this compassion fatigue when she said, "When my kids are hurting, I am hurting." Especially if a teacher has not trained in trauma-informed teaching or to facilitate difficult conversations, situations like these can have lasting impact on a teacher's emotional wellness.

It is possible that there is a gendered aspect to music teacher emotional burden and compassion fatigue, as well as to attitudes about wellness. Music education is often viewed as a feminized profession (Morton, 1995; Roulston & Mills, 2000). To Morton (1995), the adjective "feminized…describes something that is secondary, trivialized, subordinate, and usually exploited" (p. 5). Accounts of male teachers working with boy singers sometimes illustrate male music teachers emphasizing masculine characteristics in an effort to distance themselves from femininity (Martino, 2008; McBride, 2016; Roulston & Mills, 2000). Martino (2008) attributed this emphasis to "re-masculinization," an effort to project the idealized "white adult male heterosexual subject as the idealized role model" (p. 204). In an effort to re-masculinize their positions as teachers, Martino suggested that male teachers may relegate traditional teacher duties like caring and nurturing to their female counterparts. Similarly, male teachers may avoid issues of wellness, as "men too often feel that health is women's business" (Doyal, 2001, p. 1062). McBride and Palkki (2020) explained that gender roles are "culturally created and reinforced social constructs," but that discourses of gender roles in choral music education "had not seemingly changed much since the early 1990s" (p. 414). These persisting perceptions of gender roles may contribute to the presence of only one male volunteer/participant for this current study on wellness in music education.

Demoralization

Attempting to teach throughout the pandemic was professionally demoralizing for many of the CTSG members. Santoro (2011) defined demoralization as the "process of continually being frustrated in one's pursuit of good teaching." The participant in Santoro's (2011) single case study left the teaching profession demoralized because policy changes fundamentally altered her teaching practice, preventing her from the rewards of teaching that she had previously enjoyed.

CTSG participants similarly became demoralized because of fundamental alterations to their teaching practices as choral educators due to issues of personal safety, student engagement, district policies, and ever-changing teaching plans. For example, Delisa felt unsafe in her classroom as COVID-19 numbers rose and students and teachers continued to meet in person, Emma was discouraged by the lack of personal interactions with students, Neil was disturbed by annoyingly upbeat emails from his administration without any concern for teacher well-being, and Merida felt a depletion of energy as her school shifted learning plans constantly, leaving her unable to sleep and eat. Throughout the course of the study, all participants contemplated leaving the classroom due to demoralization brought on by COVID teaching conditions or lack of support from administration, echoing Emma's sentiment: "If this is the future of teaching, I don't want to be a part of it anymore." Although themes of wanting to do good work and feeling burnt out surfaced for participants, they still expressed passion for their jobs and their work with students and interest in the profession of music education.

Shifting Teaching Goals

In order to engage their students in a virtual, hybrid, or socially distanced in-person setting, participants had to adjust their expectations of teaching choir. CTSG participants felt

emboldened to “switch up everything” and focus on the process rather than the product. Delisa, Merida, Emma, and Josie all attempted to focus on the process of music making, stepping away from their traditional product- and concert-focused expectations of music education. Through a survey of 462 band directors, Hash (2021) found that distance learning allowed instrumental teachers to vary their teaching goals. Participants reported utilizing a wider range of technology, focusing on individual musicianship, incorporating lessons on theory, history, and culture, and assigning composition and arranging projects to spark student creativity.

In addition to making space for musical exploration and questioning of traditional choral goals, CTSG members’ move away from a concert focus allowed participants (and for some, their students) time to examine the role of wellness in their classroom. New priorities for the participants included in-class time for expression, reflection, and processing, mindfulness and self-care, and components of social emotional learning including self-awareness and self-management. Similarly, almost all participants in Hash’s (2021) study reported that they prioritized “maintaining students’ well-being” during remote learning (p. 392).

These findings complement de Bruin’s (2021) study of fifteen instrumental music teachers in Australia in September 2020 that coincided with the final month of CTSG meetings. Participants in de Bruin’s (2021) study similarly adapted their ways of engaging and interacting with their students during the pandemic, bringing their attention to social and emotional connectivity, interpersonal interactions, and emotional support. de Bruin (2021) noted a positive connection between “teachers’ emotional support and sustained student involvement and progress” and suggested that “students tend to be more motivated when they feel they can seek guidance and help from their teachers in emotionally supportive classrooms” (p. 9). Overall, teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic seemed to put wellness concerns at the forefront,

allowing other teaching/learning goals like performance and competition to take a backseat.

Collaborative Teacher Study Group: A Vehicle for Understanding

Stanley (2011) used the term CTSG to "denote a group of teachers collaborating in a shared, systematic investigation of teaching practice" (p. 72). As participants systematically investigated the intersections between wellness and music education teaching practices, they simultaneously sense-made, constructed, and shared ideas of the value of the CTSG as a form of professional development. For the participants of this study, the CTSG served in a capacity beyond systematic investigation, as a space of community, commiseration, and collaboration.

Community

During her final interview, Josie expressed gratitude for a professional development opportunity wherein she got to meet with her "people" and form a professional community with music professionals. Participants expressed a familiarity with sitting through professional developments that did not speak to music teachers and that forced them to apply a music lens on their own. According to Whidden (2017), this is not a unique occurrence for music teachers. One participant in Whidden's (2017) study shared the irritation they felt when sitting through professional development that she described as "not relevant to her choral music classes" (p. 8). Josie echoed this sentiment when she said, "Stop making me do math PD's, please" (Interview Three). Content mismatch and a lack of "my people" in previous professional developments for CTSG participants led to a prior lack of community development.

Findings from this study display personal and professional benefits of fostering collaborative music teacher development that allows for content-specific investigation. Shaw (2020) similarly found that a key element of fostering professional growth within a CTSG was "collaborative dialogue with colleagues working in comparable educational contexts" (p. 459).

CTSG participants in my study were able to build community around their comparable educational contexts and interest in wellness in music education.

Commiseration

The CTSG served as a space where participants could commiserate through venting (Carver et al., 1989) and showing support to their like-minded colleagues. Following the first CTSG meeting, where participants shared their current teaching situations, talked about wellness in music education, and expressed their strong emotions about teaching during a pandemic, Merida shared how nice it was to know "I'm not alone." Participants seldom had time to interact with other music professionals during the pandemic, so finding that they were all experiencing similar struggles was a relief. Similar to the participants in Stanley's (2011) CTSG, belonging to a professional community helped the members of my study to feel less isolated as professionals. Neil found that constructive discussions with his colleagues helped him to "get out the rut," which, he said positively contributed to his professional and mental wellness.

The CTSG professional development allowed participants to provide support for each other, which served as a coping strategy (Carver et al., 1989) during pandemic teaching. Kim and Asbury (2020) noted that during the pandemic, teacher participants in their study who were emotionally overwhelmed sought emotional support through conversations with colleagues and by venting to each other. Participants found comfort from talking to other music teachers about their similar stresses and struggles during the pandemic. During COVID teaching, Federkeil (2020) found that his participants relied on functional coping (i.e., approaching a situation proactively) strategies like planning or seeking social support as a way to "actively and deliberately manage distance teaching" (p. 450). Participants in my study similarly relied on functional coping strategies by seeking social support from their CTSG colleagues and

collaborating to create plans for their classrooms.

Collaboration

As participants sense-made the CTSG as a form of professional development, they constructed an understanding of CTSG as a collaborative endeavor, wherein they could create and share understandings, wellness strategies, and pedagogical ideas. This CTSG broke the mold of the "egg-crate school" (Lortie, 1975) in which teachers work in the isolation of their classrooms, focusing on their students and interacting minimally with their colleagues. Rather than locking their expertise within their individual classrooms, participants collaborated, sharing their ideas, experiences, and expertise with each other. During our final interview, Emma expressed "I think [what] I found most beneficial from our meetings is our conversations and building ideas and sharing with one another."

Emma's quote above illustrates this CTSG's relative placement on Little's (1990) continuum of collegial relations. Within this continuum, teachers who collaborate in a professional development setting move from (1) surface-level storytelling to (2) asking for/providing aid or advice to (3) sharing of materials or methods, and finally to (4) interdependent shared teaching. The members of this CTSG quickly moved beyond any worry of "jeopardize[ing] self-esteem and professional standing" (p. 516) by asking each other for advice during the first meeting and sharing materials with each other during their first workshop. Through an examination of collaborative professional development for music teachers, Stanley et al. (2014) identified essential elements of collaborative professional development for music teachers. This CTSG reflected five of the elements: organization around skills and strategies that are content-specific, sustained interactions, voluntary participation with elements of teacher choice, the respect for teacher prior knowledge and experience, and opportunities for reflection

throughout the professional development. The presence of these five elements from the start of the CTSG perhaps influenced participant willingness to set aside ego and have honest and sometimes difficult conversations.

It is important to note that collaboration was more fruitful for some CTSG participants than others. Little (1990) explained that teacher collaboration may promote change, but it also has the possibility to conserve present practices. Within this group, Delisa and Emma shared examples of significant change in practice and thought, while Neil and Josie demonstrated some change in practice and thought, and Merida conserved her present practices. This continuum of change might imply that those who entered the CTSG with more experience with wellness in music education were already implementing strategies and mindsets in their classrooms so did not have much room to grow, but it might also suggest that those members who joined with more experience were less open to change and instead wanted to conserve their present practices.

Implications

The findings of this study are particular to the individual participants of one collaborative teacher study group, and therefore, are not widely generalizable. However, I hope that the findings of this study might inform music teachers, music teacher educators, and policy makers as they consider wellness practices in music education. I believe the findings from this study can provide insight to the strategies, struggles, and successes of approaching wellness in and beyond music classrooms.

K-12 Music Teachers

First, school music teachers need to take care of themselves before they take care of others. So many teachers feel selfish for putting their needs first, but as the participants in this study came to understand, it is not selfish to take care of your holistic wellness. When they

focused on their self-care, put their needs first, advocated for themselves, and asked for help, CTSG members felt they were more effective educators and more responsive to their students' needs. Music teachers hoping to prioritize their wellness and care for themselves should seek out wellness resources for teachers, professional developments focused on self-care and self-advocacy, and communities of like-minded wellness-focused music teachers within professional associations or on social media.

Second, whether they know it or not, K-12 music teachers serve as an important model of musicians' wellness for their students. Music teachers must take stock of their own wellness strategies and habits and recognize the explicit and implicit messages they are sharing with their students regarding wellness. The burden of a students' wellness does not lie completely on the individual music teacher. The music teacher is just one member of a larger community of family members and school and community professionals who work together to support a student musician. Therefore, music teachers should help music students identify their musicians' wellness team. Additionally, it may be fruitful for teachers to create a contact list of trusted wellness specialists in their school and community, so when a student approaches them with a wellness concern that is beyond their purview, they may refer the student to the proper professional.

Finally, it is never too early for a music teacher to dive into wellness practices with their students. A music teacher might start simple, by identifying and implementing individual wellness strategies like breathing and body awareness into their curriculum. They may take a broader approach, allowing their students to examine their own musicians' wellness, identifying areas of need, and creating a plan as a class. A wellness focus woven throughout a music curriculum might help teachers identify their students' needs and provide them with knowledge

and experience to respond efficiently. To weave wellness through a year, a music teacher might create a curriculum of wellness that they enact concurrently with their traditional musical instruction. Within this curriculum, they might address different wellness strategies and concerns throughout the school year, perhaps inviting musicians' wellness experts to speak to the class and leading them in preventative physical or thought exercises. When it comes to sharing strategies of mindfulness, social emotional learning, and musicians' self-care within all dimensions of wellness, the earlier the better.

College and University Music Education

Wellness is a collaborative community effort. A student is influenced by each professor with whom they interact, so each professor needs to be invested in that students' wellness. But once again, the burden of a students' wellness does not lie upon any one individual. Rather, this collaborative community effort can reach beyond the school of music to partnerships across campus with vocal and hearing health professionals, physical therapists, nutritionists, etc.

Evidence suggests that collegiate music students struggle with mental health, with one study reporting that a majority of 252 music major participants reported mild to extreme anxiety, stress, and depression (Koops & Kuebel, 2019). One participant in the study reported that "suffocating stress is seen as the norm," (p. 10) while others described work overload and lack of sleep as factors contributing to stress and anxiety. By the time they graduate, music students should have interacted with wellness strategies for ideas like performance anxiety, stress, depression, vocal and hearing health, and body alignment to name a few. Music students should leave their undergraduate education with a plethora of tools to care for themselves once they leave their institution, and music education students and those who will teach applied lessons should be prepared to encounter wellness concerns with their own students. In other words,

wellness should be an integral component of music teacher education.

Professionals within higher education need to prioritize prevention *before* injury. So much of musicians' wellness is reactive. For example, I only heard music teacher vocal health horror stories *after* I had developed a pseudocyst on my vocal folds. Professionals within higher education have the power to share preventative techniques with students throughout their education, in every methods course, ensemble, or applied lesson. Further, rather than relying on personal reactive experiences, these professionals should seek out wellness education so as to teach students with both knowledge and experience and know when to pass the wellness responsibility to a more qualified individual.

Finally, college and university music professors also need to care for themselves first. Professors who care for themselves may also find themselves more responsive to their students' needs. Additionally, professors serve as an important model of musicians' wellness for their students as they model everything from work-life balance to prioritizing mental health to valuing the process over the product to practicing self-care.

Policy Makers

Policy makers at the institutional, state, and national levels first need to know the importance of teacher boundaries if we want music teachers to avoid burnout and remain in the field. These boundaries may be related to student/teacher relationships, work-life balance, or professional expectations. School leaders often ask music teachers to perform duties beyond teaching music, and teachers need to be able to draw a line somewhere. Policy makers should examine the explicit and implicit duties they assign music teachers, identify their priorities for music teachers, and provide recommendations for music teacher boundaries.

Second, policy makers should make an effort to value music students' and teachers' time.

After reading Josie's observation about working overtime as an undergraduate, I took a look at my undergraduate transcripts and saw how many zero and one credit classes I took. I remember joking with the other music education students at the time about our heavy load, but what I did not realize was that I was implicitly being told that it was okay to do extra work for little compensation. This narrative carried over into my first job, where I often offered to do things that I was not compensated for just to feel like I was contributing to the team. It was not until my third year of teaching that a mentor shared with me the importance (and the joy) of saying "no" to extra work as a teacher. Those individuals creating undergraduate student schedules should examine music teacher preparation requirements, align workload with credits, and draw limits on student course and ensemble participation. Perhaps a lack of wellness standards from professional associations like the National Association for Music Education, the American Choral Directors Association, the National Association of Teachers of Singing contribute to a dearth of appreciation for wellness in music education. Although wellness groups have formed within certain music education professional groups, there is still much work to be done.

As participants from this study shared time and time again, music teachers value professional development (PD) time with other music teachers. Not only were CTSG members excited to have PD time with other music teachers, but they also felt like they were able to make quicker progress professionally because they did not have to be constantly translating their professional development to a music teacher context. Especially considering the prevalence of video conferencing in education today, there are so many ways to bring music teachers together and collaborate beyond traditional PD. For the participants of this study, the CTSG was a valuable and productive form of PD for like-minded individuals who wanted to work together virtually to address a specific aspect of choral music education. Choral leaders might consider

facilitating choir-specific PDs utilizing the CTSG format. Local and state chapters of ACDA and NAfME might benefit from polling member interests and creating special interest CTSGs. Additionally, school district leaders might consider facilitating music teacher CTSGs within their districts or with neighboring districts as an alternative to math or English-focused all-school PDs.

Finally, especially when it comes to discussions of wellness in music education, professional developments should be sustained and interactive. The participants in this study showed that sustained work, thoughtful consideration of wellness topics, and collaboration were necessary components to their professional development. Being able to digest new information, create and enact lessons in their classrooms, and report back to their CTSG colleagues for feedback led to deeper understandings of wellness in music education for these participants than would an individual professional development session presented randomly throughout the school year. School and district leaders should examine professional development formats and consider the addition of intentional sustained professional developments for teachers through CTSGs or other forms of professional learning communities.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study provided insight into how music teachers perceived and experienced wellness in music education. Although some research has examined elements of physical wellness for music educators (e.g., vocal, hearing, musculoskeletal health), elements of emotional wellness for music educators (e.g., stress, stress interventions, mindfulness), elements of occupational wellness for music educators (e.g., job satisfaction, accountability stress, burnout), elements of social wellness (e.g., work-life balance), elements of intellectual wellness (e.g., creativity, music making, problem solving, professional development), and elements of spiritual wellness (e.g., spirituality, ethics of teaching), there is little research into wellness as a whole in music

education. Further investigation might continue to shed light on this under-examined aspect of music educator and music student experience and understanding. Furthermore, although the goal of this study was not to examine the effectiveness of collaborative teacher study groups, future research might explore the usefulness of different approaches to the CTSG for fostering teacher engagement and collaboration.

Holistic wellness in music education is a broad topic, and therefore I see many directions for future research as a result of this study. First, studying longitudinal effects of wellness practices in choral classrooms and in music education in general would be fruitful. This study followed five teachers over a four-month period. It would be interesting to work with music students and teachers to study the evolution of their wellness strategies and practices over a longer period of time. Additionally, given that the field lacks baseline knowledge on music teachers' understanding/perceptions of wellness, it would be fruitful to consider large-scale surveys that would illuminate the general state of the profession. The field also needs a better understanding of wellness differences in teachers and students, and would benefit from investigations of music teacher and student wellness that take into account influential variables like gender, race, and social class.

Participants in this study were particularly fond of social emotional learning and longed for more practical SEL resources for their classrooms. Although several teachers had baseline understandings of SEL, they struggled to translate SEL to the choir context. Future researchers may focus their empirical research on choir teacher understandings of SEL, implementation of SEL practices in choral classrooms, and student and teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of SEL in choir ensemble settings. They may also consider facilitating professional development for choir teachers regarding SEL in the choir context and studying the outcomes.

Future research may examine student experiences of wellness in music education in K-12 and college or university contexts. There is little research on choir student experiences with and perceptions of wellness concerns like vocal health and performance anxiety and of wellness strategies like SEL and mindfulness. The addition of student voice and experience to the growing body of wellness literature in music education would be valuable. For example, researchers might consider working with individual choirs as student singers and the teacher integrate wellness into their rehearsals or surveying large groups of students about their wellness and musicians' wellness strategies. Knowledge of the presence of wellness strategies and mindsets in music student experience and the effectiveness of said strategies could inform music teacher wellness pedagogy and practice.

Finally, future research of wellness for music educators might investigate societal expectations surrounding wellness. For example, future investigators might consider the role of gender as a factor in perceiving wellness as valuable. Future studies might include different groupings of participants by gender and compare perceptions of essential wellness strategies. Additionally, this investigation included only one person of color. Future research may include the investigation of the role of wellness for members of marginalized communities in music education. Home, school, and community life may play a role in teacher and student perceptions and reception of wellness strategies. Further investigation in a variety of settings and with a variety of students and teachers may help music educators identify a wealth of wellness strategies and conceptualizations that may serve teacher and student musicians' wellness needs.

Final Thoughts

Throughout the course of this project, the group and I had several conversations that ended with one of the members saying something like, "I bet you never envisioned talking about

this during your dissertation." They were absolutely correct. In my wildest dreams, I would have never envisioned proposing a project, facilitating a professional development, and writing a dissertation almost entirely from quarantine in my apartment during a global pandemic. I was stunned that music teachers who were dealing with the uncertainties of teaching during COVID-19 would volunteer their time and energy in order to participate in a collaborative teacher study group to study wellness in music education. I was impressed every meeting by the care, determination, and perseverance that each of these teachers displayed, as well as the sorrow, pain, and anger that they were willing to share. This project serves as a sort of time capsule, containing keepsakes, projects, and stories of teachers who struggled their way through what we are all sick of hearing called unprecedented times.

Throughout my time as a graduate student, I have continually searched for the practical implications, the "so whats" and the "hows." Yes, theoretically wellness is important for music teachers, but what does a musicians' wellness pedagogy actually look like in practice? How do music teachers get the resources they need? How do we get them to buy in? How do we share the wealth of musicians' wellness knowledge and resources? Through sharing participants' constructions of wellness in music education as well as their practical creations for their classrooms, it is my hope that I have taken a step toward establishing a foundation for the practical aspects of implementing a musicians' wellness curriculum.

During their final interviews, I asked each of the participants what advice they might give to a teacher who was thinking about adding musicians' wellness to their choir program. I think it is only fitting to close this document with their advice:

> Emma: I would say do it. But it should be inherently in your curriculum…it should be in like every aspect of choral teaching and musicianship. Inherently in your lesson plans. Inherently in your concerts. In everything.

Merida: Find a way to tie that choral breath in to the idea of centering yourself and using those tools to sing well - to me that's the, that's the logical in. And then if you do any sort of stretching before rehearsals…that is a perfect way to include some yoga and some wellness and some breath control while stretching the kids out, loosening them up, and getting ready to go into a really strong rehearsal.

Josie: Well, first of all, go for it. Know that you're in it for the long haul. Like, it's not just like a one-hour clinic at the state conference. I would say take your students with you definitely as you're doing it. You don't have to be perfect before you do it with your students like you can do it with your students and it still be just as effective, I think. Yeah, I mean I do it. Do it and don't worry about going all in at once. Like it's okay to go slow because it can be a challenge like trying to analyze where you're at and stuff. You know it's almost like a mini therapy for yourself.

Delisa: Hurry up. Hurry up. It's never too late, but don't hesitate. If you're thinking about adding it, if I were going to give advice, I would say one piece at a time. I would say practice. You have to be the model of it. The best way to do it is to model it.

Neil: Talk to people. Ask questions. Find resources. Go online. And take the time to do it.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Introduction to Wellness Worksheet

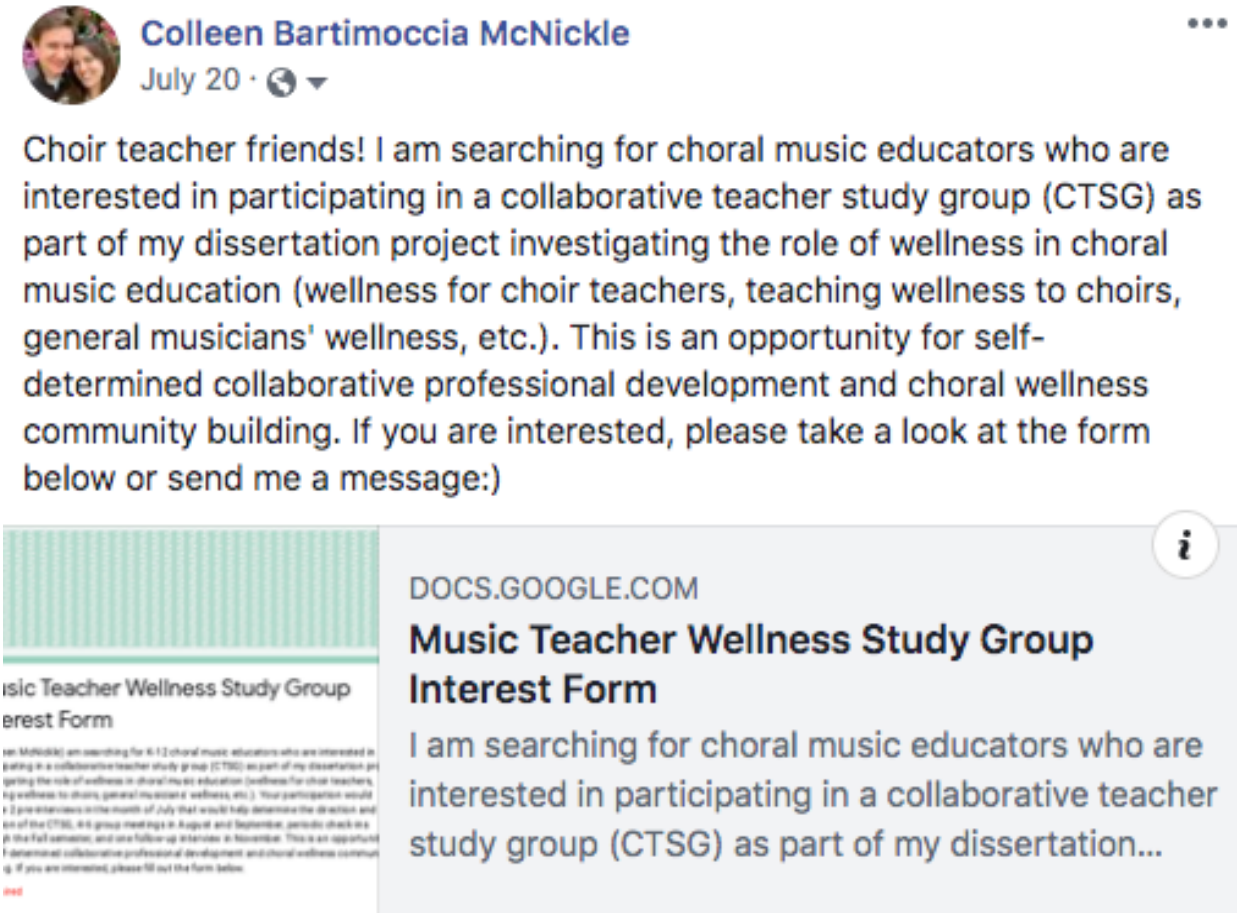
Approaches to Elements of Wellness:

- **Physical - Issues of the body: injury prevention, hearing, vocal, and musculoskeletal health, exercise and eating habits, etc.**
  - Strategies for Students:
  - Strategies for Self:
- **Emotional - Awareness of personal and interpersonal feelings**
  - Strategies for Students:
  - Strategies for Self:
- **Intellectual - Performing and sharing stimulating mental activities which expand knowledge and skills**
  - Strategies for Students:
  - Strategies for Self:
- **Occupational - Finding satisfaction and enrichment in life through work**
  - Strategies for Students:
  - Strategies for Self:

- **Social - Making contributions to environment and community**
    - Strategies for Students:
    - Strategies for Self:
- **Spiritual - Search for meaning, purpose, and world-view**
    - Strategies for Students:
    - Strategies for Self:

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Post and Survey



Music Teacher Wellness Study Group Interest Form

I (Colleen McNickle) am searching for K-12 choral music educators who are interested in participating in a collaborative teacher study group (CTSG) as part of my dissertation project investigating the role of wellness in choral music education (wellness for choir teachers, teaching wellness to choirs, general musicians' wellness, etc.). Your participation would include 2 pre-interviews in the month of July that would help determine the direction and intention of the CTSG, 4-6 group meetings in August and September, periodic check-ins through the Fall semester, and one follow-up interview in November. This is an opportunity for self-determined collaborative professional development and choral wellness community building. If you are interested, please fill out the form below.

* Required

Email address *

Your email

Name *

Your answer

Briefly describe your teaching experience. (Grade levels taught, courses taught, years in education, school types, etc.) *

Your answer

If you were to be a participant of a collaborative teacher study group, what topics of choral music education wellness would you be interested in discussing? *

Your answer

What is your general availability and preference for group meetings (days/times/etc.) during the months of August and September? *

Your answer

Do you have any questions? Anything else you want me to know?

Your answer

Send me a copy of my responses.

Submit

APPENDIX C

Music Teacher Wellness Interview Questions

Interviews 1 and 2 pre-intervention, Interview 3 post-intervention

Interview One: Focused Life Histories

Seidman (2019) – "In the first interview, the interviewer's task is to put participants' experience into the context of their life history by asking them to tell as much as possible about themselves in light of the topic up to the present time" (p. 21)

- How did you come to your current teaching position?
    - Tell me a bit about your professional trajectory.
    - Where did you get your start?
    - Where are you now?
- Talk to me about your job pre-COVID-19.
    - Who do you work with?
    - How is your support from your administration?
    - What are your students like?
    - What did a typical day look like for you?
    - What was your favorite part of your day?
    - What kind of music were you working on with them in like January and February?
    - What were your most time-consuming aspects of your job?
    - How many total students did you have?
    - What were some things you were doing outside of school for yourself? Or for others?
    - How would you describe your work-life balance pre-COVID?
- What are some ideas of musicians' wellness (or lack thereof) that you and/or your students have interacted with in the past? (*Physical, emotional, social, intellectual, occupational, spiritual*)
    - If you are willing to share, what wellness concerns have you experienced personally in the past?
    - Have you taught any lessons or units that focus on musicians' wellness?

        - How did your students react to that?
        - Did you have any students that approached you with vocal health, anxiety, musculoskeletal issues?
    - How do you approach performance anxiety for yourself or your students?
    - Have you experienced any issues with role stress in the past as you balance the many hats choral teaching requires?
        - **Role stress** is the **stress** experienced by the persons because of their **role** (job) in the organization. They assume a **role** based on the expectation of the self and others at workplace.

The following statements are adapted from a perceived wellness survey - as you are comfortable sharing - on a scale of 1-5 (very strongly disagree to very strongly agree) how would you answer and why? [Follow up questions – does a story or do any moments come to mind where you experienced xyz at work/school?]

- Generally, I feel pleased with the amount of intellectual stimulation I receive in my daily life. (I)
- Compared to people I know, my past physical health has been excellent. (P)
- It seems that my life has always had purpose. (O/Sp)
- My family or friends have been available to support me in the past (So)
- I always look on the bright side of things (E/Sp)
- In general, I feel confident about my abilities (E/O)
- I will always seek out activities that challenge me to think and reason (I)

Interview Two: The Details of Experience

Seidman (2019) – "The purpose of the second interview is to concentrate on the concrete details of the participants' present lived experience in the topic area of the study. We ask them to reconstruct their lived experience in the area of inquiry" (p. 22).

- Walk me through the way you and your students experienced the last 3 months of the school year.
    - How did it begin for you? What do you remember about the transition to online learning?
    - What did your job look like while you and your students were in quarantine?

    - How did you function as a professional day-to-day?
    - What resources did your administration or district provide for you and your students?
    - What were some pros (if any) and cons of your experience?
- How do you anticipate the beginning of the school year progressing?
    - What worries you? What are you excited about?
    - What are some challenges you anticipate for you and/or your students?
    - How are you using music to address these issues?
- When you think of wellness for yourself and your students throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, what do you consider?
    - What are your main concerns for music teachers and students currently?
    - What wellness supports are in place district- or profession-wide?
        - What works for you? What has not worked?
    - What wellness supports do you wish you had?
    - What resources do you feel you need to address wellness concerns regarding your and your students' wellbeing?
- Intervention Questions
    - Learning preferences? Videos, Articles, Websites, Podcasts?
    - Time commitment for prep and/or meetings?
    - Topics you want to dig in on?

- Intervention between interviews two and three -

Interview Three: Reflection on the intervention

Seidman (2019) – "In the third interview, we ask participants to reflect on the meaning of the experience that we explored in interview two" (p. 23).

Questions to be developed following the intervention - examples of potential questions include:

- Talk to me about your experience with the intervention/CTSG.
    - What was most impactful? On you? On your teaching practice?
- Have you been able to utilize any ideas from the intervention within your classroom / daily life? How?
- What aspects of wellness do you feel like you need support with / to develop?

APPENDIX D

Google Classroom Images

Wellness for Choirs CTSG

Stream | Classwork | People | Grades

Create

Google Calendar | Class Drive folder

All topics

Week One - Intro to ...

Week Two - Self-Car...

Week Three - Social-...

Week Four - Mindful...

Week Five - SEL Rev...

Week Six - Physical ...

Week Seven - Music...

Additional Materials

Group Goals and Expectations — Posted Aug 5

Week One - Intro to Musicians' Wellness

- Rising to a new paradigm: infusing health a... — Edited Aug 2
- Week One Worksheet — Posted Aug 1
- 8/5 Agenda and Discussion Questions — Edited Aug 3
- Meeting and Check-In Preference Form — Posted Aug 4
- Week One Slides — Posted Aug 7

Week Two - Self-Care, Boundaries, and Emoti...

- Wellness Policy — Due Aug 10, 10:00 AM
- Compassion Fatigue Video — Posted Aug 5
- Health and wellness for in-service and futur... — Posted Aug 5
- Wellness in Music Education: An Interview ... — Posted Aug 5
- The Resilient Educator — Posted Aug 5
- 8/10 Agenda — Posted Aug 5
- Week Two Slides — Posted Aug 10

Week Three - Social-Emotional Learning

- Week Two "Temperature Check" — Due Aug 11
- Student Musicians' Self-Care Worksheet or ... — Due Aug 17

Colleen McNickle
Sep 14

Hello CTSG!

Thank you so much for your contributions today and for taking the time to be in collaboration with your colleagues. I know this is a wild time and it is difficult to take extra time - so I really appreciate it. Thank you to for facilitating, to for note taking, and to for keeping us on track!

During our next (and final) meeting, we will discuss how music can be used to enhance wellness and workshop our action plans. I look forward to seeing what you come up with! To prepare for the meeting, please complete the following:

1. Submit your action plan at the assignment link under week 7 by the Sunday night before we meet so I can include them in our slides.
2. Read 'Exploring the processes of change facilitated by musical activities on mental wellness.'
3. Listen to the Self-Care for Educators Podcast (7 min)
4. Make a self-care soundtrack OR make music as a form of self-care (we will report back during check-ins)

I look forward to seeing your action plans and to figuring out our next steps as facilitators of musicians' and music teachers' wellness.

Last meeting will be Monday, September 28 at 3:00 PST / 5:00 CST / 6:00 EST. Zoom link is below. As usual, I will be on early if you want to chat :)

Join Zoom Meeting
https://msu.zoom.us/j/91654969323

Meeting ID: 916 5496 9323
Passcode: 392793

Add class comment...

APPENDIX E

Consent Form

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Music Teacher Wellness Perceptions and Experiences
Colleen McNickle, PhD Student
Music Education, Michigan State University
815-721-4127, cdbmcnickle@gmail.com
Sponsored by Ryan Shaw, rshaw@msu.edu

BRIEF SUMMARY
You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation including why you might or might not want to participate, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to discuss and ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Your participation in this research study would include 3 individual interviews and participation in a wellness collaborative teacher study group, and if you wish, participating in a focus group interview. Interviews and study group meetings will be conducted via Zoom.

As all interviews and interventions are discussion based, risks of participating in this study are unlikely. The potential benefits to you for taking part in this study are access to music education wellness educational materials, an examination of your wellness teaching practices, introduction to a group of similarly interested choral music educators, and knowledge and support gained from group discussions.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH
The purpose of this research study is to investigate music teacher perceptions of the role of wellness in music education with a particular interest in participant experiences throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Research questions include: 1. How do music teachers describe their perceptions and experiences of wellness in music education? 2. How do music teachers navigate wellness concerns related to music education prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic? 3. What is the impact of a music teacher wellness intervention?

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO
We will begin our investigation with a two-part interview in the month of July. During these interviews, I will ask you questions regarding your teaching history, philosophies, and experiences. During this time, we will also discuss your wishes for the direction of the collaborative teacher study group. This group will meet 4-6 times during the months of August and September depending on group availability and will discuss topics related to wellness as determined by the interest of the group. All educational materials will be provided online. Throughout the course of the semester, I will ask you to keep an electronic journal or audio or video log as an additional method of data collection and I will check in with you occasionally. We will conclude with a final interview in November.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS
The potential benefits to you for taking part in this study are access to music education wellness educational materials, an examination of your wellness teaching practices, introduction to a group of similarly interested choral music educators, and knowledge and support gained from group discussions. You may not benefit personally from being in this study. However, we hope that in the future, other people might benefit from the knowledge of teacher wellness needs gained from interviews and group discussions.

POTENTIAL RISKS
Although there are no foreseeable physical, legal, privacy-based, or psychological risks to participation, some discussion topics might be uncomfortable.

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Music Teacher Wellness Perceptions and Experiences
Colleen McNickle, PhD Student
Music Education, Michigan State University
815-721-4127, cdbmcnickle@gmail.com
Sponsored by Ryan Shaw, rshaw@msu.edu

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POTENTIAL RISKS
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APPENDIX F

Initial Codes Grouped by Themes

Challenges to Wellness
Those emotions, feelings, experiences, that participants shared that seem to challenge their sense of wellness.

- "And that's why people crack"
- "Emotional weight"
- "I just wasn't taking care of myself"
- "It's hard to keep your cup full when you are constantly giving"
- "Never got a break"
- "No one should have to be this ready for trauma"
- "Toxic Positivity"
- "We have normalized living in toxic worlds"
- E: Anxious
- E: Burnt Out
- E: Excluded
- E: Exhausted
- E: Indignant
- E: Overwhelmed
- E: Powerless

COVID Questions
Concerns the teachers expressed mostly related to COVID - spring to now - how do they continue doing their jobs, serving their students, taking care of their needs. Do they even stay in their career?

- "How do I keep kids singing?"
- "I don't know where to begin"
- "If we come back, how do I do this?"
- "Let go of normal"
- "Putting myself on the front line"
- "Rethink how choir goes"
- "Run Away"
- E: Hesitant

CTSG Affirmation
Moments that show the value of the CTSG. Inspiration, support, words of appreciation, etc.

- "I'm going to steal that"
- "Long game rather than quick fix"
- "This is the what matters"
- "We modelled what professional development should look like"
- "You are not alone"

Reactions to recent teaching situations
The positive and negative realities of teaching in the era of COVID. How their changing situations affected their day-to-day actions and mindset.

- "A pretty mind-opening experience"
- "Any way I can to move forward"

- "Concentrate a lot more on the process"
- "I don't hate this"
    - Initial relief teaching online
- "I kind of forgot how to do my job"
- "I really miss that about teaching"
- "It was very abnormal"
- E: Hopeful
- E: Isolated
- V: Autonomy

Roles Beyond Choir Teacher

Ways in which these teachers go beyond the singing, conducting, music making already.

- "I never dealt with that even in student teaching"
- "Internal role conflict"
- "It's my responsibility"
    - Regarding looking out for student expressiveness/ mental health concerns
- "We are the first line of defense"
    - Teachers as first responders
- E: Insecure
- V: Equity and Inclusion

Student Wellness Concerns

What are teachers worried about regarding their students' health? Especially during this time.

- "The new assessment turned into proof of life"
- "These kids don't know how they feel"
- "This is what all these students are carrying"

Trauma of Uncertainty

The unknowns weighed heavily on these teachers. Teaching situation, mode, student presence, health, etc.

- "Constantly pivoting on a dime"
- "Is this just going to be a vicious cycle?" (compassion fatigue)
- "Nobody's thinking about the chain reaction for specialists"
- "So many unknowns"

Wellness in Choir

Could combine this with wellness strategies - but these were very specifically linked to how teachers use wellness with their students in the choral setting.

- "Singing is a form of personal wellness"
- "All of that wellness starts with me"
- "COVID or not, it should be just as important"
- "That's not the first thing on my mind" (wellness)
- "Wellness is unintentionally embedded in music education"
- "What can I do to change the stigma?"
- V: Expressiveness

Wellness Strategies

Ways in which participants approach their own wellness. The values, habits, and mindsets that they already have in place or strive to have in place for themselves and for their students

- "Boundaries and sustainability"
- "It's about creating those habits"

- "Reflection and Processing"
- "We have to begin where the child is"
- V: Balance
- V: Connection
- V: Consistency
- V: Diligence
- V: Education
- V: Health Value Physical and Mental Health
- V: Laughter
- V: Learning
- V: Mindfulness
- V: Self-care
- V: Spiritual Awareness, Grounding
- V: Teamwork

APPENDIX G

Choir Teacher Wellness CTSG Materials

Week One: An Overview of Wellness in Music Education

- Read – Pierce (2012) *Rising to a new paradigm: infusing health and wellness into the music curriculum.* (PDF)
- Prepare – Introduction to group: prepare to share your name, a tiny bit about your school and choir program, what musicians' wellness means to you, and why you were interested in being a part of this CTSG.
- Download or Print – Wellness Toolbox Worksheet

Week Two: Self-Care, Boundaries, and Emotional Endurance

- Create: A wellness policy for your classroom that you could include in a syllabus or on a website.
- Watch – Ted Talk – Compassion Fatigue: What is it and do you have it?
- Read – Kuebel (2019) *Health and wellness for in-service and future music teachers: Developing a self-care plan.* (PDF)
- Complete – Self Care Inventory in Kuebel Article
- *Optional: Listen – Wellness in Music Education: An Interview with Dr. Christa Kuebel
- *Optional: Browse – resilienteducator.com (start with this article)
- Reflect – What is your self-care plan? How do empathy and compassion negate that plan? What resources do you need in order to carry out your self-care plan?

Week Three: Social-Emotional Learning for Music Educators

- Create: create an outline for a student musicians' self-care worksheet or activity.
- Watch – YouTube – *Social Emotional Learning: What is SEL and Why SEL Matters*
- Read – Edgar (2013). *Introducing social emotional learning to music education professional development.* (PDF)
- Complete Inventory of Practices mentioned in Edgar (PDF)
- *Optional: Browse – casel.org (start with this page)
- *Optional: Listen – Choose One: *Seven Best Podcasts to Learn More about SEL*
- Reflect – Do you see a space for SEL in your classroom? Explain. What about choral music education already promotes SEL? Where do we have holes?

Week Four: Mindfulness for Choirs

- Watch – *Why Mindfulness Is a Superpower*
- Read – Rechtschaffen (2014). *The Way of Mindful Education: Cultivating Well-Being in Teachers and Students.* (Book) Part One: Why Mindful Education Matters.
- Listen – Mindfulness Meditation
- Browse – mindful.org (start with this article)

- Reflect – What mindful strategies do you employ on a daily basis? How would the introduction of mindful strategies affect you and/or your students? What works for you? What doesn't work for you?

Week Five: Revisiting SEL

- Read the intro to CASEL's SEL Roadmap for Reopening Schools
- Read your assigned 'shared reading' (Neil - part one; Delisa - part two; Josie - part three; Merida - part four; Emma - Edgar's article)
- Prepare a summary of your reading for the group. Feel free to include discussion points, ideas, brainstorms, translations to the music classroom, etc. If you want to have slides included in the presentation, send them to me by Sunday night. Each person/reading gets 10-12 minutes including discussion and time for questions.
- *Optional - watch Teaching Social Emotional Learning through Music - Episode One - Composing with Heart

Week Six: Physical Wellness in Choral Music Education

- Create: A lesson, assignment, activity, or unit that focuses on one or more aspects of SEL and incorporates at least one mindful moment.
- Read – Allen (2017). *What Every Singer Needs to Know About the Body.* (Book) Chapter One: Body Mapping, Kinesthesia, and Inclusive Awareness.
- *Optional: Listen – Vocal Health 101 for Teachers
- Watch – Full Laryngeal Massage
- *Optional: Browse – musicianshealthcollective.com (start with this article on body mapping)
- Reflect – How has your physical wellness affected your roles as musician and teacher? How have you approached issues of physical wellness in your classroom? How can you infuse your curriculum with elements of musicians' physical wellness?

Week Seven: Music's Role in Wellness

- Create: A wellness action plan
- Read – Kwan and Clift (2018). Exploring the processes of change facilitated by musical activities on mental wellness
- Listen – Self Care for Educators Podcast – Episode 1
    - Transcription if you'd rather read
- Mae – A self-care soundtrack OR make music as a form of self-care.
- Reflect – How did listening to your soundtrack or making music feel? Did this process affect your wellness this week?

APPENDIX H

Emma's Wellness Policy

The [school] music department is committed to supporting the intellectual, physical and psychological health and safety of its students. The resources and information below are designed to inform and service each individual as needed.

Intellectual Health
[The] music department is committed to providing stimulating intellectual material each and every day for students. To continue your personal music practice at home, please see the materials below.

- Musictheory.net
- Teoria.com
- flat.io
- noteflight.com

Physical Health
When playing a musical instrument and/or singing, misuse can lead to a number of health problems. These injuries are preventable with the correct information and resources. Please see the links below in regard to maintaining proper physical health.

- Hearing
- Musculoskeletal Health – see #2
- Vocal Health

Psychological Health
Prioritizing your psychological health when studying a musical instrument and/or singing can often be overlooked. Know that your mental health is just as important as your physical health. Please see the resources below.

- Coping with Stress and Anxiety
- Performance Anxiety

Medical Disclaimer: The information above is not a substitute for a consultation with a medical professional. If you are personally concerned about any of the issues above, please consult a licensed medical professional.

[Local health specialists and counseling names, addresses, and phone numbers omitted]

*As a reminder, [my] office is a safe space. To talk to [me] about any of the above, feel free to schedule an appointment or contact via email at [email omitted].

APPENDIX I

Merida's Student Self-Care Activity

Wellness Class/ Rehearsal Check In

- When I came in, I was feeling these emotions:
  -
  -
- When I practiced my breathing, it helped me to:
  -
  -
- Did practicing mindful breathing help me set intentions? YES NO
- How did you feel at the end of class?
  -
  -

Extensions for Upper School students (6th, 7th, 8th):

- Did you find your Vagus nerve today? How did it feel to practice breathing from the bottom of the nerve to the top? Turn and talk to the person next to you about your findings.
- Did you stay connected to that breath throughout rehearsal? Is there a song that made you feel more connected? What was it that connected you more deeply?

APPENDIX J

Josie's Student Self-Care Activity

Student Musicians' Self Care Activity

Objective: students will create a self-care plan based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and six areas of wellness.

Materials: Visuals of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, six areas of wellness (and example strategies), pyramid template(s), and completed example(s).

Procedure:

1. Discuss hierarchy of needs and six areas of wellness. Point out subcategories and overlaps. T & S share examples of needs and wellness being addressed.
2. Discuss the importance of self-care plans. Show examples.
3. Fill out the blank Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs pyramid with strategies for how to address needs in that category, starting with "physiological needs" then up to "self-actualization". Reflect on the six areas of wellness while brainstorming strategies. Some areas of wellness will fall into several categories of Maslow's Hierarchy, some will only fall into one. Use various student groupings to complete the pyramid. Example:
    1. "Physiological needs" completed as a class with as many suggestions as possible. S can submit suggestions electronically to compile a word cloud, S can write suggestions on post-it and put on board. Students write the examples which they connect with most on their own pyramid.
    2. "Safety needs" completed as a class with some discussion. T can write down S suggestions, S can pair share, and/or jigsaw (using the six areas of wellness). Students write the examples which they connect with most on their own pyramid.
    3. "Love & belonging" completed with small groups. Remind S to focus on actions they can take to address this need. S share with class. Students write the examples which they connect with most on their own pyramid.
    4. "Esteem" completed with partner(s) of choice to encourage thoughtful discussion. Consider cognitive and aesthetic needs. S who are comfortable can share.
    5. "Self-Actualization" completed individually. Consider "transcendence". S who are comfortable can share.
4. Extension: On 3-D pyramid, students decorate each panel to depict what it looks like when a different level of needs and/or area of wellness is met. Essentially, they will show what it looks like when they enact their self-care plan.
5. Wrap up: Remind students to check in with themselves, implement strategies, and update plan as needed.

Materials & Resources: [Images Omitted]

Maslow's hierarchy, Teacher Self-care pyramid, Wellness areas & examples, 2D pyramid

APPENDIX K

Emma's Student Self-Care Activity

You're not ok? That's ok!

Daily questions to ask yourself during COVID-19.

1. Are you hydrated? If not, have a glass of water. It is recommended to drink 8 cups of water (3 liters) a day.	**5. Have you carved out time for an activity of your choosing?** Allowing yourself your own designated time has more power than you think! Don't be afraid to try something new, or pick up an old hobby!
2. Have you eaten in the past three hours? If not, grab a bite to eat! Give your body the sustenance it needs by eating a variety of nutrient packed foods - whole grains, lean proteins, and fruits & veggies. A little chocolate doesn't hurt either :)	**6. Have you said something nice to someone in the past 24 hours?** Spread the love! Whether online or in person, make it genuine. Don't wait to be kind to someone!
3. Have you stretched your legs in the past few days? Believe it or not - exercise is a great energy booster! When you exercise, your body releases endorphins, a positive feeling in the brain!	**7. Have you gotten at least eight hours of sleep?** Make sleep a priority! Studies show that at least 8 hours of sleep improves your mental and physical health.
4. Have you talked to someone that you trust? Having a support system that you trust and feel comfortable with is important. Not sure where to start? A trusted teacher, therapist, parent, or friend is a great starting point!	**8. Have you waited a week?** Sometimes our perception of what is going on in the moment is skewed, and we can't tell we are not thinking clearly! Try waiting a week, practice self care, and see how you are feeling then!

ACTIVITY: Make a self-care checklist that caters to your individual needs during this time. Keep it in a place where you will see it every day. Don't be ashamed to make yourself a priority!

APPENDIX L

Delisa's Student Self-Care Activity

Student Wellness

Wellness is an active, holistic, and multidimensional process of self-awareness combined with the balance and integration of healthy choices within one's particular environment

Usingthe definition provided, list examples of ways this form of wellness can be expressed.

EMOTIONAL - Awareness of personal and interpersonal feelings

Spiritual Wellness - Search for meaning, purpose, and world-view

Social - Making contributions to environment and community

Physical Wellness - Issues of the body: injury prevention, hearing, vocal, and musculoskeletal health, exercise and eating habits, etc.

OCCUPATIONAL - Finding satisfaction and enrichment in life through work

INTELLECTUAL - Performing and sharing stimulating mental activities which expand knowledge and skills

Name _____ Date _____

Student Wellness

ItWellness is an active, holistic, and multidimensional process of self-awareness combined with the balance and integration of healthy choices within one's particular environment

Choose three (3) artworks from the ones you've created in class. Before we present them to everyone, we'll prepare an Artist's Statement. When we're done, we'll paste our artworks on the wall and share our statements with the class.

Occupational

Physical

Social

Emotional

Intellectual

Spiritual

Name	Date

APPENDIX M

Neil's Student Self-Care Activity

Weekly Check-In

Wellness practices include being aware of ourselves and our minds. Please take some time to reflect upon your week. All answers are anonymous and only read b .et me know if you have any questions or concerns.

* Required

"Emotional Regulation" means that I feel in control of my emotions and I understand how I feel. Being "emotionally unregulated" means I do not feel in control of my emotions. How do you feel today? *

- [ ] Emotionally Regulated
- [ ] Somewhat Emotionally Regulated
- [ ] Emotionally Unregulated
- [ ] Other: _____

Based on your answer to the previous question, describe how you are feeling and why. Use words like RESTED, ANXIOUS, FRUSTRATED, JOYFUL. For example: "I feel anxious because I have a big test on Friday." Be as specific or non-specific as you'd like! *

Your answer

Do you feel that there is a conflict, (disagreement, fight, argument with a friend or family-member) in your life? *

- Yes
- Maybe
- No

If you do have a conflict, do you think it is affecting how you feel? If so, feel free to explain if you want. *

Your answer

Do you feel safe today? *

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

Do you have a plan on how you will face the rest of the week? If you are feeling anxious, how will you move forward? If you are feeling joyful, how can you share your joy? Etc. *

Your answer

What is one thing that makes brings you happiness this week? *

Your answer

What is one goal you have in rehearsal this week? *

Do you feel the need to speak with or anyone else after filling out this form? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Anything else you would like to share? *

Your answer

Submit

APPENDIX N

Delisa's SEL/Mindfulness Workshop Materials

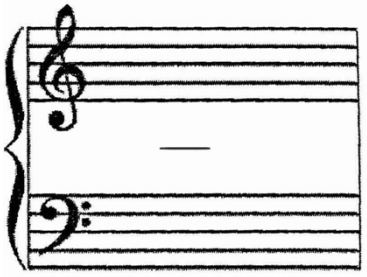
Name: _____ Class Period/ Ensemble: _____

Title of the piece: _____Composer / Arranger: _____

When all the music elements combine, we get ….

The Five "T"s!

It gives us the opportunity to understand the music before we even sing a note!



Tessitura (What is the range of your voice part? Of other voice parts?)

Text (Language, Origin of text, Poet, Form, your interpretation, etc.):

Time (tempo, time signature, time period)

Tonality (Key, Accidentals? Hint to modulation? Where"):

Texture (How many parts are performing? Instruments?):

APPENDIX O

Wellness Action Plan Prompt

Wellness Action Plan

This plan can be whatever you want it to be in whatever format you want it to be. The goal is to have attainable goals and results from our time together for yourself and your students and strategies for keeping yourself accountable. Below are some potential ways of approaching this plan. *Do what works for you.*

Option One

Reflect on materials from our seven weeks of meetings. What action points can you draw from each topic? For yourself? For your students?

- Week One - Introduction to Musicians' Wellness
  - Philosophy (Pierce Article), Building Your Wellness Toolkit
- Week Two - Self-Care, Boundaries, and Emotional Endurance
  - Compassion Fatigue, Self-Care Plans
- Week Three - SEL
  - Music activities for addressing SEL, key components of SEL
- Week Four - Mindfulness Strategies
  - Meditation, Mindfulness, Restorative Practices, Intention
- Week Five - SEL Revisited
  - SEL Critical Practices for Reopening, SEL for music advocacy
- Week Six - Physical Wellness
  - Vocal Health, Body Awareness, Prevention
- Week Seven - Music as Wellness Strategy
  - Music for Mental Health, Music as Self-Care

Option Two

Revisit the "Building your wellness toolbox" from week one. Fill it in, set some goals, collect some resources. How can you use this toolkit? For which elements of wellness do you have many strategies? For which elements of wellness are you/the music profession lacking? Where do you go next?

Option Three

Talk to your students or survey them. Where do they feel wellness-wise right now? How are you supporting them? How do they need to be heard? What ideas do they have for your classroom? For their self-care? What action points can they come up with for you?

Option Four
Keep a journal for the next couple of weeks and ask yourself a version of the following daily:

- What have I done for myself wellness-wise today?
- What have I done for my students wellness-wise today?
- What ideas do I have for my and/or my classrooms' continuing wellness?
- What ideas did I implemented today and how did they go?
- What is working for me/my classroom? What is not working for me/my classroom?
- Where do I go from here?

Option Five
Write a song or chant (or whatever) that outlines your wellness priorities. How will this product help keep you and your students accountable?

Option Six
Your choice! Figure out something that will help you approach your and your students' musicians' wellness and keep you accountable.

APPENDIX P

Emma's Wellness Action Plan

Wellness Action Plan: The First 15

First 5: Prayer

To me, starting my day off with prayer helps me realize I am not alone/in control. My spiritual health is important and something I need to prioritize just like I do exercising.

Second 5: Meditation

Over the past few weeks, meditating has helped me focus on the present and has increased my overall self awareness. Below are two apps I use for guided meditation:

- Headspace
- Calm App

Third 5: Journaling

When I take the time to articulate my thoughts, dreams, ideas & anxieties on paper, my brain is more organized and at ease. Below is a simple 3 question prompt I am currently following. This may change from month to month, week to week, etc.

- What am I thankful for?
- What are my fears/anxieties?
- What will I do for myself wellness wise today?

The Next Step…

- Sharing this plan/similar plan with students
- Create a "self care" checklist
- Follow checklist for at least a week. Come back & talk about it.

APPENDIX Q

Josie's Wellness Action Plan

	Weekend	Workdays	Anyday / Everyday	Monthly	
Physical	Sleep in	Sleep @ 10	Workout	Spa Day	
Emotional	Gratitude Practice	SEL w/ students	Love on doggos/hubs		
Mental	Hobby/exploration	Create something	Outdoor time	Day Trip	
Occupational	NO WORK (PD fun times are okay)	Work space	Delegate to [husband]	Collabs	
Social	>2 hrs fun time	Work @ house	Check in with two friends /week	Community work	
Spiritual	Reassess my needs		Meditate	Community work	
Personal Self-Care:					
Occupational Self-Care					
Professional Quality of Life Scale	[omitted links]				
Window of Tolerance:					

PERSONAL SELF CARE	0	1	2	3	
Physical	*Never*	*Rarely*	*Often*	*Usually*	
Eat regularly & healthily			2		
Get regular exercise & maintain fitness			2		
Get enough sleep (an average of 8 or more hours per day)			2		
Take time for yourself		1			
Get regular medical & dental preventative care		1			
				Total	8
Cognitive	*Never*	*Rarely*	*Often*	*Usually*	
Take time for self reflection		1			
Recognize and value your strengths, capabilities, and accomplishments		1			
Discuss and exchange thoughts and ideas with others			2		
Encourage yourself to be activiely curious and interested		1			
Read books or materials which have nothing to do with work		1			
				Total	6
Psychological/Emotional	*Never*	*Rarely*	*Often*	*Usually*	
Listen to your internal expereince (feelings, thoughts, beliefs, judgments)			2		
Allow yourself to expereince distressing emotions			2		
Make space and opportunities for laughter and fun			2		
Actively work to reduce your stress levels			2		
Make opportunities to safely connect with others and be yourself		1			
				Total	9
Behavior	*Never*	*Rarely*	*Often*	*Usually*	
Ask for support and assistance when you need it		1			
Do things where you are not an expert or not in charge		1			
Say no to added responsibilities & stress			2		
Engage in hobbies or interests which are not work related		1			

PROFESSIONAL SELF CARE	0	1	2	3	
Physical	*Never*	*Rarely*	*Often*	*Usually*	
Take regular lunch and coffee breaks				3	
Eat a healty lunch and snacks				3	
Drink 4-8 cups of water during the work day				3	
Limit caffeinated beverages to 3 cups/day			2		
Make opportunities to stretch and be active during the work day		1			
				Total	12
Cognitive	*Never*	*Rarely*	*Often*	*Usually*	
Give yourself a mental map about what you are going to do that day			2		
Allow yourself to feel interested in what you are doing				3	
Engage in activities which increase your professional knowledge base and sense of competency				3	
Share your knowledge with others			2		
Initiate new projects or procedures, consider ways you could improve the job				3	
				Total	13
Psychological/Emotional	*Never*	*Rarely*	*Often*	*Usually*	
Check in with your emotional state throughout the day. Identify distressing feelings & what is causing them		1			
Stop to recognize & appreciate when you have done somethingyou could feel good about		1			
Recall the positive reasons why you are doing the work			2		
Identify projects/tasks which you find interesting & rewarding			2		
Recognize the emotional states of those with whome you are interacting			2		
				Total	8
Behavioral	*Never*	*Rarely*	*Often*	*Usually*	
Create quiet time to complete tasks				3	
Set limits with those who you work with (students)			2		
Set limits with coworkers and supervisors			2		
Balance your daily tasks so you are not overwhelmed		1			

Give your self day trips, minivacations, breaks from the routine			2		
				Total	7
Interpersonal	*Never*	*Rarely*	*Often*	*Usually*	
Make time for your intimate relationship			2		
Spend quality time with family			2		
Spend time with friends who are important to you			2		
Take risks in letting people know different aspects of you		1			
Set limits to taking on responsibilities and burdens which are not yours			2		
				Total	9
Existential	*Never*	*Rarely*	*Often*	*Usually*	
Be aware of what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life				3	
Pray, meditate, or engage in other practices which give you grounding and sense of peace				3	
Hold awareness of the non-material aspects of your life		1			
Find a spiritual connection or community which shares your beliefs and values	0				
Take part, in some way, in causes you believe in				3	
				Total	10

Keep your workplace comfortable			2		
				Total	10
Interpersonal	*Never*	*Rarely*	*Often*	*Usually*	
Take daily time to chat and be social with coworkers		1			
Make use of a peer support group to debrief		1			
Keep communications open with supervisor and team members			2		
Get specialized consultation when you need it			2		
Participate in workplace social occasions		1			
				Total	7

APPENDIX R

Neil's Wellness Action Plan

Figure 4: Neil's Wellness Action Plan Part One

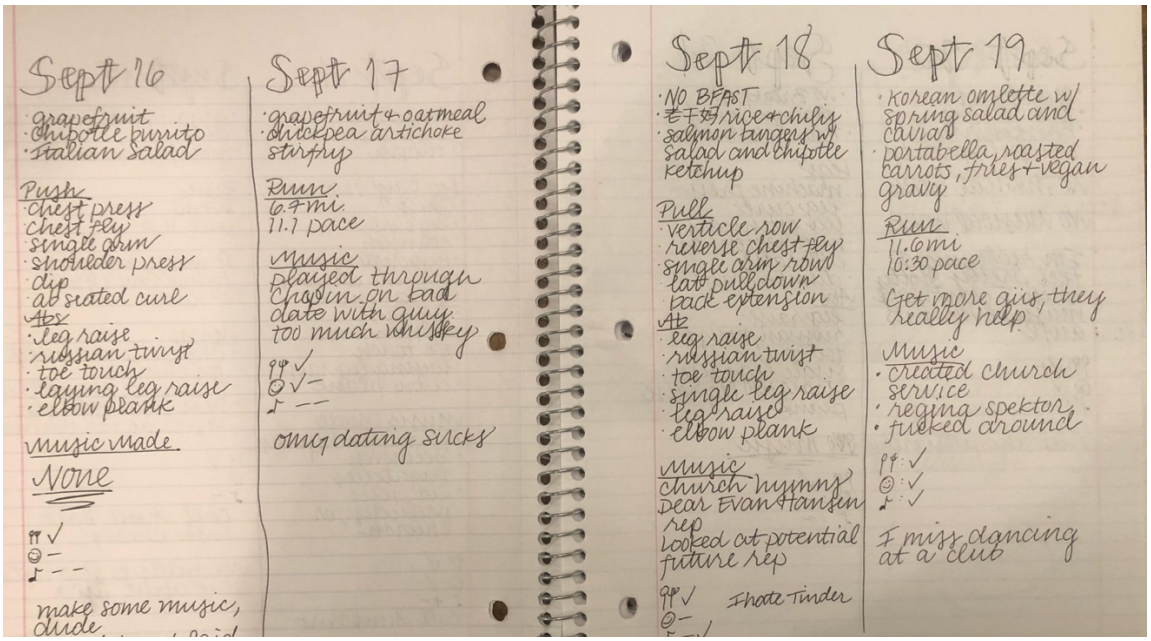
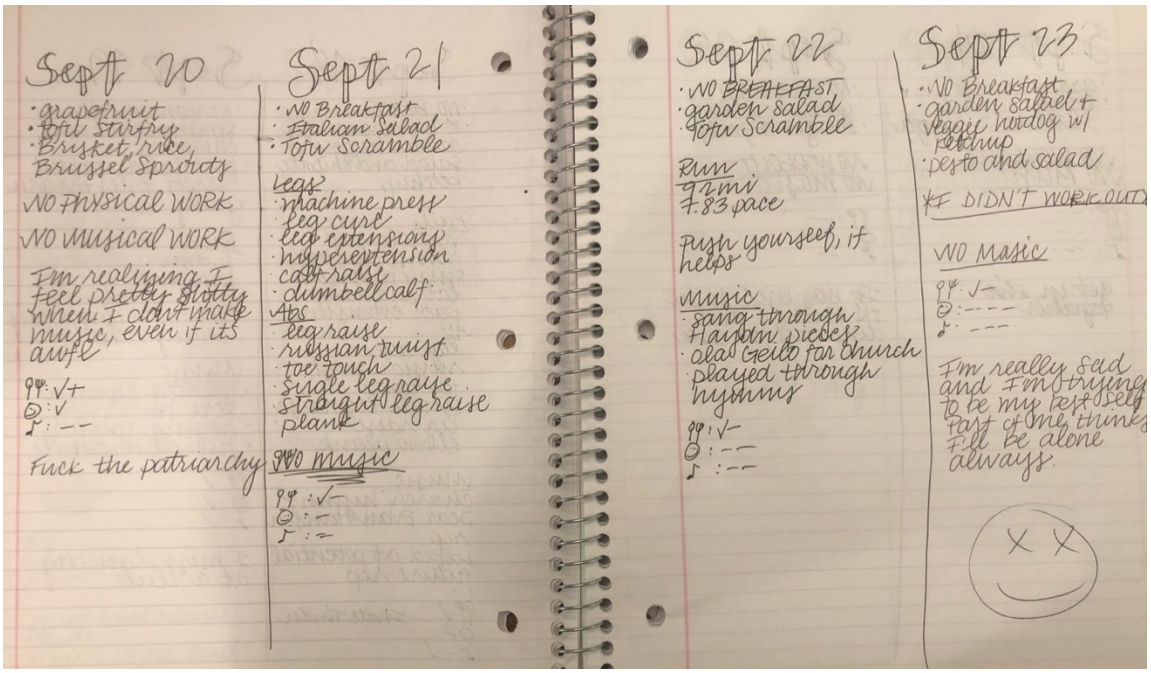


Figure 5: Neil's Wellness Action Plan Part Two



APPENDIX S

Delisa's Wellness Action Plan

Your name:

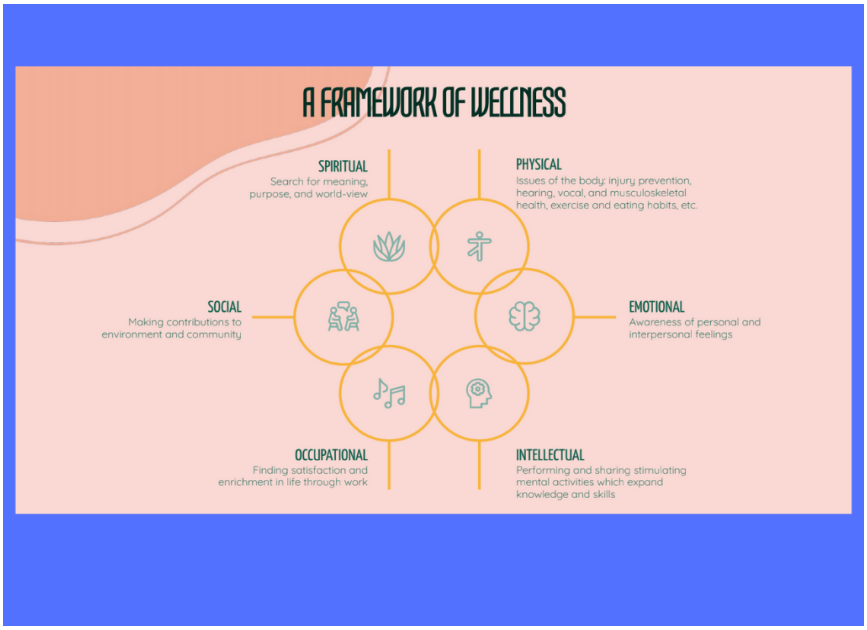
Choir/ Class Period:

Are you working on All-State Music? (Yes or no)

Our Virtual Fall performance will be called: ***"What we plant".*** *This video will be a collaborative project with other teachers at Crosby to talk about ways to take care of yourself and be aware of others! To gather all the content, we need YOUR input! (*SCROLL TO THE THIRD PAGE FOR HELPFUL PICTURES AND GRIDS!)

1) Share this document with [your teacher] in your Google Drive. (Due Monday, 9/28)
2) Watch my video where I explain the wellness chart and how to complete it: [video link omitted] (Due Monday, 9/28)
3) Complete your wellness chart in your own words AND choose 1 song per category. My examples are below. (Due Monday, 9/28)
4) Choose any song (on your list or not) that brings you joy or helps your understand/ express one of the wellness categories and tell me why you chose it.
    a) [My] song choice: "Hometown Glory" - by Adele
    b) Why did you choose this: I love the text of "Hometown Glory" because it reminds me that even though I have lived in many different places, it's the people that make a place "home", not the location.
5) Record yourself performing the song of your choice and submit the video (Due Wednesday, 9/30). Note: I will not use any solo videos without speaking to you first).
    a) My example can be found here: [video link omitted]
    b) Exceptions: Students working on All-State repertoire may turn in their video Friday, October 2nd.
    WE ARE STILL MEETING IN TEAMS DURING YOUR CLASS PERIOD! SEE YOU THERE!

Your Wellness Plan If you aren't sure, write, "I don't know yet".		
Category	**Your Notes and Song**	**[Your teacher's] example**
Physical		Boxing, stretching, time in the sun **Song:** Never Give Up - Neflex
Spiritual		My faith, meditation **Song:** Come Right Now - Jonatha Ferguson
Social		1-on-1 deep talks **Song:** Don't you worry bout a thing - Tori Kelly (originally by Stevie Wonder)
Emotional		Journaling, having talks with my best friend, having a day where I unplug and don't check my phone. **Song:** Ok - Lena
Occupational		ALL THINGS CHOIR - singing, study scores (songs), conducting… when I was in HS, I was in multiple music classes. I was also on Newspaper because I enjoyed writing: **Song:** Water Night - Eric Whitacre
Intellectual		1-on-1 deep talks, reading for fun **Song:** We Shall Be Know (ft. Thrive Choir) - MaMuse

Here are short descriptions of what all the different categories mean.	
Use this image if you want to create your own wellness poster. Or feel free to design your own!	

We will continue with this theme. Extension: I challenge you to expand your thoughts to your voice part/ section and to the whole Choir and choir program.	

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