Student Citizens:

Whiteness, Inequality, and Social Reproduction in Marketized Music Education

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Abstract

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Music education policy and administration attempts to shape the musical sensibilities of young people. Yet, the logics of music education from a socioeconomic standpoint are inadequately understood. This dissertation focuses on the relationship between music education nonprofits and public schools and on the public and private policies that have shaped the formation and perpetuation of these relationships. I analyze the logics of policy documents alongside the discourses and narratives of private organizations that support music education within the specific contexts of New Jersey, a state that mandates music education access for all students, and the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated societal inequalities, to illuminate how policy makers and administrators shape student experiences in the proto-democratic space of the classroom.

I use policy analysis and institutional ethnography, approaching data primarily through the lenses of neoliberal critiques of marketization, critical whiteness studies, and analyses of the intersection of class and race, which I outline in chapter one. I also consider the design of music education programs within the theoretical framework of culturally relevant pedagogy. Education systems are adapting to shifting racial discourses as schools continue to construct citizens within racialized and classed hierarchies. Music historically has been invoked in the construction of societal stratifications to mark ethnic and cultural boundaries. In chapter two, I examine these narratives that have shaped the formation of music education in the United States as a culturally hegemonizing force and persist in debates around the purpose of music education in under-
resourced schools that mainly serve students from minoritized communities. Music education remains a site at which policy makers, administrators, educators, and community members negotiate the role of culture in shaping new citizens. State music education policy in New Jersey specifically struggles to support the progressive vision it professes as it continues to suggest a strongly hegemonic curriculum and perpetually underfunds music programs in schools.

Within this context, the third chapter considers how funders and advocacy groups are so frequently focused on short-term funding needs that they persistently struggle to address systemic issues in music education, such as issues with administrations that do not represent the communities being served, colonial content and pedagogy, and unsustainable funding solutions. As such, the limited services and non-democratic leadership of privately funded music education programs in public schools reinforce the role of public schools as gate-keepers of exclusionary citizenship norms. At the same time, privatization has also opened opportunities for non-normative, anti-oppressive forms of music pedagogy to enter public schools. In the fourth chapter, I investigate how, though their very existence reinforces the marketizing trends that rank and exclude, some nonprofits do attempt to serve students in culturally relevant ways within this environment, and can even work in ways that support publicly funded programs.

Altogether, my research provides insight into the role that the privatization of public spaces within neoliberalism plays in the formation and reproduction of classed and raced citizens, as policy makers, funders, and program administrators determine which young people are given access to which forms of education.
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Introduction

0.1 New Jersey Learning

September 9th, 2019, saw the headline: “New Jersey first in nation to give all students access to arts education in public schools” (Adely 2019). New Jersey does have the best education system in the country (U.S. News n.d.). Yet, just a few months earlier, a very different tone was communicated by a headline from the same local, North Jersey news outlet: “One school gets new instruments; others lose music teachers” (Malinconico 2019). A wealthy town had donated instruments to a nearby under-resourced one, but without the financial infrastructure in place to sustain music teacher salaries and classroom spaces, the in-kind wealth redistribution rang somewhat hollow. New Jersey requires all students to receive an arts education and requires high schools to offer an array of arts classes: music, visual art, theater, dance, and media art. What does it mean for music classes to be taken from a school that is mandated to offer music to all of its students? And how does a state as wealthy as New Jersey justify these uneven offerings?¹

Under layers of federal and state education policy and histories of racial oppression, school districts with small local tax bases, which often serve mostly students of color, have struggled to budget for a thorough education for all of their students. In these areas especially, political actors, advocacy groups, private and public administrators, and educators are constantly responding to the needs of the moment, spending all of their energy and resources putting out fires, but searching for stability so that they might instead focus their efforts on designing a

¹ New Jersey is currently ranked the third wealthiest state in the country (Alas 2021).
bright future for their students. Some groups serving these areas with access to private resources perpetuate the inequitable systems that have served them, but others see that different systems might be built to serve everyone.

In this dissertation, I set out to understand these private groups that partner with schools to fill some of the gaps left by insufficient public funds. Once the COVID-19 pandemic hit, I, like everyone else, found myself navigating a world in flux. Inequitable structures were unveiled to new extremes, racial tensions reached new heights, and governments surprisingly responded with huge amounts of emergency funding for education. In sorting through these complexities, my research provides insight into the role that the privatization of public spaces and resources within late capitalism plays in the formation and reproduction of classed citizens along racial lines, as policy makers, funders, and administrators determine which young people are given access to which forms of education. The neoliberal paradigm of public-private partnerships, in which funding and planning become decentralized from local governments to private interests, destabilizes public schools, leaving them without the resources necessary to offer arts education and thus potentially at the mercy of non-democratic, private interests. As music programs are often among the first to be affected by changes to budgets, researching music education can be valued as a litmus test for larger sets of questions regarding what culture means to education policy makers and who is taught the higher-order thinking required for our society’s future leaders.

0.2 Racializing Whiteness in Music Education

This project is about how Whiteness\(^2\) functions in music education policy. In

\(^2\) I choose to capitalize White and Whiteness. My reasoning follows the words of Ann Thúy Nguyên and Maya Pendleton from the Center for the Study of Social Policy:

We believe that it is important to call attention to White as a race as a way to understand and give voice to how Whiteness functions in our social and political institutions and our communities. Moreover, the
investigating the current privatization of music education in low-income areas that primarily serve minoritized students, and the actions of policy makers and administrators, I analyze how histories and current manifestations of Whiteness and their associated hierarchies continue to shape the educational experiences of young people. I do not mean to speak of White people as a single, uniform entity who support any single, uniform ideology; rather, I use the term White to describe the racially and economically hierarchizing mechanisms that have evolved throughout the history of capitalism and to describe the people who benefit from those mechanisms due to their racial categorization as White. I explore the complexities and implications of Whiteness with respect to music education by examining the rhetoric of the public and private policies, the pedagogies, and the materials.

Furthermore, the demographics of the under-resourced, urban areas that I research have changed over the decades. While many of the urban areas in New Jersey were, in the early 20th century, mainly European immigrants (notably Irish, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish), many of these areas shifted to become predominantly Black American following the Great Migration, while some of these areas now have more prominent Hispanic and South Asian populations. The populations will continue to shift as new waves of migration occur. While the low-income groups in these urban areas have their own vibrant and unique cultures, histories, and struggles, I am here concerned more with how those in power conceptualize these groups. For this reason, I refer to the residents of the low-income, urban areas of my research who do not

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detachment of “White” as a proper noun allows White people to sit out of conversations about race and removes accountability from White people’s and White institutions’ involvement in racism. … While we condemn those who capitalize “W” for the sake of evoking violence, we intentionally capitalize “White” in part to invite people, and ourselves, to think deeply about the ways Whiteness survives – and is supported both explicitly and implicitly. (Nguyễn and Pendleton 2020)

Other scholars of race, such as Kwame Anthony Appiah (2020), Eve L. Ewing (2020), and Nell Irvin Painter (2020), have publicly adopted the same practice, along with the National Association of Black Journalists, among other publications.
read as White in society as “minoritized.” In my writing, then, the term “minoritized” works to encapsulate the efforts made by people in power to control other groups and maintain existing cultural and economic hierarchies. Where these efforts adapt to retain control over specific minoritized groups, I aim to speak of those groups with specificity to reflect the “relational” (Molina 2019) development of race distinctions and treatments in the United States.³

Such a frame of reference builds on the work of scholars such as Dipesh Chakrabarty, who critique historicist analyses of interactions between the “West” and “non-West” (2000). When scholars, politicians, activists, and others frame minoritized groups in historicist ways that paint human socio-political history as an evolutionary process leading to an “advanced,” Eurocentric end, we misunderstand the diversity of engagement with the political. A historicist approach leads many music educators to presume that elite, Western European music is a universalizable epitome of musical creation, leaving teachers insensitive to the many cultural forms that have resisted oppression and domination for centuries. This frame of reference also builds on the music-specific research of scholars like music theorist Philip A. Ewell, who focuses on identifying Whiteness and the White racial frame in music theory in order to make its presence and effects explicit, aiming eventually to contribute to a reframing of Whiteness in music theory that more accurately encapsulates its role in the field (2020).

Especially when considering music education content and pedagogies, questions of identity and culture arise: whose musical culture do we decide to place in schools to ensure that

³ Molina states that:

race is not made in just one moment or by just one powerful person or group. Instead race is created across time by various players who attach different (and sometimes contradictory) meanings to both cultural and structural forces. Yet despite the multiplicity of influences that help shape our concept of race, common themes prevail. These themes are often molded and transformed, or even revived and recycled, by those in power to advance explicit and/or implicit agendas. The use of a relational lens deepens this understanding of race as made by revealing how easily racial scripts are adopted and adapted to apply to different racialized groups. (2019, 139)
every student learns and how do we teach it? To answer, “European culture,” would be overly simplistic. Many public schools in the United States did, for decades, only to teach music composed by White European men, though this music often contains non-European influences and inspiration. Today, however, in addition to European classical styles, music education curricula often include, at the very least, jazz and popular music, two genres that are intimately tied to Black culture. Whiteness as a hegemonizing force constantly incorporates influences from minoritized cultures, working to remove any anti-hegemonic potential; understanding how and why they do so in education further illuminates hegemonizing and hierarchizing processes. Federal education policy in the United States in particular has been passed with bipartisan support over the last nearly sixty years, and it continues to uphold societal hierarchies; it has not done so through blatant White supremacist messaging, but through adaptations that hide hierarchies and oppression under layers of rhetoric that appease many different groups.

Furthermore, hegemonic coalitions around education are constantly shifting, and minoritized groups can form around identity axes other than race as well. Whiteness does not exist as an independent social, economic, or political variable. Race is tied to class in complex ways: through employment opportunities, generational wealth, housing opportunities, tax structures, and access to education, to name a few. Many academic conversations around race and class have antagonistically pitted the two against each other by insisting on the prioritization of one over the other (see Roediger [2017] for a mapping of this history). I attempt to hold both race and class in prioritized positions. Other axes of identity, including but not limited to gender, sexuality, ability, and immigration status, also influence education access in informal and formalized ways. Here, however, I focus on the implications of class and race, illuminating the means by which wealthy groups continue to entrench White pedagogies in schools while these
effects of these policies simultaneously reinforce class divisions along lines of race.

I grapple with concepts of Whiteness largely to racialize and politicize Whiteness, to make it and its mechanisms of domination visible and even obvious (Omi and Winant [1986] 2014). Society is racially codified in ways that can seem invisible (Crenshaw 2014). As the United States continues to move away from overtly racialized laws, like those found in the Jim Crow South, Whiteness and White supremacy become even less apparent, but continue to work in insidious ways. Like education and critical race studies scholar David Gillborn (2005), I aim to expose Whiteness as a persistent and potent force in the policy that shapes classrooms by naming policy rhetoric as racial where this rhetoric has adapted to hide racializing discourse in the “colorblind” realm of liberal individualism (Roediger 2002; 2017).

Critical studies of Whiteness and class frequently focus on working-class White populations, enumerating the problems that have grown from White working-class allegiance to White supremacy over potential working-class allegiances. Drawing instead on the work of Gillborn (2005) and of historian Nell Irvin Painter (2010), my research keeps the focus on the ruling class, the groups whose political and financial decisions influence the lived experiences of all. I examine their actions from the foundation of critical studies of Whiteness in order to shed more light on the mechanisms of dominations and hegemony building, as dominant groups continue to perpetuate racial and class hierarchies through education systems. I use Antonio Gramsci’s theorization of hegemony to understand how the politically and economically dominant groups have been able to encapsulate some diversity of musical genres into public education while maintaining the stratifying effects of uneven public education services to sustain a hierarchy of citizenships (Gramsci 1971).

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4 See, for example, Ignatiev (1995), Delgado and Stefancic (1997), Roediger (2002), and Roediger (2017).
5 See also the chapters in Fine et al (2004) for critical Whiteness studies analyses of the ruling class.
Considering music education specifically leads to more explicit examinations of bodily discipline as music performance is not only an aural art but a physical one as well. This makes the music classroom a space where bodies are disciplined explicitly, yet the social implications of this disciplining are made invisible by the professed service to the sonic product. My aim is to contribute to the creation of new relationships between schools and students that ensure that all students and forms of knowledge are welcome and celebrated in schools. To do so, we need to name, understand, and dismantle the colonial pedagogies that are supported from the federal government to the teachers and at every level in between. In this dissertation, I focus on naming and understanding the colonial, White supremacist teaching mechanisms at the federal and state levels and among private groups at the state and local levels.

Ultimately, through my investigation of youth music programs, I provide a critique of current neoliberal notions of the personhood of high-risk youth as they are influenced by private interests. I also critique related neoliberal conceptions of the role of education, particularly within the growing environment of semi-privatized public schools. Interrogating the phenomenon of music programs as a site of government and private intervention opens a broader set of questions about the use of culture by neoliberal governmentalities as well as the blurring lines between what “public” and “private” mean today. This critique exists more generally within theories of subversive struggle within hegemonic economic and state apparatuses.

By researching financially and culturally powerful institutions, I am placing ethnomusicology in conversation with music education and cultural policy. Similar to typical education policy researchers, I investigate the bodies that are creating the music policies that dictate what music is taught and how. While hearing music was a rarity during my research experience, my subject matter is precisely that which attempts to shape how students-becoming-
citizens understand what music is socially “acceptable” and in what contexts. Additionally, my research purposefully focuses on policy and institutions that govern education from outside of the classroom in part because researchers have already extensively described the nonconformity of childhood cultural practices in classrooms (Heath 1983; Campbell 1998; Minks 2013; Bickford 2017). Conducting ethnography that consciously questions policy from within the institutions that create policy contributes to the formation of more accurate and nuanced depictions of cultural education to which new policy and classroom practices can respond.

Finally, my research is part of a growing body of applied ethnomusicology, situated as an ethnographic study that is in dialogue with education policy. Rethinking entrenched academic divisions between (qualitative) ethnographic research and (traditionally quantitative) policy research and between academic work and activism is critical to the structure of my research (Harrison et al 2010; Harrison 2012). Historically, education research has relied heavily on quantitative methods, and education policy creators have responded primarily to quantitative data. Statistics, however, can be manipulated to hide or highlight certain effects. For this reason, quantitative methodologies and findings must be critically examined and rethought in light of qualitative research (Zuberi 2001). Categories implemented in quantitative research, especially categories formed around White cultural concepts like intelligence, appropriateness (in terms of content), and learning, can be questioned and refined with qualitative methods. These refined quantitative categories, together with the ethnographic stories and descriptions, can then better inform policy-making.

0.3 Literature Review

0.3.1 A Very Brief Overview of Education Policy Trends

Schools play a dominant role in childhood governance. Beginning in Massachusetts in
1852 and spreading throughout the United States by 1918, public education was mandated largely in response to urban population growth during and after the industrial revolution as a way to instill the youth of the emerging working class with the cultural values of the liberal, capitalist bourgeoisie (see, for example: Miller and Yúdice 2002; Block 2018). In public schools, children of all backgrounds were expected to learn and adopt gendered, upper class, White, urban culture. The arts were first introduced as a requirement in public education at the turn of the twentieth century, following the example set by England, as the place of public schools in communities was solidifying. Arts education, too, held the express purpose of molding working-class children into liberal, capitalist adults (Miller and Yúdice 2002).

Public education in the United States has largely continued to strive towards producing capitalist citizens despite changing notions of what it means to be a worker within capitalist economies. Capitalism has taken different forms, often simultaneously, throughout history. The general form of market capitalism does not exist on its own, but rather in combination with other economic approaches; for example, public schools serve the majority of the population through socialized funding, yet rely on private groups functioning under market capitalism to provide services that local taxes fail to cover. Capitalism in any form has typically been understood as “an economy in which people make profits by producing goods and services for sale on competitive markets” (Block 2018, 117). Yet, the practices and features within capitalism are constantly changing; such an essentialist argument that capitalism has any single trait that drives all economic behavior comes out of the highly racialized determinist economics of colonialism that function under the false assumption that capitalism, potentially accompanied by coerced labor and struggling working classes, is a key component of advanced societies (Block 2018).

It is this essentialist argument that focuses on the importance of profit-driven business
practices and its imagined necessity of labor coercion that pervades not only the subjects taught in schools but also limits the access to education that low-income groups have in order to reproduce the labor force. Because education is key to accumulating capital for low-income groups, the quality and accessibility of education plays a vital role in maintaining racial and class hierarchies (Kozol 1991). This occurs in arts education through the distribution of cultural knowledge and enforcement of a cultural identity deemed suitable for the societal position towards which low-income minorities are firmly guided (Hall et al 1978, 340-7; Willis 1981; Foley 1990). Furthermore, due to the neoliberal stagnation in public funding for grade schools, individual families are under increasing pressure to spend money that they do not always have on private full-time or supplemental education only to find that higher education costs, too, have become prohibitive (Gould 1981; Block 2018).

A major component of neoliberal discourse that justifies selective education is “post-racialism,” which claims that society is now free from any institutional forms of racism and thus no longer needs to consider race (Au 2015; Dixson et al 2015; Scott 2009). Post-racialism is, however, a naïve perspective. While explicitly racist laws, especially those around segregation, are largely no longer in effect, many legal and institutional structures (for example, housing, law enforcement, and healthcare) still reinforce racial hierarchies by targeting the working-class and minoritized cultures. Public education, for example, frequently defines certain minority cultural practices as detrimental to academic success in order to explain racial achievement gaps without addressing the class-stratified funding structures that maintain poor quality education in predominantly minoritized communities (Warikoo and Carter 2009).

Policy and classroom practices are related in complex ways, as policy attempts to address problems that educators and students experience, yet educators are the experts on solving those
problems. To fully grasp why certain school subjects are taught in certain ways and to certain students, it is imperative that research considers the many and complex layers of policy that dictate what forms of education are allowed in classrooms and what resources, publicly or privately provided, are available to educators (Cohen, Moffitt, and Goldin 2007; Kos 2018). Within a state of intellectual, financial, and infrastructural inadequacy, low-income public schools that mainly serve minoritized students in particular struggle to offer their students the quality of education that their high-income peers typically receive. Democratic, central bodies, namely state and local governments, relinquish power to private entities in an attempt to overcome the insufficient educational offerings that persist due to the legacies of racist policies and their contemporary post-racial successors. Acting from a variety of positions, private or semi-private organizations have recently entered the education ecosystem with the intention of providing the services that are missing from low-income, urban schools. Yet, the people determining which services exactly are missing and how they should best be provided are rarely from the community to which the school belongs. Members of the community frequently protest their lack of involvement in the decision-making process. Many aid programs impose neoliberal standards of education, especially valuing privatized education efforts targeted at a limited number of students over public efforts that aim to reach all students (Au 2015; Dixson et al 2015; Scott 2009).

This marketizing of schools, part of the “school choice” movement, is paired with an expansion of standardized tests, the results of which determine access to federal funding and

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6 For one instance of this phenomenon in the context of Native American Residential Schools, see Troutman (2009).  
7 A significant piece of the neoliberal privatization of public schools occurs in the form of charter schools, which draw on both public and private funding. Because they receive significant amounts of private funding, they are not as regulated as public schools, which has proven particularly problematic in the quality of teachers they may hire, the content they choose to cover, and the reasons they may give for expelling students. The public funds that charter schools accumulate also detract from public school funding. Through these mechanisms, charter schools often make education ecosystems increasingly inequitable (Wells et al 1999; Dixson et al 2015).
allow the consumers (namely parents and private funders) to navigate school markets. Because these tests are based on culturally specific knowledge, students who have been enculturated into the hegemonic cultural frame tend to excel (Apple 1993; Apple 2001; Valencia and Villarreal 2003). Furthermore, because results of the tests are tied to lifeline funding lines, this testing apparatus further hierarchizes schools based on race and class (Apple 1993; Gewirtz, Ball, and Bowe 1995; Whitty, Power, and Halpin 1998; Lauder, Hughes, et al 1999; Gillborn and Youdell 2000; McNeil 2000; Apple 2001; Valenzuela 2004). Since schools in under-resourced communities depend on federal funding to stay open, these under-resourced classrooms place a much higher emphasis on rote memorization and test-taking skills than on higher-order learning (McNeil 2000; Lipman 2004; Valenzuela 2004).

0.3.2 Contemporary Considerations for Music Education in Schools

Music education scholarship has historically engaged with adolescent education experiences in the most direct way. Education scholars, including music education scholars, frequently publish quantitative policy reports that are easily digestible by policy makers and voting blocs and that contain relevant guidance for future policies. This research, however, does not typically engage with arts on an aesthetic level, but rather with how arts education impacts students’ academic careers. As such, proponents of funding for music education have historically relied on unfounded notions that the aesthetics and appreciation of art music is unquestionably, uniformly, beneficial to the development of youth (Regelski 2019).

The longstanding relationship between music education scholarship and cultural policy

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8 The long-term effects of music education are difficult to identify precisely. See Costa-Giomi (2015) for a review of these studies. There is some evidence, relevant to my research topic, that music composition classes are correlated with student creativity in other areas (Running 2008) and that teaching specific music content and broader reflective practices can promote social capital that translates to later career and financial success (Brimhall 2017). See Elpus (2013a) for a critique of analyses that demonstrate a correlation between music education and better performance on SATs but that fail to account for selection bias in school music programs.
does provide a precedent that can be followed even with the transition to incorporating more substantial qualitative research. This is especially true for policy created by decentralized institutions that can implement changes faster and with smaller and more localized effects than centralized governing bodies. One issue with the current literature on music education policy research is that this research is frequently financed and overseen by the very foundations and governmental agencies that create the policies and allocate funding (e.g., Bodilly, Augustine, and Zakaras 2008; Stern 2019). The University of Chicago Place Lab (which now encompasses the Cultural Policy Center) is one of the only academic centers in the United States created specifically to engage with cultural policy. The communication gap between researchers who do not have financial interests in policy-forming institutions and cultural policy reports remains disruptive to fully transparent policy creation.

Within the current neoliberal political environment, however, the nature of music education programs is changing. The culturally hierarchizing effects of standardized testing are also being felt in music classrooms (Kruse 2015). As public funding for the arts is cut and responsibility is decentralized, there is an increased amount of non-governmental funding from private and corporate foundations, often administered through non-profit educational programs (Elpus and Abril 2011; Elpus 2013b). A growing body of literature surrounds the rise of public-private partnerships and community-wide coordination efforts in arts and music education that are resulting from the neoliberal decentralization of education governance (e.g., Bodilly, Augustine, and Zakaras 2008; Stern 2019). Because these non-profit programs are not subject to the standard regulations that guide public school programs, identifying patterns among education programs and making evidence-based recommendations becomes difficult. With each privately-run program following its own pedagogical philosophies and techniques, quantitative trends are
difficult to identify and are not necessarily as useful among such particularized approaches. This is made more complicated by the instability of privately-run music programs in schools due to unreliable funding and high turnover of the school administrative personnel who negotiate partnerships with private programs.

To understand how ethnomusicologists are more recently engaging with a globalized political economy and the related cultural policies, first we must understand the relationship between “culture” and the neoliberal, multicultural governance regimes. Latin American studies scholar George Yúdice describes the outcomes of the neoliberal policy motions that were implemented beginning in the 1970s. Resulting cultural policies have created a new paradigm in which culture⁹ can now be made into a resource that is politically and economically expedient. The neoliberal political tendency to decentralize social assistance responsibility from democratically elected bodies to non-democratic forms of governance, such as non-governmental organizations, private and corporate foundations, and private donors, opens spaces for previously marginal groups to insert themselves into these new institutions of governance. For them to be able to interface with such institutions, however, marginal cultures are forced to make themselves legible within multiculturalist frameworks. To do so, they must homogenize and commodify their culture, making cultural difference economically expedient. This institutionalization of aesthetic practices provides fodder for the governance systems that many marginal groups have historically opposed (2003, 22-28).

Yúdice argues that the decentralization of governance creates a level of disorder within power structures as marginal groups stake claims among the wide array of independent

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⁹ At the forefront of neoliberal designations of culture, UNESCO defines culture “as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group [that] encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs” (UNESCO).
governance institutions (2003, 34). Within this disorder, broader orders of power hierarchy reproduction remain intact and reinforced by the many decentralized institutions. One means of reinforcing these power hierarchies is by selectively recognizing potential value in only some forms of culture. As ethnomusicologist Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier points out, not all musical forms are treated as inherently dignified and valuable, at least not in a way that can garner economic or political expediency, especially those that do not conform to dominant narratives of traditional culture (2013). Cultural rights recognition also remains geared, in the longstanding liberal fashion, towards individuals, while groups can only claim rights based on a shared culture that is recognizable in a commodified form (Yúdice 2003, 49-58).

For researchers and policy makers to best assist marginalized cultures as they continue to insert themselves into decentralized cultural institutions, they must understand the means by which homogenizing, monopolizing corporate institutions consume marginal power and jointly create policy that resists it. Critical cultural policy studies draws theoretical grounding primarily from philosopher Michel Foucault to analyze “particular technologies and objects [as] they are applied to the classification and regulation of ‘populations’ or the cultivated ‘care of the self’” (McGuigan [1996] 2002, 29; see also, e.g., Miller and Yúdice 2002; Sterne 2002; Lewis and Miller 2003). Engaging with Foucault in this manner sheds light upon the relationships between individuals, groups, and the institutions that govern popular music, especially on the uneven institutionalized processes of marginalization. The inclusion of the term “critical” again describes a form of scholarship that looks to include socio-political reform as a goal of scholarship.

In addition to more theoretical approaches towards researching cultural policy, researchers (namely, applied researchers) have begun implementing ethnographic approaches
within policy research. The focus of ethnographic policy research, generally, is on uncovering false notions of objectivity within quantitative categories (Dubois 2009). In line with such reasoning, ethnographies of cultural policy would question the cultural categories and frameworks of value that cultural policy makers have long assumed to hold true and potentially introduce alternative means of understanding the phenomena that policies aim to affect.

Among the first English language texts that consider how ethnomusicology can engage with cultural policy is *Music in the Dialogue of Cultures: Traditional Music and Cultural Policy*, edited by Swiss ethnomusicologist Max Peter Baumann (1991). Its authors write from a predominantly European standpoint on some of the earlier policy conferences, including the Helsinki Accord of 1975 and the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policy of 1982. These international agreements created policy on cultural rights, especially those of “traditional” cultures, formed around ideas of multiculturalism and the preservation of diverse, distinct traditions. The idea of distinct, “pure” traditions has long been dismissed within academic social sciences; Baumann encourages a move away from the emphasis within ethnomusicology on “traditional” forms of music whose identification relies on essentializing ideas of authenticity that reinforce portrayals of non-European cultures as ahistorical and monolithic (1991, 23). Baumann specifically calls for ethnomusicologists to take part in cross-cultural dialogues that can lead to more ethical policies. He also suggests an approach that not only looks to the past, as with historical research, or the present, as with ethnographic research, but that also looks to the future through applied research (1991, 14). Still, policies rooted in multiculturalism have maintained global dominance and thus continue to demand attention from scholars who wish to engage policy.¹⁰

¹⁰ From a music education standpoint, see Miralis (2006) for a review of literature on multicultural education.
At the same time that these structural changes are occurring, music education scholarship has been experiencing a reflexive turn related to recognizing the personhood of youth (O’Neill 2012) and is gradually opening itself to more qualitative methodologies (Newman 2002). Music education and equity studies scholar Susan A. O’Neill offers a method of fostering an “engaged agency” among music students based on notions of personhood (2012). By building theory out of a focus on personhood, O’Neill begins to direct educational theory past the culturally specific Western constructions of childhood that are inextricably enmeshed in hierarchized power structures. O’Neill defines personhood as “a dynamic and cultural construct that refers to the human condition – what it is like to be a unique person in a particular place and time, experiencing, responding, and acting on the world in a particular way” (2012, 2). This definition allows educators, policy makers, and researchers to address the diversity of ways of being in and experiencing the world that are represented by students in the United States, especially those who are marginalized, minoritized, or otherwise oppressed or who respond best to non-normative learning environments. Personhood is only understood in relation to others and the way we perceive our experiences; it is always fluid and unfinished. Notions of dynamic personhood situate persons as having the agency to understand their relationships with their environments and related histories and also, through interactions, as having the agency to transform their environments (2012, 2-5).

0.3.3 The Musicality of Young People

The methodology that tends to be implemented when researching children’s musicality has historically been based in folklore and education research techniques and thus has involved large numbers of observations. Often, this means interviewing and observing hundreds of children and collecting data on thousands of songs and games. Folklore studies as a field
traditionally amasses large amounts of data before analyzing it, often quantitatively. Some of the early and influential studies of music and youth occurred in the domain of folklore by scholars like William Wells Newell (1883) and Iona and Peter Opie (1947; 1959; 1969; 1985; 1997). Early music education scholars, such as Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1920), Carl Orff (1950-1955), and Zoltán Kodály (1965), also based their pedagogical theory on data collected from ethnographic research that covered extensive geographic areas. The arguments of these early folklorists and music pedagogy theorists tended to rely on notions of universality among childhood musical cultures.\textsuperscript{11}

One reason that quantitative studies with a large number of observations continue to be conducted is to prove or disprove assumed patterns or universalities within youth culture. Margaret Mead and Martha Wolfenstein were the first in anthropology to assert that childhood cultures are not universal but are, in fact, diverse and complex (1955). Philippe Ariès furthered these notions of the diversity and complexity of childhood cultures in the field of sociology (1962). However, it was not until scholars conducted extensive, long-term, comparative investigations of children around the United States (Campbell 1998) and around the world (Marsh 2008) that theories of universal cultural traits among children were formally dismissed in musicological literature.

Pioneering ethnomusicologist of children Patricia Shehan Campbell, a scholar of music education and ethnomusicology, methodologically positions herself in line with much of the earlier folklore and education research on children. While she did conduct qualitative research through observing and interviewing children, her arguments relied on gathering large amounts of data in order to disprove in a decisive way the myths of universality espoused by the earlier

\textsuperscript{11} For example, early researchers commonly referenced the theory that all children’s cultures around the world rely on the minor third (Newell 1883).
folklorists. She conducted research that spanned a number of different field sites, observing and interviewing a large number of young people that only had age and enrollment in a United States school in common (1998).

Campbell’s *Songs in their Heads* (1998) has become a foundational text in scholarship on children and their musical practices. Campbell was among the first ethnomusicologists to engage with children not as blank slates, as was once thought to be the case, but as already active and experienced cultural and musical beings. Campbell was also among the first ethnomusicologists to interact with children as co-producers of knowledge. From her position as a music educator, her aim was to understand “where [children] musically are” in order to construct and offer guidance towards creating more productive learning environments for them, both in and out of school (1998: 4). However, while she described children as capable music makers, she posited that children do not actively try to become musical; rather, as she described, “music happens to children” (4, emphasis in original). At the same time, she found that children do actively engage with the music that exists in their lives as they decide what music they like and dislike, as they use music to understand their experiences, and as they learn, modify, and create new music (1998: 4-5).

Methodologically, Campbell adopted a more dialogic and mutual approach to studying children than her predecessors. While earlier folklorists and music pedagogy theorists observed and analyzed the musical behavior of children, they did not intellectually engage with children as actively, creatively, and consciously participating in musical activity, as did Campbell. As a result of her dialogue with children, Campbell was able to understand childhood cultures as distinctive from adult cultures (1998: 9-10). In Campbell’s demonstration of the complexity and diversity of childhood cultures throughout the United States, however, she sacrificed a more
nuanced foray into any one of the localized childhood cultures she explored. In doing so, she positioned her research in communication with more extensive networks of education literature and therefore, potentially, with teachers in classrooms. Furthermore, she weaves her study with practical suggestions for music educators that are more in line with her notion of children as agential beings (1998). Thus, her research potentially has a direct influence over the lived experiences of children in music classrooms.

Traditional private education selects a pool of students based on expensive preparatory background and/or notions of “talent” or “giftedness” that are classed and raced. Talent-based education opens opportunities for a select few students without addressing systemic restrictions on access to elite forms of education, such as conservatories. In the first ethnography of a Western European classical music conservatory, ethnomusicologist Henry Kingsbury describes the construction of discourses of talent. These discourses depict talent as something inherent in certain people and unalterably absent others. This informs how Western European classical music programs select certain “talented” students as investments, to be supplied with elite training, while, as non-“talented” students age out of elementary school programs, fewer have access to music education. Yet, the process of identifying talent is unclear and, at times, contradictory, as cultural background influences listening and performing practices from an early age. This means that having a knack for playing a certain type of music is by no means uncontrollable, though discourses of talent say otherwise (1988).

The arts specifically, along with sports, have a racialized education discourse attached to them as Black and Latina/o students historically have been associated with corporal skills rather than academic knowledge. In his earlier ethnography of education in predominantly Black, under-resourced, urban communities, activist and educator Jonathan Kozol describes the limits
of arts education. Even with a fully funded arts program that is available to all students at a particular public school, the superintendent of East St. Louis schools says that “‘[g]ifted children ... are everywhere in East St. Louis, but their gifts are lost to poverty and turmoil and the damage done by knowing they are written off by their society’” (1991, 33-34). These local arts programs may provide only a select few of the students who are deemed “talented” with opportunities for continued art education. The rest must find different ways of coping with their situations, regardless of hard work and “talent.” Ultimately, the lasting effects of arts programs in other areas of knowledge have yet to be proven. At the same time, students from families with low socio-economic status – disproportionately students of color – are less likely to stay in school music programs than their White peers (see Albert [2006] for a review of this literature).

Few other ethnomusicologists have engaged music learning in schools and classrooms in the United States. Paul Austerlitz, as part of the reflexive and applied turns within ethnomusicology, designed, implemented, and studied a world music class from an ethnomusicological perspective in a progressive elementary school in Connecticut. Rather than create a cursory survey of non-Western musical practices, Austerlitz highlighted the inclusion of North American music as part of and intimately connected to “world musics” and emphasized the connection between music and broader culture, diving deeply into a few musical traditions to build analytical skills. Austerlitz also worked with the school to integrate the music curriculum with other curricula to further teach students that music is not separate from other areas of education (1992). More recently, an education trend of using music in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) classrooms, where funds are often poured, has led ethnomusicologist Ryan Bazinet working with mathematics curriculum scholar Anne Marie Marshall to teach education graduate students to use world music as a component of mathematics
Finally, music education scholar Matthew D. Thibeault draws on sound studies to encourage music educators to expand their frameworks for teaching music to consider music production, dissemination, and consumption technologies in all of their historical and cultural complexities, and encourages sound studies to engage with classrooms and education more explicitly in their research (2017).

The second methodological lineage I consider engages with children in a more localized setting, often on a smaller scale, than the previously described folklore and music education studies. These methodologies are more prominent within ethnomusicological research, though there is significantly less ethnomusicological scholarship on youth than there is folklore and music education scholarship on youth. Alice Fletcher conducted an early ethnographic study of childhood music that portrayed childhood culture as a developmental process, a transitional path that leads to adult culture, a stance which influenced ethnomusicological studies of children throughout the next century (1888). Likewise, John Blacking depicted the culture of children as a pre-adult culture (1967). This methodological approach that engages with a more localized setting has been replicated throughout much ethnomusicological scholarship. The resulting scholarship, however, has not typically had much influence over, nor many attempted connections with, the institutions and environments in which many children live. Even within the specific research sites, early ethnomusicologists studying children observed and analyzed, but did not intellectually engage with children.

More recently, ethnomusicologists Amanda Minks (2013) and Tyler Bickford (2017) built on the contributions of Campbell that demonstrated the large diversity among childhood classrooms (2015). This growing trend of incorporating music and other arts into STEM classes has led to the related umbrella label, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics). Popular urban education scholar Christopher Emdin, for example, has popularized the use of hip hop in the science, technology, and mathematics classroom (2010; 2021a; 2021b; see also his edited volume from 2018).
musical cultures and complex modes of engaging with music. Both Minks and Bickford used more particularly ethnomusicological methods, like Fletcher and Blacking, as they pursued nuanced investigations into localized, smaller groups of children. In doing so, they contributed more dense theoretical knowledge of the lives and cultures of children. However, the specificity of these data sets, in addition to the accompanying theory that primarily communicates with ethnomusicological academic research, potentially closes avenues of communication with music educators and the field of music education. While a significant portion of their fieldwork occurred in schools, their aims were not necessarily to directly influence music education.

Minks is unique in this selection of ethnographers in that her primary ethnographic site was not a school. While she did conduct a portion of her research in a school and in a church, much of her research involved spending time with children outside of governing institutions, including away from adult community members (2013, 36-44). This methodological choice provided her with insights into interactions between children of varying ages, especially among siblings and cousins, who spend much of their free time together. Such interactions between older and younger children are pivotal to understanding the means by which child socialization occurs. While the culture of children does interact with the culture of adults, much of children’s culture is obtained not from adults, but is orally communicated by older children. In order to best engage this aspect of child socialization, Minks positioned herself as a transdisciplinary scholar, drawing also on linguistics theory and methodology to structure her data collection and analysis (2013, 12-14). Like Campbell, Minks understands children as co-producers of knowledge. While Campbell observed and interviewed children, however, Minks also conducted participant

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observation among children, embedding herself in childhood culture (as much as an adult can), and thus obtaining a deeper understanding of the nuances and complexities of their experiences.

Bickford used interviews in addition to a form of participant observation that was adapted to the power dynamics of his position as an adult, teacher, and researcher interacting with his young students. He was conscientious of anonymity as is legally required when researching minors, but Bickford went further, promising students and explaining to administrators that he would not repeat anything said by children to other adults. He made this choice so that the children would feel that their privacy was being respected and therefore would not censor their culture around him, as children often do around adults. While his position as a music teacher did not provide him with any inherent access to informal engagement with music, it did, for many students and other teachers, justify his presence in the school and help to establish a sense of trust with students as he asked and learned about their engagement with music (2017, 7-9). His analysis of his observations, interviews, and conversations with children built on an enriched scholarship in media studies as he completed the first ethnographic study of children’s engagement with media from the perspective of children.

Few ethnomusicological publications across the field consider adolescents. Ethnographic studies of adolescents and older youth have predominantly been completed within the fields of cultural studies (e.g., Willis 1981; Hebdige 1979; Foley 1990; Nolan 2011) and sociology, usually on low-income, urban youth in high-risk settings (Cammarota 2004; Harding 2010; Kupchik 2010; Nolan 2011; Shedd 2015; African American Policy Forum 2016).

Additionally, methodologies that work with younger children need to be altered when working

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14 Campbell and her colleagues provide one of the only exceptions with their research on music as it contributes to identity formation, emotional development, social interactions, and educational experiences among high schoolers (Campbell, Connell, and Beegle 2007). Other exceptions fall into the category of applied ethnomusicology, discussed subsequently.
with adolescents. Adolescents are conceptualized differently in North American culture than pre-adolescent children; thus, they are treated differently in institutions like schools. They are also socially expected to adopt adult-like behaviors and responsibilities that reflect their closer temporal proximity to adulthood. As such, both in and out of school, adolescents espouse different values for and different modes of engaging with the arts than do young children or adults.

There is a growing trend, however, towards engaging with the musical practices of adolescents through ethnographic methods. This trend coincides with critical, activist forms of ethnography of youth that highlight the creativity and resilience of youth (Solórzano and Bernal 2001; Cammarota 2004; African American Policy Forum 2016; Dumas and Nelson 2016; Kruse 2016; Przybylski 2018). Accounts of modern childhood describe children as under nearly constant surveillance and governance that aim to mold the ideal liberal, capitalist citizen, far removed from any imagined “natural,” primitive nature (Stephens 1995, 28-33; Miller and Yúdice 2002). Applied ethnomusicologists in the United States are increasingly drawing from education scholarship and indigenous studies scholarship to investigate new implementations of music education in schools.

Within music classrooms, there is a growing body of activist, applied, interdisciplinary research under the label of critical hip hop pedagogy that examines the place of hip hop in education and its related institutionalization (Kruse 2016; Przybylski 2018).15 16 The field of

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15 Introducing hip hop to the music classroom from a culturally and historically critical standpoint is an idea from education scholars that predates the involvement of ethnomusicologists in the movement. See, for example, Thibeault (2010), and see Wong (2019) for more recent education research on hip hop in schools.

critical hip hop studies incorporates music education scholarship while it also examines ways in which hip hop is implemented by non-music educators and by community members to foster positive relationships with community identities and histories. Hip hop is also used to foster an active, decolonial approach towards molding the future of the community. The term “critical” describes a form of scholarship that not only observes and analyzes, but also engages with the material and lives that are involved in a way that looks towards the future. Critical scholars aim to challenge the present structures and ethically work towards altering them and creating new ones. As an area of applied ethnomusicology, critical hip hop studies relies on transdisciplinary literature and methodologies to engage with complex issues that arise in education settings (Przybylski 2018).

Critical hip hop pedagogy scholars engage with the neoliberal instance of the music classroom as a site of potential activism. The insertion of hip hop into school curricula can be read within the heritage regime paradigm. Hip hop is often introduced to pedagogy as a component of Black culture that can help youth of color feel more connected to the forms of knowledge they engage in school. Many programs that use hip hop do attempt to explore its diverse forms and grapple with the misogyny, violence, and drug use that some forms of hip hop espouse (Kruse 2016). Nevertheless, hip hop is able to command an institutional presence when educators and artists present it as a single, cohesive form of Black heritage.

One of the problems that has arisen from hip hop being portrayed as a form of institutionalized heritage is that the forms of hip hop that are introduced to schools are often more mainstream forms or earlier forms that are more familiar to the generations of the teachers. The students do not necessarily relate to these forms, as they are likely listening to and creating more current and possibly more marginal forms that have not yet been institutionalized (Kruse
2016). Thus, the presence of hip hop in schools has, for the most part, become an example of the homogenizing and essentializing forces of neoliberal political economies. Applied ethnomusicological research on this phenomenon has the potential to guide the use of socially conscious hip hop and other marginalized cultures in schools to retain their critical, decolonial stances (e.g., Przybylski 2018).

0.4 Methodology

State and private cultural policy settings involve a variety of actors engaging each other strategically within the shifting forms of power that policy makers and policy influencers hold. Policy and education actors include, but are not limited to, “politicians, city functionaries, artists and musicians, business owners, nongovernmental organizations, and general consumers/citizens,” and, I would add, educators and students (Luker 2016, 17). The decisions of these actors ultimately create policy and shape institutional interactions with culture (Luker 2016). It is within this sort of complex cultural policy environment, composed of many individuals with shifting forms and amounts of power, that I investigated how the actions and interactions of actors within foundation and nonprofit17 realms shape or attempt to shape music education.

I defended my prospectus on March, 30, 2020, just as the COVID-19 novel coronavirus pandemic was beginning. This has reshaped the relations of community groups, education providers, funders, and governments. It also placed severe strain on students, teachers, families, and schools in particular. Between restrictions in place in New Jersey, in which public schools remained fully virtual until the fall of 2021, and the new stressors on administrators and in

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17 Nonprofits, also called not-for-profit corporations or tax-exempt organizations, encompass many different entities. Throughout this dissertation, I use the term nonprofit to refer specifically to organizations that fall into tax code 501(c)(3): public charities and private foundations.
classrooms, I made the partly forced, partly ethical choice to limit my time in foundations, nonprofits, and classrooms. The pandemic thus heavily informed my investigation of the myriad efforts of music education policy and interviews with funders and administrators.

The COVID-19 crisis is also, in a way, serendipitous, while certainly limiting methodologically. The cross purposes of the different entities I investigate have been exposed in a new way that has given me valuable ethnographic material through the meta discourse currently circulating. Author Arundhati Roy famously described the pandemic in 2020 and predicted that:

> Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next.
> We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it. (2020)

Hegemony slipped and was not sufficient to contain the forces tugging at it. Major structural challenges to education as a whole have been presented, and some structural changes are, finally, being made. Whether they last, and whether this new trajectory of structural change will persist, however, is yet to be seen.

Ethnography is most effective and most ethical when completed in light of intellectual and sociopolitical histories of the local area under investigation (Born 1995). Education content and public policy rely heavily on “common sense” discourses that are often contradictory or untrue (see Hall et al 1978, Apple 2003; 2004a; 2004b). As musicologist Georgina Born points out, when “phenomena have the capacity to absorb and conceal contradiction, it takes a method such as ethnography to uncover the gaps between external claims and internal realities, public rhetoric and private thought, ideology and practice” (Born 1995, 7). By considering the ethnographic data that I gathered throughout my research in light of the histories of education in
New Jersey, I work towards unmasking some of the contradictions and unproven or false assumptions that education and policy often unknowingly encompass. Ideally, this work will guide those with power over education toward more informed decisions as it guides the development of private education programs into stronger forms that are locally relevant, well-established, and decidedly critical.

I conducted policy analyses, participant observation, and interviews in light of the relevant histories, variety of actors, and power dynamics. The policy research I conducted delves into the state of music education leading up to and following privatization in order to historically and politically situate my observations. The interactions and observations I had while conducting participant observation and while interviewing key players provide me with insights into the interpersonal relationships that form the politics of funding and running cultural education programs, as well as the broader theoretical dialogues that take place among and between different organizational levels regarding anticipated long-term effects on students and on the community. I analyzed the ethnographic data I gathered in light of the political history of music education in New Jersey.

0.4.1 Allyship and Complicity

Ethnographic scholarship in policy institutions considers the positions of people in power and the relationships between those in power and the researchers. Thus, policy research can be more productive if policy makers are viewed as people who have acquired power rather than people in power. This approach helps to highlight that power is constantly shifting in interpersonal interactions (Shore 2000). As such, considering identity, a basis for power, and access when researching institutions is of vital importance (Luker 2016). Given my White, middle class, female status, I expected to gain access to certain spaces relatively easily and be
rejected from others. This proved to be the case as I was welcomed to speak with White administrators, private and public, at local and state levels, but often struggled to gain contact with program administrators of color.

In my attempt not to place even more of a burden on educators and advocates in the midst of the pandemic, I chose to limit my deep ethnographic engagement in education spaces. I opted instead to take advantage of newly popular virtual disseminations of information in the form of webinars. My attendance at these gave me access to the rhetoric of many of the programs and institutions that I was attempting to study without adding to the workload and burnout of the speakers. While this restrained the questions being asked to those asked by the webinar moderators, many of the webinars focused on funding and advocacy (as music educators have long struggled with), as well as structural issues of race and class brought to the fore with the pandemic and with the protests against racialized police brutality in the summer of 2020.

Additionally, in such public forums within the strained environment of the pandemic and of the highly publicized police brutality, speakers – especially, for perhaps the first time, wealthy, White male speakers – may have felt the need to self-censor. I did not, however, find many differences in the quality of response between my personal interviews with administrators and in the responses I heard in webinars; if anything, responses in personal interviews were often terse, as administrators do not have time for lengthy chats with graduate students. The administrators who are invested in maintaining the status quo may not trust the radical stance on issues of race and class that many university-affiliates take, while I felt morally opposed to taking too much time away from those actively fighting for a better system.

While I could have, and at times did, offer to volunteer my time to help with this advocacy and change work to gain more intimate access to these spaces, funders and local
administrators were finally seeing the value in actually paying community members to do this work, rather than outsourcing to financially stable but culturally foreign (typically middle class, White, female) workers (like myself) who could contribute their time and resources without pay. My active presence would have risked removing a job and therefore potentially a local voice from being active in advocacy work. Especially without children of my own to be enrolled in the public schools, I found myself unsure how to actively and ethically show up in this virtual world. This was not a problem I foresaw and is one that I continue to debate as I consider the parallel but broader ethical concerns of nonprofits engaging in activist work.

Activists frequently identify two productive modes of engagement for people outside of the oppressed group: allies and accomplices. Activists have offered many definitions of and opinions on the roles of allies and accomplices. Generally, allies work with individuals one-on-one and may not always work in the interests of the oppressed communities, while the work of accomplices is guided by oppressed communities and aims toward dismantling systems of oppression (Powell and Kelly 2017). In the work of nonprofits, offering individual services helps to alleviate daily stresses of oppression. The extent to which nonprofits can act as accomplices to anti-racist (Gillborn 2007; Kendi 2019) efforts, dismantling oppressive systems slowly and ultimately delivering entire communities from oppression, is contested.

Education nonprofits, for example, work to provide individual services that alleviate the stresses of oppressive systems, but the nonprofits tend overwhelmingly to consist of members of the technocracy. The technocracy was defined by William Henry Smyth in 1919 (1921) to describe a socialist rule by scientists and engineers as a means of more firmly securing workers’ interests within governance. Currently, technocracy is more broadly and more critically used to describe the governmental rule of the educated elite, often to the exclusion of the organic
intellectualism of grassroots movements. Technocrats are those who have had access to capital and to higher education, and whose aim is to use their elite power and specialized knowledge to govern. Nonprofits, and especially the boards of nonprofit, are largely filled with members of the technocracy aiming to use their specialized knowledge to provide specific services to communities. Can the technocracy serve as allies to oppressed communities from their positions of power over those communities? Can we serve as accomplices?

Allyship is a fraught term that is often analyzed from the perspective of White scholars (or scholars who are otherwise members of dominant groups: male, heterosexual, abled, etc.). Two writings by scholars of color help to clarify some expectations of and views on allies by oppressed groups. Maintaining the common understanding of allies as dominant groups working towards a more equitable society, psychology and education scholar Derald Wing Sue and his colleagues describe:

Allies surpass individuals who simply refrain from engaging in overt sexist, racist, ethnocentrist, or heterosexist behaviors; but rather, because of their desire to bolster social justice and equity, to end the social disparities from which they reap unearned benefits, and to maintain accountability of their actions to marginalized group members, they are motivated to take action at the interpersonal and institutional levels by actively promoting the rights of the oppressed (Brown & Ostrove, 2013). Like targets, ally-ship development involves internal and painful self-reckoning, and a commitment to external action. (2019, 132)

Allies must advocate for equality without being driven by guilt or the desire for glorification. The work of allyship is a constant struggle against systems of oppression.

Social psychologists Kendrick T. Brown and Joan M. Ostrove completed three studies interviewing people of color on their definitions of allyship. These studies found that people of color perceive White allies, as compared with allies of color, as taking significantly less informed action to intervene in issues that threaten or actively oppress particular racialized groups (2013). Furthermore, “People of color perceived somewhat less support from their ally of
color than the ally of color saw in him—or herself. Likewise, people of color gave lower affirmation ratings to White allies than the White allies gave themselves” (2013, 2220). This discrepancy points to the inconsistencies that arise from the self-identificatory nature of allyship and with the wide range of behaviors that can be perceived to fall under the umbrella of allyship.

Along those lines, activists criticize allies as working from a place of comfort and individual interactions that gives them a very limited capacity to influence social change. Additionally, legal scholar Catherine Pugh argues against identifying members of dominant groups as allies because, ultimately, it is the behavior of the dominant group that must change. Dominant groups are the sources of biases; they must be the ones working to remove their dominance and learn new ways of relating to other groups (2020).

From a critical Whiteness studies stance, education scholar Jessica Powell and social work scholar Amber Kelly identify the discourse around allyship as understanding White allies as assisting people of color, who need assistance (2017). They describe that “allies might set their own agenda, choosing which issues to amplify. Some allies might profit off of trainings, workshops, or professionalized activism that seek to neatly package responses to social justice” (2017, 45). Indigenous Action Media further criticizes what they term “the ally industrial complex.” Like Powell and Kelly, Indigenous Action Media argues that allyship has been commoditized. Individuals can earn certificates in allyship and “nonprofit capitalists advance their careers off the struggles they ostensibly support” (2014). Such an approach to activism is inherently limited in its understandings of the lived realities of racism and in the scope of possible results. Identifying the ways that the macroaggression of White cultural supremacy informs K-12 music education contexts takes nuance and consistent, humble work that allyship alone does not appear to be able to encompass.
Rather than base an analysis of activism by nonprofits on the standards of allyship, I consider the standards of complicity, of being an accomplice. Anthropologist Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz offers:

The invitation to complicity, rather than allyship, asks us to acknowledge that what distinguishes legality from illegality, innocence from criminality, is a matter of power. Laws are policy decisions made by people in power; they are not neutral moral decrees, much less instruments of radical liberation. (2018, 36)

Indigenous Action Media further describe: “When we fight back or forward, together, becoming complicit in a struggle towards liberation, we are accomplices” (2014). Indigenous Action Media also offers the following guiding questions for analyzing the work of organizations:

Look at the organizations funding. Who is getting paid? How are they transparent? Who’s defining the terms? Who sets the agenda? Do campaigns align with what the needs are on the ground? Are there local grassroots Indigenous People directly involved with the decision making?” (2014)

Unlike being an ally, being an accomplice is not a label that one can self-ascribe. The actions of an accomplice are determined by listening and being led by oppressed groups even and especially when this means risking our own privileges.

This understanding of practices of being an ally and an accomplice sheds light on the practices of nonprofits and foundations. Nonprofits and foundations may engage in both services for individuals (like after-school music programs) and in advocacy efforts that may aim to dismantle or change oppressive systems (like federal and state education policies that defund public schools in low-income areas). Activist Paul Kivel describes the choices that managerial staff of nonprofits can make:

All of our work is situated within the economic pyramid, and in whatever part of the economy we find ourselves, we have a choice. Either we can go along with a ruling-class agenda dictated through grant proposals, donors, foundations, government agencies, “best practices,” quantified evaluations, standards, and traditional policies, or we can take on the riskier work of engaging in consciousness-raising, organizing, organizational and institutional critique, and mobilization for change. … The problem is not with providing social services … The problem comes when all of our time and energy is diverted toward
social services to the detriment of long-term social change. (Kivel 2007, 142)

Kivel is aware that the individualized service labor, typically associated with allyship, is necessary. At the same time, he emphasizes the need to find means of breaking away from oppressive logics of the ruling class; this is the work of the accomplice, prioritizing the liberation of the oppressed community over the economic ties to the funding bodies. Furthermore, advocacy efforts must be community-driven and must incorporate institutional critique, rather than advocating for uncritically extending institutional power.

As a White person and, through my status as a doctoral candidate affiliated with an economically and politically powerful university, a member of the technocracy, I write with the aim of contributing to dialogue with and among the foundations and nonprofits who work to support music education in schools in low-income, minoritized, urban areas. The entrenched economic resources tied to White supremacy through class stratification make it difficult, though not impossible,¹⁸ for education groups to attain financial stability without playing into many societal narratives of White supremacy. The world of education especially is dominated by Whiteness, from teachers to administrators to teacher education programs, and all of these actors, myself included, require anti-racist professional development to shed enculturated racism (Lawrence and Tatum 2004). With this at the forefront of my mind, much of my “research” for this dissertation included my own anti-racism professional development.

By spreading awareness of how these ties work, music education nonprofits and their funders can more actively work to resist reifying racial and class hierarchies. We are all guilty, at times, of playing into White supremacy. Nonetheless, we can all take steps towards creating a more equitable education system. One way to do so as allies, on the individual level, is through

¹⁸ See, for example, the account by community organizer Alisa Bierria of the nonprofit, Communities Against Rape and Abuse (2007).
micro-interventions. Sue and his colleagues use the psychology concept of metacommunications to create a framework for effectively dealing with microaggressions and macroaggressions in what he terms microinterventions. These microinterventions work to “(a) make the invisible visible, (b) disarm the microaggression, (c) educate the perpetrator, and (d) seek external reinforcement or support” (2019, 128). I follow a modified version of this process to address the macroaggressions found within music education policy in the United States, tracing them from their conception during the 1960s civil rights movement through today. Sue and his colleagues identify micro-interventions as working primarily in two ways:

First, they serve to enhance psychological well-being, and provide targets, allies, and bystanders with a sense of control and self-efficacy. Second, they provide a repertoire of responses that can be used to directly disarm or counteract the effects of microaggressions by challenging perpetrators. They are interpersonal tools that are intended to counteract, change or stop microaggressions by subtly or overtly confronting and educating the perpetrator. (2019, 134)

Possible microinterventions, like making the “invisible” visible, also include educating those who, consciously or unconsciously, reinforce White supremacist structures. Taking a stance that aims to educate our peers (as opposed to a punitive or aggressive stance, though an educating stance could also be read as punitive or aggressive by perpetrators) can work towards opening lines of communication, acknowledging the good intent of the actions and pointing out what their words and/or actions have conveyed and how they have caused harm, even if inadvertently.

0.5 Chapter Outlines

The first chapter of my dissertation offers a theoretical framework for understanding the current marketizing trends within public education as part of broader patterns within neoliberalism. Drawing heavily on Michael W. Apple in curriculum and policy studies, Gloria Ladson-Billings on culturally relevant pedagogy, Emily Good-Perkins on culturally sustaining music pedagogy, and other education scholars, I review the fundamental tenets of neoliberalism
and describe how these are at play in the realm of public education. Together with neoconservativism, neoliberalism shapes curriculum, funding structures, and access to schools, at the same time that it attempts to mold students, guardians, and their communities into individualist consumers. While some nonprofits do attempt to serve students well within this environment, and even work against marketizing trends, their very existence reinforces the marketizing trends that rank and exclude. Still, some teachers attempt to foster meaningful, participatory, decolonial learning within their own classrooms, despite the overwhelming amount of material they must cover as dictated by high-stakes testing.

In the second chapter, I investigate the major federal and New Jersey state policies and resources that influence music education. Beginning with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the first major federal legislation that funded public education, the federal government has attempted to shape student experiences in the classroom (20 U.S.C. § 6301). By controlling the requirements for obtaining significant pools of funding, the federal government has been able to guide how public schools, especially those in low-income areas that require additional funding, focus their energies. Applying Lindsay Pérez Huber and Daniel G. Solórzano’s concept of the macroaggression uncovers systemic frameworks of “common sense” ideas around education that underwrite many of its oppressive mechanisms (2014). The privatization of music education in New Jersey in particular originated in the 1980s as White state government officials attempted to financially control rising Black local governments following the civil rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s through 1970s. New Jersey state music education policy struggles to support the progressive vision it professes as it continues to suggest a strongly hegemonic curriculum and perpetually underfunds music education programs in schools.
In the third chapter, I analyze the rhetoric of foundations and non-profit organizations that support music education within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Music programs in financially unstable schools have been threatened since New Jersey transitioned to online learning and parents, teachers, and administrators experienced fears of student learning loss in what are typically considered to be more vital areas of education (namely math and literacy). Music education nonprofits have continued to fulfill services that had been publicly defunded due to limited local tax streams, state takeovers, and other punitive federal and state resource distribution policies. Now, to bolster their utility in the mid- and post-pandemic worlds, public and private music education programs are reframing their objectives around social-emotional learning. Groups like Americans for the Arts, the National Association for Music Education, and Arts Ed NJ are also advocating for public policy to be more expansive, yet rarely, if ever, broach issues of race and class. Meanwhile, groups like the Newark Museum, the Aljira Center for Contemporary Art, and NJPAC are attempting (to varying degrees) to create more equitable arts offerings and education structures within their communities, but interact minimally with public policy. These funders and advocacy groups are frequently so focused on short-term funding needs that they persistently struggle to address systemic issues in music education, such as issues with administrations that do not represent the communities being served, colonial content and pedagogy, and unsustainable funding solutions.

In my fourth chapter, I conclude my dissertation with a study of music education nonprofits in under-resourced, racially and ethnically diverse cities in New Jersey. I draw on ethnographic data to map and explore the ecosystems that form within decentralized education frameworks. Applying a lens of culturally relevant arts education raises questions regarding the pedagogical value and deficiencies of offering music education programming that does not
center diverse epistemologies. The limited services and non-democratic leadership of privately funded music education programs in public schools reinforce the role of public schools as gatekeepers of exclusionary citizenship norms. At the same time, privatization has also opened opportunities for non-normative, anti-oppressive forms of music pedagogy to enter public schools. I focus on one program in particular, in which interactions between the nonprofit and the community of students, parents, and local educators are shifting. This nonprofit now prioritizes hiring community members into administrative positions in order to integrate the community into decision-making processes. It is also introducing more diverse and creative musical practices into the program. Finally, this group has taken advantage of the upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic and the newly reinstated music programs in the city’s public schools to redesign its relationship with the school district in a way that continues to serve students while making space for the growth of the public schools’ music programs.
Chapter 1: Neoliberal Capitalism, the Marketization of Public Education, and White Supremacy in Music Classes

I use neoliberalism as the framework for my analysis of music education policy, funding, and nonprofits. Understanding the roots of neoliberalism helps us understand how partnerships have come to exist between public schools and privately run entities. In his seminal texts on the decentralization of education, education scholar Michael W. Apple traces in great detail the history of the logics that currently drive the standards-based marketization of education. Apple describes how schools are not only evidence of the ideologies present in society more broadly, but are also where these ideologies are negotiated and learned; as Apple attests, political discussions about schools “refer to the utterly complex struggles over who has the right to ‘name the world’” (Apple 1993, 44-45). He argues that the root of the conflict over ideology in privately-run versus publicly-run education – and privately-run versus publicly-run social services in general – is a tension “between property rights and person rights” (1993, 17, emphasis in original). Dominant groups tend to advocate for property rights as they accumulate wealth while “subordinate groups” tend to advocate for person rights that will improve their working conditions and equal treatment regardless of identity (1993, 17-18):

Equality, no matter how limited or broadly conceived, has become redefined. No longer is it seen as linked to past group oppression and disadvantage. It is now simply a case of guaranteeing individual choice under the conditions of a “free market.” Thus, the current emphasis on “excellence” (a word with multiple meanings and social uses) has shifted educational discourse so that underachievement once again increasingly is seen as largely the fault of the student. Student failure, which was at least partly interpreted as the fault of severely deficient educational policies and practices, is now being seen as the result of what might be called the biological and economic marketplace. This is evidenced in the growth of forms of Social Darwinist thinking in education and in public policy in general.

In a similar way, behind a good deal of the rhetorical artifice of concern about the achievement levels in, say, inner-city schools, notions of choice have begun to evolve in which deep-seated school problems will be solved by establishing free competition over students. These assume that by expanding the capitalist marketplace to schools, we will somehow compensate for the decades of economic and educational neglect experienced
by the communities in which these schools are found. (1993, 19, emphasis in original)

Here, Apple identifies the crux of neoliberalism: individualism within a free market. Schools now compete for funds in a marketplace that rewards particular cultural knowledge while it claims to offer all students an equal chance.

In what follows, I explore the recent history of the neoliberal trend and its vast implications for education. I then consider the effects of the neoliberal policies governing public education on public school students and their families as well as the theoretical perspective of the nonprofits filling the gaps in public educational offerings that the marketization of education has exacerbated if not created. Next, I briefly outline culturally relevant pedagogy, along with some adjacent education theories, as one oft-cited approach to counteracting the forces of neoliberalism at play in schools. In this section, I highlight the unique cultural role that music plays in public school curricula and how culturally relevant pedagogy can help to decenter and critique the associated hegemonic norms.

I use macroaggressions as a metatheoretical framework for interpreting research on education policy. As education scholar George J. Sefa Dei attests,

Researching for “data” (e.g., oppressive relations and practices) cannot be pursued as mere descriptive appendages of our theoretical formulations, as these oppressive moments are far from mere appendages in lived experiences. In effect, anti-racism research has a specific political and academic goal to subvert the dominant ideologies that seek to dismiss/downplay/dislodge/decenter the relevance of race in everyday practice. (2014, 16)

My focus cannot be exclusively on the oppressed or minoritized. Research must also consider policy as a source of influence over educational outcomes for all students (Dei 2014).

Language in federal policy is mirrored in public and private policies at the state and local levels by governments, schools, and other groups seeking to qualify for federal funds. As psychologist and education scholar Derald Wing Sue and his colleagues state, “In many cases,
bias and discrimination go unchallenged because the behaviors and words are disguised in ways that provide cover for their expression and/or the belief that they are harmless and insignificant” (2019, 128). This is the case with much of the policy I explore; policy makers use language in a way that obscures the White supremacist structures and intentions. As such, I attempt to name the oppressive gestures, as Paulo Freire advocates, making them visible (1970). Sue and his colleagues also attest that, “The first rule of effective intervention is the quality of perspicacity or the ability to see beyond the obvious, to read between the lines, and to deconstruct conscious communications from metacommunications” (2019, 138).

I use social and cultural analysis of education scholar Lindsay Pérez Huber and social scientist and comparative education scholar Daniel G. Solórzano’s concept of the “macroaggression,” which “provides the ideological foundations for the reproduction and perpetuation of institutional and everyday racism – white supremacy,” encompassing the “microaggressions” perpetrated by individuals and institutional racism at the systemic level (2014, 6). Pérez Huber and Solórzano define macroaggressions as “the set of beliefs and/or ideologies that justify actual or potential social arrangements that legitimate the interests and/or positions of a dominant group over non-dominant groups, that in turn lead to related structures and acts of subordination” (2014, 7). Macroaggressions are the frameworks for “common sense” ideas that justify oppression (like the common misconception that listening to classical music will make babies smarter than if they were to listen to anything else). “The concept of macroaggressions allows for this analysis – to identify the ideologies of white supremacy (the disease) that uphold institutional racism, from where racial microaggressions (symptoms) emerge” (2014, 8).

1.1 A Brief Exploration of Neoliberalism
Considering the neoliberal turn as rooted in the politics of the 1960s allows us to understand market logics as a response to the codified end of segregation as they work out a new de facto hegemonic hierarchy free of de jure discrimination. Apple identifies the source of neoliberal thought in a form of “authoritarian populism” (1993, 21, emphasis in original) that results from increasingly close ties “between government and the capitalist economy” (1993, 21), as initiated by Reaganism and Thatcherism. Apple draws heavily on Stuart Hall’s theorization of “common sense” (see Hall et al 1978) and the coalition of groups that, despite differences in identity and interests, unite around ideologies that are not obviously linked to form hegemonic blocs:

What has been accomplished has been a successful translation of an economic doctrine into the language of experience, moral imperative, and common-sense. The free-market ethic has been combined with a populist politics. This has meant the blending together of a “rich mix” of themes that have had a long history – nation, family, duty, authority, standards, and traditionalism – with other thematic elements that have also struck a resonant chord during a time of crisis. These latter themes include self-interest, competitive individualism…, and antistatism. … In this way, a reactionary common-sense is partly created. (1993, 22).

In expanding the private market since roughly the 1980s, economic and socially conservative groups were reacting to the political movements of the 1960s and 1970s as well as the progressive (for the United States) economic policies of the 1960s. Apple poses the question, “Isn’t it odd that just as gains were being made in decentering dominant narratives, dominance returns in the form of national and state curricula (and national and state testing) that specify – often in distressing detail – what ‘we’ are all like?” (2001, 206). This anti-state reaction by economically and still-politically dominant groups was and largely still is a reaction against the gains made in voting rights and access to public positions by women and people of color:

Behind the conservative restoration is a clear sense of loss: of control, of economic and personal security, of the knowledge and values that should be passed on to children, of visions of what counts as sacred texts and authority. The binary opposition of we/they becomes very important here. … These binary oppositions distance most people of color,
women, gays, lesbians, and others from the community of worthy individuals. The subjects of discrimination are now no longer those groups who have been historically oppressed, but are instead the “real Americans” who embody the idealized virtues of a romanticized past. (Apple 1993, 28)

Apple cites the roots of such sentiment in “ultra-right-wing organization[s]” like the Ku Klux Klan (1993, 29), coupled with the ties formed around the same time between capitalism and “traditional” work ethics (1993, 30). Even the more seemingly progressive logics of multiculturalism erase the violent histories that still structure our interactions and possibilities today, as Apple points to “the creation of (an artificial) ‘we’ and the destruction of historical experience and memory” (2001, 207).

It is between these two groups primarily – neoliberal proponents of the free market and neoconservative advocates for (White, elite) traditions – that the currently hegemonic coalition formed, along with a middle class willing to advance by using their managerial skills to enforce the neoliberal vision:

A new hegemonic accord … combines dominant economic and political elites intent on “modernizing” the economy, white working-class and middle-class groups concerned with security, the family, and traditional knowledge and values, and economic and cultural conservatives. It also includes a fraction of the new middle class whose own advancement depends on the expanded use of accountability, efficiency, and management procedures which are their own cultural capital. This coalition has partly succeeded in altering the very meaning of what it means to have a social goal of equality. The citizen as “free” consumer has replaced the previously emerging citizen as situated in structurally generated relations of domination. Thus, the common good is now to be regulated exclusively by the laws of the free market, free competition, private ownership, and profitability. In essence, the definitions of freedom are no longer democratic, but commercial. (1993, 30-31, emphasis in original)

Through this coalition, freedom now refers to freedom within an unregulated market, driven by the possibility of profit. Apple describes how this political and economic system came to dominate in the United States, as well as in other post-industrial nations, despite only economically serving a small portion of the population. Those who benefit economically from this system also gain support from a wide base by incorporating conservative populist cultural
values into the economic system, “form[ing] an accord that acts as an umbrella under which many groups can stand but which basically still is under the guiding principles of dominant groups” (1993, 68).

Interestingly, the outwardly professed ideals of neoliberals appear to be in conflict with this historical trajectory that perpetuates racialized class hierarchies. Sociologist and race theorist Howard Winant offers the following description of neoliberal philosophy:

Neoliberalism recognizes the cross-cutting and competitive dynamics of race- and class-based forms of subordination in the postindustrial, post-civil rights era. It seeks systematically to narrow the differences that divide working- and middle-class people as a strategy for improving the “life-chances” of minorities, who are disproportionately poor. It thus attempts to appeal to whites with arguments about the medium- and long-term consequences upon their living standards of downward mobility and greater impoverishment of nonwhites. The neoliberal racial project can thus be described as social democratic, focused on social structure (as opposed to cultural representation à la the various right-wing racial projects), and somewhat class reductionist in its approach to race. (2004, 9)

Winant’s description of neoliberalism highlights its professed aims of providing an equal playing field for anyone to compete and to potentially win financially based solely on “excellence.” What neoliberalism fails to do, however, is recognize the ongoing role of White supremacy in structures that maintain racial and class divides (2004, 9). In reality, there is no equal playing field within our societal structures on which the individual can win based solely on merit.

So, neoliberalism does attempt to create an egalitarian society, but impossibly only through the removal of race, not through the recognition of Whiteness as an entrenched mechanism of racial oppression. Neoliberalism does, according to Winant, “undertake a crucial task: the construction of a transracial political agenda and the articulation of white and minority interests in a viable strategic perspective” (2004, 10). Winant goes on to say that, “Like any other complex of beliefs and practices, ‘whiteness’ is imbedded in a highly articulated social structure
and system of significations; rather than trying to repudiate it, we shall have to rearticulate it” (2004, 11). While the process will be complex and arduous, “that rearticulation (or reinterpretation, or deconstruction) of whiteness can begin relatively easily, in the messy present, with the recognition that whiteness already contains substantial nonwhite elements” (2004, 11). A complex understanding of Whiteness as creole would help dislodge Whiteness from its reign. Yet, without recognizing the continued central role that race plays structurally around the world, including in the United States, no rearticulation of Whiteness can occur, and Whiteness will continue to surreptitiously permeate policy and socio-economic systems.

With these considerations of race in mind, to fully understand the effects of neoliberalism today, we must look beyond the professed egalitarian philosophy of neoliberalists and into the impetus behind and results of neoliberal policies that are ultimately backed by a coalition of seemingly unrelated groups. Education scholar Dave Hill further describes neoliberal capitalism as such:

For neoliberals, ‘profit is the God’, not the public good. Capitalism is not kind. Plutocrats are not, essentially, or even commonly, philanthropic. In capitalism it is the insatiable demand for profit that is the motor for policy, not public or social or common weal, or good. … Thus privatised utilities, such as the railway system, health and education services (schools, trade, vocational education, universities), free and clean water supply are run, just as much as factories and finance houses, to maximise owners’ and shareholders’ profits and rewards, rather than to provide a public service. (2006, 49)

This definition highlights how neoliberalism prioritizes financial profit over any other form of growth. Political scientist and Africana studies scholar Lester K. Spence adds to this definition by describing neoliberalism as:

the gradual embrace of the general idea that society (and every institution within it) works best when it works according to the principles of the market. … We now routinely refer to public officials as people we hired rather than elected, as CEOs rather than political representatives. We place business executives with more managerial expertise than educational expertise in charge of public school systems. (2015, xxiv)

As neoliberalism prioritizes profit over all else, Spence adds the perspective that neoliberalism
marketizes institutions that were previously democratic, even valuing finance and business acumen in school leadership over other forms and areas of knowledge.

Neoliberalism not only influences how institutions are organized or how leadership is chosen; it also shapes how communities and individuals interact with and within these institutions. Spence writes that:

The idea of human capital theorized by the late Chicago economist Gary Becker plays a critical role here because it transforms labor from a simple unit you plug into an economic equation (so many units of labor translate into so much profit for the company when combined with so many units of equipment) into something human beings can themselves transform through skill development, education, creativity, and, perhaps most important of all, choice. (2015, 9, emphasis in original)

As they engage with the newly marketized space of education, individuals must choose how to focus their time and energy in ways that will render them legible and marketable in future higher education and/or job markets. Spence goes on to describe how this economic philosophy requires politicians to remove social services, even if they reduce inequality, in favor of forcing engagement with markets (Spence 2015).

Placing such responsibility on individual choice ignores the structural mechanisms at play that provide certain groups with more choices and more guidance in making those choices, and that provide those groups with a much higher baseline on top of which their choices accumulate. Anthropologist Aihwa Ong describes this difference within neoliberalism:

Neoliberalism … applies to two kinds of optimizing technologies. Technologies of subjectivity rely on an array of knowledge and expert systems to induce self-animation and self-government so that citizens can optimize choices, efficiency, and competitiveness in turbulent market conditions. … Technologies of subjection inform political strategies that differently regulate populations for optimal productivity, increasingly through spatial practices that engage market forces. (2006, 6)

Ong recognizes the role of individual choice in neoliberalism, which forces people to make themselves into neoliberal subjects if they hope to be marketable in a neoliberal world. At the same time, neoliberalism subjects different groups of people to different choices within these
markets in order to create different forms of workers. Education scholar Michael W. Apple further posits that “market societies like our own act to create and valorize the individual and, at the very same time, can actually work against that individual because of the society’s lack of binding value commitments that might promote the ethical integrity of both the person and the social order” (2003, 15). Not only does neoliberalism create regulated, individualist subjects, it also limits subjects’ abilities to take advantage of their choices by fracturing and dissolving ethical action frameworks in favor of the marketization of social services.

Spence further points out that, by hiding this perpetuation of longstanding structural inequality under the guise of market forces, experiences of inequality come to appear as an individual choice, and therefore not something that needs to be addressed at a structural, societal level:

These [neoliberal] ideas and the policies and techniques associated with them tend to increase levels of inequality. Further, they tend to “naturalize” inequality. That is, they tend to attribute inequality to personal, populational, or institutional flaws rather than structural ones. Even when politicians and policy makers do believe inequality is produced by structural factors, as a result of the neoliberal turn they are more likely to turn to the market for solutions than they are elsewhere. (Spence 2015, 10).

By attempting to address structural inequalities with capitalist market solutions, the inequalities continue to grow, as unregulated markets allow for the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth. Through this attempted erasure of race, coupled with the move towards privatization of historically public services (like schools), neoliberalism modifies and reifies the forces that hierarchize groups according to race and class. Apple reminds us that “behind this is an attack on egalitarian norms and values. Though hidden in the rhetorical flourishes of the critics, in essence ‘too much democracy’ – culturally and politically – is seen as one of the major causes of ‘our’ declining economy and culture” (1993, 95). Connecting back to the reactionary roots of neoliberalism, by illuminating the forces that perpetuate societal hierarchies, we see more ever
clearly the non-democratic impulses of the invisible yet racialized forces that drive “free-market” discourse.

Finally, Spence argues that neoliberalism is kept alive not only through the racialized labor divides that maintain wealth for White individuals at far higher rates overall than for Black individuals; neoliberalism is also kept alive within Black institutions that fail to offer sustainable alternatives to neoliberalism:

Black institutions and ideas have themselves been transformed. Black elected officials and civil rights leaders reproduce these ideas, participating in a remobilization project of sorts, one that consistently posits that the reason black people aren’t as successful as their white counterparts is because of a lack of hustle, is because they don’t quite have the work ethic necessary to succeed in the modern moment. A remobilization project that consistently posits that the greatest danger black people face is one posed by other black people, black people who are not only not productive but are in fact counter-productive. This remobilization project posits that there are two types of black people – black people who have the potential to be successful if they take advantage of their human capital, and black people who have no such potential. (2015, 25)

Spence states that, “calls for better or more moral ‘black leadership’ are not only insufficient in beating back the [neoliberal] turn, but arguably may be counterproductive in defeating it” (2015, 96). Neoliberalism is a structural problem, and needs to be addressed as such. Leadership in neoliberalism comes from people who have benefited from the marketization of social services. Incorporating diversity into neoliberal leadership alone will not dismantle neoliberalism.

1.2 Neoliberalism in Schools

Education is one instance where neoliberalists have pressured politicians to create markets where there were previously none. This trend of marketization is seen in the rise of school voucher programs, charter schools, content standards and state-wide curricula, and “the growing pressure to make the needs of business and industry into the primary goals of the educational system” (Apple 1993, 20). On a national level, too, in education policy, the high-stakes, standardized testing introduced by No Child Left Behind (2001) from the Bush
administration and the Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) from the Obama administration (reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 [20 U.S.C. § 6301]) are both examples of neoliberal education policy as they both place responsibility for success on the individual schools, teachers, and students, rather than acknowledging and addressing the broader societal inequalities that create circumstances that make learning difficult (culturally foreign content, underfunded schools, hunger, housing instability, violence through policing, etc.). They also increasingly support the privatization of public education services. These policies exacerbate inequalities in education and therefore in the students’ future life and career opportunities, a reality that has been well-documented and that I continue to explore (see, for example, Apple 2001; Ladson-Billings and Tate 2006).

Apple identifies a hegemonic coalition driving these changes within education specifically as a combination of four key groups: neoliberals, neoconservatives, “authoritarian populist religious fundamentalists,” and a managerial middle class. Neoliberalists seek to minimize the role of the government in society in order to marketize all services for profit. Neoconservatives seek control over the culture that is taught in schools by creating a “common [White, elite] culture” and enforcing “higher” standards of an imagined past. Neoconservatives have been highly successful in influencing federal policies that provide funding to schools. The “authoritarian populist religious fundamentalists” seek to imbue schools with their religious values.19 Finally, the managerial middle class is instrumental in enforcing the standards and markets in schools at the local and state levels, though the individuals who comprise this group are not necessarily forwarding their own ideological agendas, and members of this group often

19 While this group is certainly present at a national level and has worked hard to minimize the reach of public education and control school content, they are less relevant to the local contexts of the nonprofits and schools that I explore in New Jersey.
ideologically oppose many components of neoliberalism and neoconservatism (2001, 65).

Apple describes that the result of this alliance within schools is a continuation of the neoliberal and neoconservative values across society:

In essence, the new alliance has integrated education into a wider set of ideological commitments. The objectives in education are the same as those which guide its economic and social welfare goals. They include the dramatic expansion of that eloquent fiction, the free market; the drastic reduction of government responsibility for social needs; the reinforcement of intensely competitive structures of mobility both inside and outside the school; the lowering of people’s expectations for economic security; the “disciplining” of culture and the body; and the popularization of what is clearly a form of Social Darwinist thinking. (2001, 65)

As neoliberalism reduces government funding for public education and expands the reach of free markets, individuals navigating these public-schools-as-markets are now limited by the same racialized structures that limit economic mobility elsewhere in society. Furthermore, federal funding for education is now tied to performance on standardized tests that reflect curricula created by individual states, curricula that are heavily influenced by the not-so-subtly racist neoconservative White, upper-class cultural value frameworks. Because these standards-based testing regimes determine the federal funding that schools receive, schools are financially pressured to prioritize and serve students who can do well within the neoconservative cultural frameworks. As families are given more and more choices of schools within the neoliberal market, schools, too, have more freedom to select students. This creates the “intensely competitive structures” within schools in which students compete within the neoconservative cultural values that underpin testing regimes.

Both the high-stakes testing approach of the federal and state governments and the intertwined marketization of education rely on racist notions of intelligence that have been debunked time and again (see, for example, Gould 1981; Harraway 1990). Education scholar and sociologist Deborah Youdell and critical race theory and education scholar David Gillborn
connect the present moment to its eugenics
ist father figure:

Writing in 1916, Lewis Terman, one of the most influential figures in the introduction of IQ testing had this to say:

The whole question of racial differences in mental traits will have to be taken up anew… The writer predicts that when this is done there will be discovered enormously significant racial differences in general intelligences, differences which cannot be wiped out by any scheme of mental culture.

Children of this group should be segregated in special classes … They cannot master abstractions, but they can often be made efficient workers.

The new IQism is ensuring that these same perspectives (usually unspoken, often unrecognized) are shaping the current reality of education in Britain [and other Western countries embracing neoliberalism]. (2000, 213, emphasis added)

Here we see the deeply racist foundation of a privately-run education that responds primarily to market forces: the idea that the children of some groups are inherently rulers while others are inherently workers. This division is especially prescient in the modern context of resegregation where schools often serve relatively economically and racially homogeneous populations (United States Commission on Civil Rights 2018). In this way, controlling the quality of the school or the types of classes in which each group of students is able to enroll controls the types of jobs that the particular student population can access. Attributing success in school to the abilities of individual students again denies the structural mechanisms at play maintaining a minoritized working class on both macro (curriculum and funding policy) and micro (internalized bias of teachers and administrators) levels (Gillborn and Youdell 2000, 217-222).

While the state-wide, standardized, standards-based testing satisfies neoconservatives who only agree to fund schools if their particular ideas of education are executed, the standardized tests serve a secondary purpose as well. For schools to become marketized, consumers (families sending their children to schools) and private funders (companies “investing” in education) need some standard data that can be used to rank the schools. The results of standardized tests provide this data, and education consumers and funders are able to make informed investment decisions (Apple 1993, 96). With schools’ access to funding and
rankings so dependent on neoconservative cultural values that are portrayed as “common culture,” public schools give life to a version of “Social Darwinism” that rewards Whiteness and renders moot, if not punishes, any nondominant cultural experiences (Apple 1993, 19).

Apple dives deeper yet into the logics of neoliberal markets that uphold neoconservative values to Social Darwinist ends. The hierarchizing phenomenon as it functions in schools is, as part of its core, an effort to maintain the racial, gender, class, and other hierarchies that have preserved White, male, heterosexual, able-bodied, Protestant Christian dominance across an increasing diverse public sphere that results from various social movements having won meaningful voting power for people of color and women:

Although race talk may be overtly absent in the discourse of markets, it remains an absent presence that I believe is fully implicated in the goals and concerns surrounding support for the marketization of education. The sense of economic and educational decline, the belief that private is good and public is bad, and so on is coupled with an often unarticulated sense of loss, a feeling that things are out of control, an anomic feeling that is connected to a sense of loss of one's “rightful place” in the world (an “empire” either now in decline or under threat), and a fear of the culture and body of “the other.” The “private” is the sphere of smooth running and efficient organizations, of autonomy and individual choice. The “public” is out of control, messy, heterogenous. “We” must protect “our” individual choice from those who are the controllers or the “polluters” (whose cultures and very bodies are either exoticized or dangerous). (Apple 2004b, 79-80)

Though the public sphere may become more diverse with the spread of voting power, the dominant groups maintain control of the private sector. Thus, pulling public services into the private sector allows these groups to remain dominant. Schools are a uniquely situated public service as their purpose is the formation of citizens; their privatization allows for a more efficient expansion of neoliberal rhetoric throughout society. Neoliberal economic philosophy is therefore dangerous, especially in schools and especially with its intimate ties to neoconservative cultural values, because its roots are very deep in White supremacy and patriarchy as they uphold class dominance.
Gillborn and Youdell also explore this phenomenon in which schools are resourced based on performance on high-stakes tests and market competition for those resources. Because schools in low-income areas do not have the funds to support a comprehensive education for all of their students, schools selectively focus on some students. Youdell and Gillbord identify this as public “schools rationing education,” focusing on particular students who they hope will lift the school’s standardized, high-stakes testing scores (often students who are marked as having potential to receive passing scores but are not quite there yet) and allow the school to receive enough funding to offer a full education to all of its students (2000, 1, emphasis in original). This occurs within a standardized testing system that considers these tests capable of quantifying intelligence and inherent ability when in reality they test learned, culturally specific skills. In this model, based on the top-down surveillance of state-administered, standards-based, standardized testing tied to lifeline funding sources, a notable number of students are deemed not worth the resources required to teach them, often students who are not part of the dominant culture that is rewarded by the standardized tests; these students quickly fall to the wayside (2000, 197-222).

Yet, under-resourced schools are forced to make such decisions, because if they continue to be under-funded, their inability to offer a full education will lead directly to the thorough marketization of education for all of their students.

This marketization of education not only upholds the existing hierarchies, but with the immense control that dominant groups have over private spheres, the hierarchies are becoming even more rigid, the difference between tiers more extreme:

Markets systematically privilege families with higher socioeconomic status (SES) through their knowledge and material resources. These are the families who are most likely to exercise choice. Rather than giving large numbers of students who are working class, poor, or of color the ability to exit, it is largely higher SES families who exit from public schools and schools with mixed populations. In a situation of increased competition, this in turn produces a spiral of decline in which schools populated by
poorer students and students of color are again systematically disadvantaged and schools with higher SES and higher white populations are able to insulate themselves from the effects of market competition. “White flight” [to charter schools, within schools to tracked programs, etc.] then enhances the relative status of those schools already advantaged by larger economic forces; schooling for the “Other” becomes even more polarized and continues a downward spiral. (Apple 2001, 78-79, emphasis in original)

Dominant groups and middle-class families already have many of the skills and resources required to navigate this marketized education system. With family cultures that align with content on standards-based, high-stakes tests, access to private tutoring services, time to drive children to better schools in other neighborhoods, and histories of overall positive relationships with school administrators, White, economically privileged families excel in this system that we, the economically and culturally elite and the managerial middle class, built. With school choice, the schools that attract such families amass cultural and economic capital at new heights, pulling from both private and public funding pools in the case of charter schools and marketized in-school programs. Meanwhile, the schools that are serving families without the cultural and economic capital are unable to successfully compete in the school markets because the economic resources to be found within the broader community, among wealthier families with understandings of White culture, are now being pooled into a few “good” schools, while the public schools that are abandoned by wealthier families become increasingly financially depleted, because the White families’ cultural capital needed to excel in the standards-based, high-stakes testing is gone. This exaggeratedly inequitable resource shift is by design.

This system of removing the economic resources necessary to run public schools from the control of local populations was originally overseen by State governments, and has since become self-sustaining among private groups. Spence describes how, concurrent with and contributing to the marketization of education, in the late 1980s into the 1990s, state governments began assuming control of local school districts that were predominantly Black as
members of the Black communities began serving on boards of education and generally became more empowered within public education systems. With school district takeovers, state governments, beginning in New Jersey, diminished public funding for schools, despite the knowledge that reducing funding would create further inequality. As the state governments removed public funding for schools, they contracted privately funded groups to replace essential services, creating a competitive market for education services that prioritized cost saving over quality of education (Spence 2015, 78). Democratically elected school boards that were finally representative of their local communities abruptly lost control over financial and content-related decision-making. State takeovers and school choice in low-income communities create a market for aspects of education, such as music education, that the state requires. So, while the state recognizes a robust education as necessary for all students, the marketization of education in low-income areas means that students in those schools (and their parents who navigate these systems on young students’ behalves) would only be able to access some elements of that complete education, as determined plutocratically by the directors of the privately run education entities that were now being contracted by the school districts.

Finally, neoliberalism does not only affect the materials taught in schools and the way that schools are funded. In addition to perpetuating markets that uphold racist social structures, Apple outlines the reality around companies that donate money to public education. Under neoliberal funding structures that aim to reduce democratic government power, private

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20 This marketization of education also comes in the form of charter schools that function within the public education systems but have more flexibility in terms of the content they are required to teach and their budgets, which draw on both public and private funding sources. Charter schools, which, by definition, accept students through lottery, give parents more choices for their children’s education, creating a market in which schools compete for student attendance (Spence 2015, 76). Although charter schools accept students by lottery, they very purposefully can expel students who do not conform to their behavioral and academic standards. Thus, charter schools create even more inequality in education, because now public schools, which serve any and all students in their district, compete for public resources with charter schools, which only serve some students, and which also receive private funding.
companies receive tax breaks that drain funds from public schools, which are funded by local taxes. The donations to schools that these companies make, enabling them to pay even lower taxes, do not make up for the amount of funding that schools are losing due to the newly lower taxes that local private companies pay (Apple 1993, 96).

1.2.1 Instilling Neoliberal Values in Students

Within all of these elitist forces wrestling the control of public education away from the public, education scholar Heidi Katherine Pitzer highlights how the shaping of students is still the ultimate purpose of education, even within neoliberalism. Pitzer describes neoliberalism in education as:

the set of ideas and policies that make the market paramount. Under neoliberalism, the world is understood in exclusively economic terms, and schooling becomes further tied to producing a competitive economy; the individual is seen as consumer rather than citizen, and public education and other public goods are turned into products or services that individuals need to efficiently and effectively consume – and that teachers need only to deliver. (2010, 63)

With education, markets are not only at play when curating educational offerings for students. Public schools are also where citizens are created, and neoliberal schools create consumers and laborers that will perpetuate neoliberal markets.

The implications of the neoliberal and neoconservative ideological hegemonic coalition influencing the governance of education go deeper than institutionalizing standards-based standardized testing and removing public schools from local control: families and individual students must now adopt new behaviors to navigate this market, as many no longer simply attend the public schools within defined geographic boundaries. Furthermore, Spence explains that, with “school choice” and the mobility it affords some but not all families, the strength once found in the community that each district serves is now weakened:

Traditional public schools situated in and based on local residence can serve a valuable community-building role. Indeed, the school often helps define the community. Similarly,
the political organizations connected to the school—whether it be the PTA or the formal school board—can help develop community social and political capital. However, the move towards charters and vouchers [and other out-of-school education] significantly reduces that community-building potential. The parent is no longer situated in a community, but is rather a singular consumer interested in purchasing the best education for his or her child, in order to solely develop his/her human capital. (Spence 2015, 78-79)

With “school choice,” parents are no longer unified around geographic communities; now, students enter the highest ranked school they can, fostering an individualist, competitive approach to engaging with schools. Even without moving homes, the children of a given family may attend multiple different schools or move between schools as spaces open in or as students are kicked out of charter schools.

Furthermore, without the government (federal, state, or local) providing a thorough education for all students in low-income communities, parents are forced to choose what elements of a thorough and complete education their children will receive:

Parents are expected to act as rational consumers, collecting data on schools so as to know how well schools perform. They are expected to know their children’s unique skills so as to effectively maximize them—paying to put their children in high performing sports camps if they exhibit a particular athletic talent, in various academic leadership camps so as to give them the best possible chance to get into the right colleges. (Spence 2015, 119)

When public schools are not able to offer all of their students the education that the state mandates or that is required for college acceptance, job preparedness, etc., parents must choose how their children will spend their time outside of school to bolster their education in a way that gives their children the greatest chance at succeeding on their own as adults in the broader neoliberal market. Failure to do so risks a life of instability, including unstable employment, housing, access to nutrition, and access to medical care. These are not choices that parents in well-funded school districts need to make with such dire consequences because the baseline education, as required by the state, is offered to all students in middle- and upper-class schools.
by default through the substantial local property taxes and the supplemental federal and state funding that rewards elite, White cultural knowledge.

The ultimate result of these marketizing shifts in funding structures and content control is that schools are now shaping students into individualistic consumers rather than active citizens of a democracy. In addition to schools becoming marketized and families now finding themselves navigating the education market as competitive individuals, students themselves become commodities. Corporations – both for-profit and not-for-profit – now manage a significant portion of students’ educational experiences in the United States. Like public schools, the products of private educational entities include the content and execution of that education as well as the students who are shaped into citizens at the schools. Schools in the United States have historically served the purpose of creating particularly capitalist citizens, though still capitalist citizens within a democracy. In this long-standing capacity, public schools serving geographically defined communities are a site where students learn (among many other things) to participate in the democratic functions of government. With the marketization of schools and the subsequent dispersal of students from their local communities, however, schools no longer teach students to exercise their political freedoms and engage in society as democratic citizens, but rather to navigate a free market as consumers (Apple 1993, 101-116).

In classrooms, we see this neoliberal pattern of hyper-individualistic emphases repeating itself in such ideas as “growth mindset,” an educational philosophy that El Sistema USA,21 for example (Johnson et al 2016), supports. “Growth mindset” was originally coined by psychologist

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21 El Sistema is a program designed by José Antonio Abreu in socialist Venezuela in 1975, offering free, intensive European classical music lessons after school and on weekends to impoverished children across the country in an effort to improve their social and economic mobility. As the international fame of El Sistema has grown, organizations around the world have established music education programs in under-resourced communities and have used the name “El Sistema.” The actual relationship between these programs that claim to adopt El Sistema organizational logic and Abreu’s El Sistema methodologies and philosophies varies greatly.

*growth mindset* is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts, your strategies, and help from others. Although people may differ in every which way—in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments—everyone can change and grow through application and experience. (6, emphasis in original)

This approach to learning is offered in opposition to a “fixed mindset,” in which students see their capabilities as unchanging regardless of effort (Dweck 2006). Growth mindset, then, emphasizes students’ agency over their own success, which is seen as limited primarily by their own belief in themselves.

Sociologist Alice Bradbury offers a critique of growth mindset. Bradbury examines early childhood education (birth through age five) in the United Kingdom since the 1990s, though comparable neoliberal patterns in education policy are seen in the United States. In these and many other countries, a focus on childhood interventions has accompanied a desire to offset the higher costs of social interventions for adults. In schools, this is intimately connected to standards-based accountability testing and the cost-driven marketization of education, also a driving factor in public-private partnerships. Dominant discourses that are classed, raced, gendered, and ableist shape ideas and therefore policy defining what good students look like (2019, 310-312). By shifting responsibility for learning and achievement onto students’ “mindset,” education programs are conforming to the neoliberal approach that emphasizes individual choice over making structural changes that address collective wellbeing (2019, 321-323).

In reality, any additional student learning that may accompany a growth mindset is limited by structures that restrict access to education—including music education—based on a skill level that is predetermined for each age group. It is also restricted by the students’ access to the cultural lens(es) implemented by their teachers. Bradbury also notes that “these and other
individualising discourses locate the solution to disparities in attainment in the individual child, while downplaying the role of structural inequalities” (2019, 312-313). While individual mindset does influence to some extent how much a student is able to meaningfully engage with material, a growth mindset alone cannot necessarily override other pedagogical barriers to learning, nor can it override the societal barriers to educational attainment.

Another example of the individualizing and hegemonizing trends within today’s public schools is the rise in discourse around social-emotional learning (SEL). In her critical review of SEL trends in the United States, anthropologist of education Diane M. Hoffman identifies the beginnings of the wider uptake of SEL by public schools in the early 1990s. Hoffman defines SEL as:

programs that attempt to enhance EI [emotional intelligence] and emotional literacy and/or the development of what are perceived to be fundamental social and emotional skills and competencies. These include such things as emotional awareness (being able to recognize and label one’s own and other’s emotions), having the capacity to express and manage emotions appropriately, making responsible decisions or choices, establishing positive social relationships, and handling difficult interpersonal situations effectively. (2009, 535)

Some SEL programs are tacked onto school curricula while other schools develop their curricula explicitly around SEL (Hoffman 2009). Based on a number of studies published since the early 2000s, advocates of SEL argue that incorporating SEL into curricula leads to “teacher feelings of improved competence in the classroom, improved student behavior as measured by teacher’s assessments and drops in discipline referrals, and increases in student academic achievement” (Hoffman 2009, 535; see also, for example: Durlak et al 2011; Taylor et al 2017). It is these perceived positive outcomes that many school music programs reference when advocating for funding for their own programs that newly incorporate SEL components.

22 Opponents of SEL find these studies to be insufficiently rigorous and are not convinced of the efficacy of SEL (Hoffman 2009, 536).
At the same time, Hoffman describes that the drive towards SEL often stems from “versions of the youth in crisis metaphor, in which many youth problems (risk behaviors, violence, etc.) can be seen as resulting from improper or inadequate emotional socialization or education” (2009, 536). This narrative resonates with earlier discourses of societal breakdown that blame educators for failing to teach children appropriate social skills (2009, 537). Hoffman offers a series of critical questions to frame evaluations of SEL programs:

Does a curriculum in emotional skills, for example, adequately engage with or reflect cultural diversity, or does it presume a single model of emotional competency valid across all cultural contexts? Is the very concept of “emotional skills” a useful and viable one, or would we be better off looking at emotion through less of a skill-based lens? What are the assumptions made about the individual and emotion, and what are the central (implicit) values reflected in the strategies or discourse used to approach emotion? How are notions of control, power, and choice embedded in various ways of talking about SEL? Does discourse on SEL represent the emergence of a sea change in American education – a real effort to change our entire view of learning and development – or is it “old stuff” in a new guise? (2009, 538)

Hoffman highlights the political nature of frameworks for SEL and ultimately critiques instances of SEL curricula in the United States as having “failed to engage in a deep way with questions of cultural diversity, with the politics of power, and with the real risks to educational opportunity of assuming yet another lens that defines educational problems in terms of individual deficits and their remediation” (2009, 549). Such concerns persist among critical researchers who continue to doubt the presence of consistent positive outcomes from SEL programs (Corcoran et al 2018), especially given the wide variety of SEL policies, which vary immensely by state, and the subsequent variety of student outcomes (Eklund et al 2018).

Youdell contextualizes how some students are excluded from accessing education not as a result of individual choices but as a result of school policies that make it difficult for students...
of certain identities to access learning:

these educational inclusions and exclusions are effected through prevailing discourses coming together in ways that create “truths” about students as learners. One result of these processes is that some constellations of identity markers – for instance feminine, middle class, White – come to be synonymous with the “ideal learner” who is thereby set up for educational “success” in the terms of prevailing educational and policy discourses. Another result of these processes ... is that other constellations of identity markers – for instance working class, masculine – come to foreclose the possibility of educational “success”, that is, the student is produced as an “impossible learner”. (2006, 2)

With this understanding, education functions as a means of attaining “social inclusion” (and, eventually, economic and political inclusion), while educational exclusion reinforces social, economic, and political exclusion (2006, 12). Youdell explains

that the model understands exclusionary mechanism to be located in the educationally excluded student, and so specialist interventions or more extensive reforms, such as diversification of the curriculum …, are aimed at promoting inclusion in an education system that is not itself called radically into question. In this frame, concerns with educational inclusion and education as a tool for social inclusion do not allow for a more fundamental questioning of how the institution of formal education, and school institutions, are themselves implicated in excluding students from the educational endeavour, from schooling, through their own processes and practices. (2006, 12)

Instead of viewing educational exclusion as an individual concern, which aligns with the neoliberal image of education to be accessed through individual choices with outcomes that result from individual faults, Youdell encourages reforms to address ongoing, systemic exclusion of particular intersections of socially categorized groups. In order to do so, Youdell insists on examining the “micro exclusions” that occur on a daily basis as perpetuated by school administrations and faculty as part of larger systems that educate the national population (2006, 12-13). Still, larger structural changes are necessary as well.

Neoliberal education structures are so difficult to fight in large part because, as they were designed to do, they serve the economically and culturally dominant groups so well. The deep, structural issues with the system as enumerated above, especially those directly concerning the high-stakes, standards-based testing, are clearer than ever. There are now people at all levels of
society questioning this education system that caters to “elite students in elite schools,” whereas in the past the questioning was more exclusively found among the dispossessed (Apple 2001, 86). Apple summarizes the dangers of this elitist form of education both as students experience it daily and as its messaging is interpreted:

These experiences are turned into feelings of being treated unfairly, of teachers and schools being organized in ways that privilege the already privileged in terms of class and race. If this is the case, some of the most powerful messages “reforms” of this type may send is that not only is the world deeply unfair but also that schools themselves are prime examples of institutions that simply respond to those who already possess economic and cultural capital. This is decidedly not the message that any society that is serious about what might be called thick democracy wants to teach. (Apple 2001, 93)

Schools are now more overtly than ever sending the message that only already-elite students are worthy and deserving of a quality education. If schools are to retain any semblance of proto-democratic spaces, let alone be areas in which “thick democracy” is taught and experienced, public schools need to be made fully public, centered on community, and equitably funded.

Neoliberalism, then, exists as a new articulation of race, class, and economics. This new articulation as it applies to education works to perpetuate the effects of codified discrimination (Jim Crow laws) within a post-racial legal framework by refusing to respond to the structural problems that maintain a racialized class structure and by placing the responsibility for educational and economic success on individual schools, families, and students. Marxist critiques of education have long identified public schools as mechanisms of class reproduction (see, for example, Willis 1977; Apple 1982a; Apple, ed., 1982b; Liston 1988; Foley 1990). Scholars of race have engaged in this discussion for even longer (for a select few early examples, see Washington 1900; Du Bois [1903] 1989; Woodson 1933). Rather than argue again that this is the case, my research examines how racialized class divides are perpetuated in education under neoliberalism. I do so by investigating public-private partnerships in music education as frequent instances of the marketization of education, since music classes are so often among the first
programs to be dangerously underfunded.

1.3 The Formation and Management of Nonprofits within Neoliberalism

In this section, I provide a theoretical analysis of the sociopolitical actions primarily of nonprofits, as well as of other privately funded groups, involved in public school music education within the economic framework of neoliberalism. The ideologies that guide privately funded music education are as diverse as there are groups involved. The relationship between community-driven, grassroots efforts, nonprofits, and private funding is complex: marginalized groups and the schools that serve these groups acquire funds through private and corporate foundations, and both the foundations and the marginalized groups attempt to shape how those funds are ultimately used.

Discussing capitalism, Jürgen Habermas theorizes the beginning of the privatization of state functions as far back as the 1830s:

Social organizations which deal with the state act in the political public sphere, whether through the agency of political parties or directly in connection with the public administration. With the interweaving of the public and private realm, not only do the political authorities assume certain functions in the sphere of commodity exchange and social labor, but conversely social powers now assume political functions. This leads to a kind of “refeudalization” of the public sphere. Large organizations strive for political compromises with the state and with each other, excluding the public sphere whenever possible. But at the same time the large organizations must assure themselves of at least plebiscitary support from the mass of the population through an apparent display of openness (demonstrative Publizitat). (Habermas [1964] 1974, 54)

Habermas describes a tension between the weakening of the public state and the growth of the welfare state as a means of broadening fundamental rights ([1964] 1974, 55). In the context of New Jersey, students are determined by state law to have the right to access music education in public schools. Democratically elected officials have determined and now sustain this right and assign funding on paper for it to be realized. This provides the appearance of openness to funding music education with support from the state. Yet, the actual dollars spent on music
education are regularly less than planned budgets dictate (Arts Ed NJ. n.d.b), so control of cultural education in low-income, minoritized communities is relegated to private groups. This limits local, democratic control and maintains racialized and classed power structures through “refeudalization.”

Privately funded music education programs in United States education often take the form of nonprofits. This connects to the verbiage in the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (and prior federal policies) encouraging schools to use federal funds to partner specifically with nonprofits. Thus, the most common and most fiscally supported way for community groups to enter public education spaces is through nonprofitization (i.e., corporatization) routes. Gender, women, and sexuality studies scholar Miranda Joseph describes this process:

In order to be recognized as a potential recipient of (subject to) the goodies that come from a pluralist state one must first constitute oneself as a legitimate community. But in so doing, one inscribes oneself into the machinery that turns the raw material of community into subjects of the nationstate and capital. That machinery is the bureaucratic and capitalist apparatus that community must inhabit in the United States; to participate in a community in the United States is to participate in a group with certain standardized features, such as businesses … and often more importantly, civil voluntary organizations … that are frequently organized as governmentally regulated and state-sanctioned not-for-profit corporations. (Joseph 2002, 28)

By prioritizing funding for nonprofits (as opposed to other organizational structures, like grassroots social movements), government funders are putting pressure on community groups to corporatize. This normalizing force ensures that people who have access to the public education of young people are teaching within the technocratic rulings of corporations, the social norms of the funders, and the competitive funding logics of neoliberal capitalism.

Scholars and activists have extensively critiqued the nonprofit industrial complex (NPIC) for its reliance on hegemonic wealth to maintain the efforts of nonprofits. Media and cultural studies scholar Dylan Rodriguez notes the overlapping timeframe of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s and the development of 501(c)(3) nonprofit status as a way to ensure that
corporate and private foundations and state and federal government auditing agencies can track the activities of social movements. Rodriguez questions whether organizations that are accountable to corporate and private interests and to the state are still capable of ideologically challenging those same dominant bodies (2007). African studies and gender studies scholar Tiffany Lethabo King and activist Ewuare Osayande further argue that many nonprofits receive substantial portions of their funding from foundations that made their money using unethical business practices that robbed working class communities of their earned wealth to begin with. They argue that the relatively small proportion of their wealth that corporate and private foundations give away in grants does not account for the amount of individual and community wealth that those groups stole to begin with, and continue to withhold through the tax breaks that foundations receive. Ultimately, these foundations are at cross-purposes with even the best-intentioned community initiatives, yet, through the political and economic pressures to form nonprofits, the foundations continue to control community access to financial resources (2007).

To better understand the restraints under which public-private partnerships form, social scientist and legal scholar Rosemary Coombe dissects the role of NGOs, nonprofits, corporations, and other such “neoliberal governmentalities” that “constitute collectives as responsible community subjects through intervention, auditing, and monitoring … in development projects in which they must make their cultural or ‘traditional’ assets legible for new forms of investment” (2017, 374). Communities that choose to make their culture “legible for new forms of investment” by engaging music education within the nonprofit structure open themselves to more extensive funding networks, but also open themselves to those networks’ forms of content and structure regulation.

Multiculturalism is one of the earlier contexts that fostered the formation of partnerships
between public schools and nonprofits in arts education. Gaining traction in the late 1980s through the 1990s, multiculturalism assumes culture to be the point of political and social difference, downplaying structural differences that are rooted in race and class. Multiculturalist education celebrates cultural difference by recognizing minoritized heritage as a resource. Under theories of multiculturalism, certain minoritized cultures are no longer explicitly repressed as multiculturalism aims towards equal representation of all cultures. Representation, however, is driven by the ability of the cultural group to fund its societal presence (Campbell 1998; Povinelli 2002). Anthropologist Haidy Geismar describes this outcome driven by national regulations regarding equality of identity:

such a utopian vision of a cosmopolitan world, in which all identities are created as equal and the state is technically a hindrance to the individualized project of making both identity and heritage, misrepresents a process by which a marketplace for identity disempowers those without adequate resources or networks with which to participate in the mobilization of heritage qua resource. (2015, 76)

When local education projects obtain funding to mobilize their culture in educational settings, the targeted community may find opportunities to engage their youth in culturally informed ways. Yet, by creating a “marketplace for identity,” multiculturalism ignores the uneven economic power that minoritized groups hold and thus perpetuates regimes of power and control of certain identities over others. Furthermore, multiculturalism normalizes capitalist ideologies, which are also cultural. This renders capitalist logics less visible and makes multiculturalist projects easily assimilated into neoliberal capitalist commodification.

Though multiculturalism is no longer a dominating pedagogical paradigm of United States music education, it continues to shape the formal logics of music education nonprofits. Joseph further elucidates the close relationship between multiculturalism and more current discourses of diversity within corporate logics:

the corporate embrace of multiculturalism and diversity is a strategy for the production of
subjects for capitalism. (Multiculturalism was, I think, a transitional term between pluralism and diversity used primarily by nonprofits, especially arts and educational institutions, that has since been eclipsed by the language of diversity, generated principally by for-profit corporations.) (Joseph 2002, 22)

This description highlights the role that the term “multiculturalism” holds specifically within the realm of for-profit corporate entities that usher members of various cultural identities into the tendrils of capitalism. Many nonprofits take part in a similar “production of subjects for capitalism.”

In response to the lack of uniformity between communities, neoliberal governmentalities have multiplied in number and in scope. On the surface, neoliberal governmentalities appear to have gained independence by gaining the potential to tap into great vats of wealth. The reality, however, is that this proliferation means that cultural identities are increasingly placed under the purview of the private, non-democratic entities that provide their funding (Coombe 2017, 375). Often, the community sees little of the economic or political profits of having their heritage turned into a resource because of the limited student access to privately funded projects and the limited influence that small groups have over structural issues, especially when they are working against each other, competing for the same, limited sources of private funding (Dixon, Buras, and Jeffers 2015; Geismar 2015).

In many privately funded music education projects, the centrality of elite, Western European music, the music associated with elite, White culture in the United States, continues to be privileged above other musical practices. Thus, while privatization has the potential to introduce minority voices into education, private groups most typically continue the practice of using public education to enforce dominant norms and continue to mold the ideal capitalist citizen. Furthermore, the presence of resistant ideologies within dominant ideological frameworks can be understood as a function of a totalizing hegemony. Hegemony works in part
by incorporating marginal cultures into dominant cultural frameworks through economic and sociocultural integration, as occurs, for example, within multiculturalist “marketplace[s] for identity.” Hall engages with Gramsci’s theorization of hegemony (1971) to describe this phenomenon as

evidenced by the fact that the dominant culture need not destroy the apparent resistance. It simply needs to include it within its own spaces, along with all the other alternatives and possibilities. In fact, the more of them that are allowed in, and the more diverse they are, the more they contribute to the sense of apparent freedom. The notion of incorporation points to the extremely important idea that the dominant ideology often responds to opposition, not by attempting to stamp it out, but rather by allowing it to exist within the places that it assigns, by slowly allowing it to be recognised, but only within the terms of a process which deprives it of any real or effective oppositional force. (Hall 2016, 50)

This hegemonizing force (namely, in the field of music education nonprofits, funding bodies and policy makers) is the force against which many community-based musicians and music educators struggle. To take advantage of the financial benefits of nonprofit status and to access education pathways through partnerships with public schools, community-based music educators are pressured to align their musical forms and messages with the liberal standards of public education (Przybylski 2018). In other words, the hegemonic boundaries of the education system in the United States attempt to dictate that community music programs must conform to certain standards in order for them to interface with dominant education and funding institutions, and are almost always successful. Because of this, even education with an orientation towards social justice risks being absorbed into a neoliberal governmentality that essentializes, commodifies, and marketizes cultural assets into forms of investment for donors.

At the same time, neoliberal governmentalities can offer resources that work to the advantage of their clients, as children may be afforded cultural education opportunities that they may not have experienced in traditional public-school settings, opening potential paths towards more political engagement in the future (Coombe 2017, 375). American studies scholar and
prison abolitionist Ruth Wilson Gilmore, for example, complicates the idea that all nonprofits are part of the nonprofit industrial complex and thus ultimately function to quell dissent. Gilmore identifies some organizations as responsive to the community by their design and willingness to dissolve when they were no longer able to address the problems of the day, opening space and funds for other, more relevant groups (2007). Philosopher and race and gender studies scholar Alisa Bierria also attests that there are ways to subvert the normalizing forces of funding bodies through such practices as: using different language in funder-facing materials versus community-facing materials; placing community members in positions of power within the nonprofit structure; prioritizing the personal needs of workers (childcare, education, etc.) over economic expediency; and building trust-based relationships with other groups on the ground so that funders cannot enforce unhealthy competition (2007). Legal scholar and historian Nina Farnia describes this approach as a courageous one that requires trust among different groups of political organizers and sustained relationships between organizers, the community base, and allies (2008, 289-290).

In a similar vein, urban studies scholars Robert Mark Silverman and Kelly L. Patterson found that nonprofit executive directors whose organizations have strong individual, grassroots donor bases are more likely to sustain advocacy efforts, despite frequent pressure from major foundations to avoid political advocacy. Nonprofits rely on multiple funding sources, putting them in difficult advocacy positions if they perceive that their funders might have conflicting values. Focusing instead on gathering donations from individuals frees nonprofits from such conflicts, but it is often much more difficult to sustain programs using only these mutual aid-inspired funding systems. Silverman and Patterson note:

The nonprofit industrial complex is argued to be an emergent system composed of public agencies, private companies, philanthropic organizations, and nonprofit social service
organizations. This system is argued to emphasize the role of nonprofits as service providers, while discouraging advocacy work and political activism. The narrowing of nonprofit activities is considered to be compatible with neoliberalism and less threatening to the status quo. Thus, the nonprofit industrial complex is argued to function as a tool to quiet dissent and institutionalize corporatist values in the nonprofit sector. (2011, 438)

In their research, they found that nonprofits struggle to secure funding for civic engagement and other advocacy-related programming, especially from government funding agencies, and that nonprofits often feel pressure from funders to avoid advocacy work in favor of offering social services. They also found, however, that nonprofit advocacy organizations were more readily able to find funding for advocacy for education and youth than for other social justice causes (2011, 445-7).

To address this tension between securing funding for social services and advocating for systemic change to address the problems at their sources, Silverman and Patterson suggest that nonprofits should aim to shift their funding towards individual and grassroots contributions, and that governmental funding agencies should more clearly encourage nonprofit advocacy efforts (2011, 448-9). Legal scholar Michael Haber also sees radical potential within the nonprofit structure to shift control away from ultra-wealthy donors and towards community members as a way for communities to mobilize. Haber details a number of possibilities for nonprofit structures that increase emphasis on employee and volunteer voices and decrease the influence of wealthy board members (2019). Paired with grassroots funding, these more democratic nonprofit structures have the potential to be more responsive to community needs and visions without the restraints of large foundation, corporate, and government grants.

Within all of these corporatizing, marketizing, neoliberal systems, it is important to note that not all forms of music and culture that engage with public school students are directly or consciously connected to ruling class norms. Especially following the May 2020 murder of George Floyd, the ensuing protests, and the invigoration of the anti-police brutality movement,
many nonprofits, especially those located in minoritized communities, are increasingly focusing on community-driven racial and ethnic representation within their programming and control within their administration.\textsuperscript{24} The extent to which these efforts among music education nonprofits are able to counteract the pulls of racial capitalism varies by organization depending on leadership, funding sources, and community relations, among other factors.

There is risk involved for community-based groups that adamantly remain outside of and work against the reaches of hegemonic education efforts, especially those who choose to adopt non-corporate organizational structures. These groups refuse to participate in educating young people through the institutionalizing, normalizing apparatus of the nonprofit. Joseph describes the repercussions experienced by groups that choose to remain outside of the nonprofit structure:

> If the group does not operate in this way, then it is a “gang” or an “underground network”; it is not given the status of a “community.” The practical as well as rhetorical deployment of community makes one group equivalent to another and produces equivalent subjects, even when there are drastic power differences between them (White ethnic groups versus African Americans) and discrepant logics organizing the various collectivities (gays and lesbians versus Christians). (2002, 28)

As with multiculturalism, becoming a nonprofit gives the appearance of equal access to resources, obscuring the structures that continue to prevent equality. Joseph also points out that the continued reliance on private funding for community projects has been a way to prevent socialism from taking root in areas where vast wealth differentials exist, as is the case across New Jersey. Education efforts can take hold outside of the nonprofit structure, which is regulated by state and corporate financiers, or outside of the traditional public-school systems, which are regulated by state policies. In my research, however, I focus on groups that have chosen to adopt the nonprofit status, and how these groups have approached the crises of United States music

\textsuperscript{24} For more on this, see my analysis of the “The Future of Arts in New Jersey: Role, Funding and Impact in the COVID-19 Age” webinar, discussed in Chapter 3 (Mooney et al 2020).
education leading up to and in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.4 Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: An Ethics Framework for School Music Programs

Teachers, schools, and other education programs interact with students within the inequities of our society. As they do so on a day-to-day or even year-to-year basis, many teachers find ways to counteract some of these systemic inequalities within their own classrooms. The practice of culturally relevant pedagogy (or culturally relevant teaching), an approach to teaching coined by education scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings, has offered insight into how teachers can create learning environments in which all students can thrive. Culturally relevant pedagogy is:

a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for explaining the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right. (Ladson-Billings [1994] 2009, 20)

The efficacy of such work is limited within the structural inequalities of public education and of our society, yet these practices can positively impact students who otherwise would be excluded from education spaces, if only for the potentially short times when they are learning in culturally relevant classrooms. As a means of counteracting the hierarchizing forces that are marketizing education and de-democratizing schools, many teachers and administrators in public schools, including the many of the ones about whom I write in this study, are currently turning towards culturally relevant pedagogy to offer their students a better education.25

Ladson-Billings bases her framework on the practices of teachers who excel at facilitating learning among students – primarily Black but other students of color as well – from

25 I focus here on the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy and its ideological lineage because it is the primary theory I heard referenced – and it was referenced repeatedly, though not ubiquitously – among the arts teachers and administrators with whom I spoke or whom I heard speak on the subject. There are many other promising radical pedagogies that are also theorized and designed to teach students whom traditional schooling does not or cannot reach. Some prominent examples of other theories include critical pedagogy theorist Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970) and, building on Freire (as many others have done as well), Kris Gutiérrez’s Third Space (2008).
low-income areas, especially those who have been labeled “difficult” or “special needs” in prior classrooms. She describes, at its core, that:

Culturally relevant teaching is about questioning (and preparing students to question) the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society. The teachers I studied work in opposition to the system that employs them. They are critical of the way that the school system treats employees, students, parents, and activists in the community. However, they cannot let their critique reside solely in words. They must turn it into action by challenging the system. What they do is both their lives and their livelihoods. In their classrooms, they practice a subversive pedagogy. Even in the face of the most mundane curricular decisions these teachers make a stand. (Ladson-Billings [1994] 2009, 140)

The foundation of culturally relevant pedagogy is a learning environment in which “academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness” are the prime concerns of the teacher (Ladson-Billings 2001, 31, emphasis in original). When enacting “sociopolitical consciousness,” the teacher must be aware of, be able to communicate to their students about, and act based on the political nature of education in a way that develops students into active community members who are communally responsible for the wellbeing of each individual in the group.

To create such an environment, Ladson-Billings urges educators “to delegitimate [the inequality that exists in the nation's schools] by placing it under scrutiny. In the classrooms, working in opposition to the system is the most likely road to success for students who have been discounted and disregarded by the system” (Ladson-Billings [1994] 2009, 142). She sees the actions of teachers – the education workers who are closest to the students – to be an effective means of counteracting a system designed to perpetuate inequality. These teachers can only do so by critically engaging with the learning materials as well as with education systems and other proximal systems (housing, food access, prison and military industrial complexes, etc.). By creating a space in which each individual is valued within a strong community of active citizens, together with a focus on love for the communities that raise us, all students can develop the
critical thinking tools needed to create such a community outside of school throughout their lives (Ladson-Billings [1994] 2009).

Ladson-Billings grounds culturally relevant pedagogy firmly in critical race theory, moving away from the multiculturalism discourse that was especially prominent in the 1990s and early 2000s and that celebrates identity-based differences in a way that does not recognize society's structural hierarchies around these differences. Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate, IV, (1995) expand the framework from legal studies further into education studies, drawing in particular on the contributions of Derrick Bell (1987), Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1988), Richard Delgado (1990), David Roediger (1991), Patricia Williams (1991), and Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1993; 2014 [1986]). Ladson-Billings and Tate base their analysis of the role of race in education on three central tenets:

1. Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States.
2. U.S. society is based on property rights.
3. The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity. (1995, 48)

Through their exploration of these principles, they prioritize race as the primary axis along with equity work must be completed, while also recognizing and validating the need to address other axes of difference (“ethnic, cultural, linguistic, ability, gender, sexual orientation” [Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995, 61]) and their many intersections. Understanding race and, especially, Whiteness as a form of property provides insights into how Whiteness, both as a superficial label and as a set of cultural actions, opens spaces and experiences throughout society that are otherwise difficult or impossible to access. This is equally true in education as a central and mandatory component of society, where students in the United States are most reliably able to succeed if they are able to accumulate White ways of knowing the world, expressing themselves, and being in the world. The now pervasive high-stakes, standardized, standards-based testing has
only exacerbated the difference that comes with owning Whiteness as property, which can be conferred upon certain students in an exclusionary way (Ladson-Billings and Tate 2005).

Ladson-Billings also bases her work in Black feminist theory, drawing mostly on Patricia Hill Collins’s concept of an “Afrocentric feminist epistemology,” which analyzes the intersectional position of Black women as navigating both Afrocentric and feminist values (Collins 1991, described in Ladson-Billings [1994] 2009, 189-192). Ladson-Billings uses the principles of “(1) A basis of concrete experience as a criterion of meaning, (2) the use of dialogue, (3) an emphasis on caring, and (4) an emphasis on personal accountability” to guide her research and as a theoretical foundation for culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings [1994] 2009, 189). This approach entails: elevating teachers’ and students’ experiences over academic theory; using dialogue to create more equal interactions between researcher and teacher, parents, and administrators; valuing a caring ethos in classrooms and as a driving force for research projects; and trusting teachers to determine whether and how they are meeting expectations that they set for themselves (Ladson-Billings [1994] 2009, 189-192).

While many educators refer to culturally relevant pedagogy or teaching, they often conflate it with terms like culturally responsive teaching (Cazden and Leggett 1976; Erickson and Mohatt 1977; Gay 2000) or, less frequently, culturally appropriate (Au and Jordan 1981) or culturally congruent (Mohatt and Erickson 1981) teaching, among others. These different approaches to pedagogy are all responses to the poor educational outcomes of minoritized students, but they are not interchangeable terms. This conflation of terms exists in parallel with another issue in classrooms: that teachers are labeling their pedagogy as “culturally relevant” (or “responsive,” etc.) without actually enacting the fundamental tenets of “academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness” (Ladson-Billings 2001, 31, emphasis in
original). Ladson-Billings laments:

My work on culturally relevant pedagogy has taken on a life of its own, and what I see in the literature and sometimes in practice is totally unrecognizable to me. What state departments, school districts, and individual teachers are now calling “culturally relevant pedagogy” is often a distortion and corruption of the central ideas I attempted to promulgate. The idea that adding some books about people of color, having a classroom Kwanzaa celebration, or posting “diverse” images makes one “culturally relevant” seems to be what the pedagogy has been reduced to. (2014, 81-82)

Culturally relevant pedagogy is inextricable from enacting the guiding visions and principles of democratic citizenship, critical race theory, and Black feminist theory. Teachers who claim to implement some form of culturally relevant pedagogy but who do not actively work with their students to dismantle the inequitable systems in which their students live and grow are only paying lip service to creating more equitable classrooms while ultimately upholding and reproducing the same structures that produce the inequities that make culturally relevant pedagogy so desperately needed.

Culturally responsive pedagogy as it is frequently referenced by educators today often refers to the work of education scholar Geneva Gay. Gay builds on the work of scholars doing similar research to Ladson-Billings across many different ethnic groups to develop the theory of culturally responsive teaching.26 Gay identifies similarities across education research that works to value and support culturally diverse learners. Her theory and scholarship encompass all of these approaches based on their common goal of supporting learning among students whose cultural practices are not represented or engaged in mainstream United States classrooms. Her extensive incorporation of research across many different communities is less explicitly distancing of the idealizing tenets of multiculturalism that aim to uplift all cultures since Gay

26 A theory of culturally responsive teaching was originally proposed by education scholar Courtney B. Cazden and psychologist Ellen L. Leggett (1976) and shortly after expanded by Frederick Erickson and Gerald Mohatt (1977) as an interpersonal means of aiding students from non-dominant cultures in their transition to success within dominant cultural frameworks, an ongoing and significant goal of public education in the United States.
sees culturally responsive teaching as beneficial to all. Gay offers a general definition of culture on which she builds her analysis of the ways in which students and teachers interact in schools:

cultural features are composite constructions of group behaviors that occur over time and in many different situations. They are not pure descriptors of specific individuals within groups or behaviors at a particular point in time. Instead, descriptions of culture are approximations of reality—templates, if you will—through which actual behaviors of individuals can be filtered in search of alternative explanations and deeper meanings. In this sense the cultural descriptions included in this book are intended to serve similar purposes as any other educational phenomena, such as characterizations of good teaching, being at risk, giftedness, and gender related behaviors. Few, if any, individuals will manifest the characteristics, as described, in every place and at all times. (2000, 11-12, emphasis in original)

This definition also serves my purposes of analyzing the role of culture in music education programs more broadly. Gay goes onto say that:

The cultures of schools and different ethnic groups are not always completely synchronized. These discontinuities can interfere with students’ academic achievement, in part because how students are accustomed to engaging in intellectual processing, self-presentation, and task performance is different from the processes used in school. (2000, 11-12)

While these cultural discontinuities are disruptive to student learning, removing culture is not a solution, or even possibility. The very act of learning for all students occurs primarily through cultural lenses. It is not surprising that White, middle-class students excel in tests designed using White, middle class cultural standards, and many studies show how students tend to excel in classrooms in which teachers facilitate their education using relevant cultural frameworks. Like Ladson-Billings, Gay promotes the conviction that all students are capable of reaching high academic standards under supportive conditions that are legible to students’ cultural frameworks.

While their end goals of quality education for all students overlap, Ladson-Billings and Gay have key points of divergence. Ladson-Billings discusses how schools have largely remained segregated, especially outside of the South, or are resegregating since Brown v. Board of Education, and focuses her research on how schools that serve predominantly Black and other students of color can more effectively do so (Ladson-Billings 2004). Gay does not disagree, but
more strongly emphasizes how society is only growing in diversity; she therefore states that “developing sociocivic skills for effective membership in multicultural communities is as important a goal of culturally responsive pedagogy as improving the academic achievement and personal development of students of color” (20). While Ladson-Billings emphasizes the need for students to be proud of and invested in their often-times relatively homogeneous communities, and while Gay emphasizes the importance of “sociocivic skills” for maintaining respect and equity in diverse interactions, both are highlighting a key component of a quality education: developing students’ capacities to engage in their communities. These approaches to understanding the role of education in students’ lives counter escapist rhetoric around “getting out” of a community through education, which directly implies that those communities are worse than others, should be abandoned, and should have their resources further depleted.

The cultural disconnection between students and classrooms that Gay describes is key to understanding how standards-based, high-stakes testing disadvantages students from nondominant cultures not only on a systemic level as discussed above, but also on an interpersonal level within classrooms. Federal and state policies that rely on standardized testing ultimately rank schools, teachers, and students; by their nature, they declare some students as somehow less than other students. Education scholar Yvette Jackson works with the frameworks of culturally relevant and culturally responsive pedagogy to highlight the many and often advanced capabilities of students of color in urban schools for whom state testing was not designed. Though the results of high-stakes tests provide only a narrow and biased snapshot of students’ cognitive abilities, these results also affect the resources to which schools have access. In response to this perpetuation of inequalities, Jackson draws on and contributes to theories of learning that insist that intelligence is not a fixed number, but rather an aspect of a person that
can and does change over time (2011).

Furthermore, Gay attests that low testing scores are symptoms of underlying problems; low scores themselves should not be treated as problems, since this leads to seeing individual children and their cultures as somehow deficient (2000, 11-16). While other structural problems do need to be addressed as well (housing instability, food insecurity, exposure to violence, etc.), learning needs to be framed in a way that responds to the students’ cultural frameworks in order for the students to engage with material in depth. Teacher educator Zaretta Hammond demonstrates on a neurological level the importance of culturally responsive teaching in ensuring that all students can develop their higher-order reasoning and critical thinking skills. Miscommunications that are based in cultural differences can prevent students from being able to meaningfully process new information; teachers must prioritize forming bonds with their students that are built on trust and respect of both the individuals and their cultures in order for students to be able to fully and deeply engage in learning processes (2014).

Ladson-Billings more recently has viewed culturally sustaining pedagogy, theorized by education scholar Django Paris and anthropologist H. Samy Alim (Paris 2012; Paris and Alim 2014; Alim and Paris 2017; Alim, Paris, and Wong 2020), as a “remix” of culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings summarizes the stakes of this moment in which teachers and schools are still so controlled by the demands of standards-based testing:

The newer concept of culturally sustaining pedagogy is built on the same foundational notion of students as subjects rather than objects. … I hope to help those who subscribe to earlier visions of culturally relevant pedagogy make the transition to the remix: culturally sustaining pedagogy. For, if we ever get to a place of complete certainty and

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27 As ways forward, Ladson-Billings also praises: education scholars Teresa L. McCarty and Tiffany S. Lee in their work on culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy in the context of Native groups who seek to rebuild cultural practices that have been systematically attacked over the course of centuries (2014; referenced in Ladson-Billings 2014); science education scholar Christopher Emdin on his work on reality pedagogy (2017, referenced in Ladson-Billings 2021); and education scholar Bettina Love on her work on abolitionist teaching (2019, referenced in Ladson-Billings 2021).
assuredness about our practice, we will stop growing. If we stop growing, we will die, and, more importantly, our students will wither and die in our presence. Both teachers and students can be vulnerable to a sort of classroom death. Death in the classroom refers to teachers who stop trying to reach each and every student or teachers who succumb to rules and regulations that are dehumanizing and result in de-skilling (Apple, 1993). Instead of teaching, such people become mere functionaries of a system that has no intent on preparing students – particularly urban students of color – for meaningful work and dynamic participation in a democracy. The academic death of students is made evident in the disengagement, academic failure, dropout, suspension, and expulsion that have become an all too familiar part of schooling in urban schools. Academic death leaves more young people unemployed, underemployed, and unemployable in our cities and neighborhoods, and vulnerable to the criminal justice system. Furthermore, this vicious cycle often continues with the children they will parent. If we hope to disrupt this cycle, our pedagogies must evolve to address the complexities of social inequalities. (Ladson-Billings 2014, 77)

Ladson-Billings very explicitly states that culturally relevant pedagogy, as she originally theorized it in 1994, no longer fully satisfies her original purpose of providing students of color with a strong education. Culturally relevant pedagogy and other pedagogies of the 1990s and early 2000s were fundamentally framed around using non-dominant cultures in the classroom to support students’ success in dominant spheres (in other classrooms, while undergoing standards-based testing, at college, etc.). These were progressive for their time, but need to be regularly rethought, especially in light of the hegemonizing and hierarchy-reinforcing pressures of high-stakes, standards-based testing.

In theorizing a culturally sustaining pedagogy, Paris and Alim push past notions that minoritized cultures need to be translated into something that is relevant to classrooms and advocates instead for an understanding of education that recognizes and centers the learning and growth that already happens within diverse cultural frameworks, thereby supporting a truly pluralistic society within each classroom. Additionally, Paris and Alim complicate the idea of students belonging to a single community or a single culture, as culturally relevant and culturally responsive pedagogies tend to assume. Instead, they acknowledge the multiplicities of cultures and identities with and against which students identify, considering especially broader ideas of
youth culture as students progress through middle and high school (Paris and Alim 2014; Alim and Paris 2017). Paris provides the following explanation of culturally sustaining pedagogy:

The term *culturally sustaining* requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people – it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence. Culturally sustaining pedagogy, then, has as its explicit goal supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers. That is, culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to perpetuate and foster – to sustain – linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling. … A pluralistic society needs both the many and one to remain vibrant. (Paris 2012, 95)

Recognizing that students navigate and engage with many cultures throughout their daily lives, Alim, Paris, and anthropologist Casey Philip Wong state that culturally sustaining pedagogy “positions dynamic cultural dexterity as a necessary good, and sees the outcome of learning as additive, rather than subtractive, as remaining whole rather than framed as broken, as critically enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits” (Alim, Paris, and Wong 2020, 263).

Key to culturally sustaining pedagogy is the conviction that education should not be a means of training students to succeed in the dominant culture; rather, it should be built on the many, diverse cultures that exist in our society and that have been successful in many ways at resisting the various White-dominated hegemonies that have existed since colonization. By training students in anti-hegemonic, decolonial ways of knowing and being, culturally sustaining pedagogy works towards decolonizing society. Culturally sustaining pedagogy, as Alim, Paris, and Wong describe, “reimagines education not only within the context of centuries of oppression and domination, but critically, draws strength and wisdom from centuries of intergenerational revitalization, resistance and the revolutionary love of our communities in the face of such brutality” (2020, 262). Culturally sustaining pedagogy exhibits flexibility in centering these diverse pedagogies in order to account for the ever-changing nature of culture and the ever-changing modes of engagement with culture by young people. It also exhibits reflexivity as
instructors aim to recognize and address aspects of any cultures—both longstanding and emerging—that reproduce or create new systems of oppressions (Alim, Paris, and Wong 2020).

Connecting this historical arc of culturally relevant pedagogy back to the marketization of education as an extreme hierarchizing force, Apple again offers plainly spoken insights into why the current marketization of education is dangerous to our society as it plays out in classrooms:

The value of writing, speaking, and listening, should not just be seen as access to “refined culture” or to “life skills” for our allotted (by whom?) places in the paid and unpaid labor market, but as a crucial means to gain power and control over our entire lives. . . . our aim should not be to create “functional literacy,” but critical literacy, powerful literacy, political literacy which enables the growth of genuine understanding and control of all of the spheres of social life in which we participate. (Apple 1993, 44)

Students within the education market are tracked based on their family’s cultural identities and economic status onto paths that lead to particular positions within the labor force. In classrooms, this tracking leads to students being taught a “functional literacy” determined by the demands of the market rather than a literacy that allows students to critique the market and their society. This alternative “critical literacy, powerful literacy, political literacy” ultimately aims for students to actively engage in their communities and larger society from an informed and empowered position. Yet, responding to the demands of standards-based testing in order to remain financially afloat, teachers in under-resourced schools must cover an immense amount of content throughout the year as more demands are placed on state-wide standards. With so much material to cover and paperwork that teachers must complete for testing procedures, chances to deconstruct the curriculum with students are scarce if not totally absent from the school day (Apple 1993, 114).

Still, to align with culturally relevant pedagogy in its current “remix,” culturally sustaining pedagogy, (not just nominally based on shallow interpretations of theories that proliferated thirty years ago,) educators and researchers must adopt these radical practices and
continuously evolve as new ideas and ways of understanding and engaging with the world unfold. Alim, Paris, and Wong pose the following questions:

what if instead of merely theorizing schools as pillars of the ideological state apparatus meant to reproduce the colonial status quo, we joined the long-term work of our communities in imagining schools (and other institutions, like health care and law) as sites for potentially transforming and revitalizing societies by sustaining the languages, cultures, identities and lives of our students and communities? That is, while we understand the school to be a site of social reproduction, what kinds of possibilities are opened up if we understand the school also as a site of social resistance, resurgence and transformation? (2020, 271-272)

Continuing in the direction of culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive pedagogy, and other pedagogies in this lineage, culturally sustaining teaching works to make schools a place where the foundations for a new, equitable society are imagined and built. For this project to be successful, Ladson-Billings points out that radical pedagogies must not merely apply to students of color, but to all students; they must teach students the tools for success within the current realities of our society while they simultaneously facilitate students’ ability to critique these systems and build new ones:

In our attempt to ensure that those who have been previously disadvantaged by schooling receive quality education, we also want those in the mainstream to develop the kinds of skills that will allow them to critique the very basis of their privilege and advantage. In this era of state-mandated high-stakes testing, it is nearly impossible for teachers to ignore mundane content and skills-focused curricula. However, teachers undertaking culturally informed pedagogies take on the dual responsibility of external performance assessments as well as community- and student-driven learning. The real beauty of a culturally sustaining pedagogy is its ability to meet both demands without diminishing either. (Ladson-Billings 2014, 83-84)

By creating culturally sustaining classrooms, teachers are not asked to ignore the present constraints of policy, lower learning standards on any level, or train students exclusively for success in a society that does not yet exist. Instead, like its predecessors, culturally sustaining pedagogy functions on the understanding that good teaching will provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in this world, and that includes learning how to
navigate existing systems while critiquing and changing them.

1.4.1 Culturally Relevant Arts Education and the Unique Role of Music in Schools

Teaching music and the arts within a culturally relevant or culturally sustaining framework is not a straightforward task. Applications of these pedagogies invoke questions around the Eurocentric divisions of knowledge that separate music from other arts and arts from other disciplines, in addition to more obvious questions around curriculum materials and classroom power dynamics. Music education in particular has a long history of insidious connections with cultural control and colonization that cannot be separated from the practices, standards, and rhetoric built into music education today. Culturally relevant arts education (CRAE) has been slowly forming around the principles of culturally relevant pedagogy, but much of the music education literature that applies culturally relevant (e.g., Gurgel 2015) and culturally responsive (e.g., Mckoy and Lind 2016) to music education does so through a focus on culture in the classroom in a more general sense that would apply to any classroom. A deeper understanding of the historic and contemporary social role of music education in public schools is needed to fully understand its connection to education practice and policy, including the current high-stakes, standards-based testing.

Education scholar Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, arts education and human rights scholar Amelia M. Kraehe, and arts education and African American studies scholar B. Stephen Carpenter, II, have applied culturally relevant pedagogy specifically to arts education. They offer a critique of arts education as an area that is not sufficiently critical of the role of race and White supremacy in the field, since the discourse around arts education is heavily focused on advocacy and simply maintaining a presence of arts education in any form (2018, 2-3). Furthermore, arts as a field has the reputation of being somehow inherently tied to social justice. With this logic, the
mere existence of the arts education program is often thought to sufficiently address social justice concerns within arts education spaces, regardless of the inequalities that are present across the school as a whole or even within each arts classroom (2018, 3).

Gaztambide-Fernández, Kraehe, and Carpenter argue that the arts function at once to include certain groups and exclude others:

Through one lens, “the arts” can be seen as an inclusive and encompassing category of symbolic work involving expressive practices, materials, and contexts. Through the other, “the arts” can be seen as a set of discourses that allow certain things to be said and certain people to speak and that rely on specific institutions in order to exclude and to exert authority over what counts as “the arts.” (2018, 11)

It is through the first lens that institutions are able to consider arts education as expansive, inclusive of many different traditions and practices, and thus inherently able to speak to social justice initiatives. This definition of the arts is often used by arts education advocates, framing the arts as an essential component of any education. At the same time, this definition fails to distinguish between the sociocultural, economic, and political roles of different art forms (2018, 11-12).

The second lens often more accurately portrays arts education in practice. Gaztambide-Fernández, Kraehe, and Carpenter describe how the difference between music practices can manifest in ways that are significant to music education logics:

Performing an instrument within the context of a group based on the authoritarian rule of the conductor and the preeminence of the score written by someone else is not the same as creating new music using available tools and doing so in response to particular emotions, circumstances, or ideas. While the claim that “making music” encourages creativity might sound true intuitively, this is easier to demonstrate when the music being made is original or even improvised, as opposed to when the music being made was written by another person (and in the case of music, so-called “classical,” usually written hundreds of years ago). Thus, one cannot assume that all forms of music making are analogous to each other or that what we imagine about “the arts” in one instance is true for all artistic practices. (2018, 12)

Continuing this critique of the false universality of and creativity associated with elite, Western
European musical styles, they describe how the aesthetic qualities of art are unevenly valued and openly debated. Moreover, in order to access these debates, individuals must acquire the expected vocabulary and historical understanding to join the discourse and speak from a position of expert and/or institutional authority (2018, 13).

Continuing their music education example, Gaztambide-Fernández, Kraehe, and Carpenter point out that:

while everything that is classified as “the arts” involves creativity, not everything that involves creativity can be classified as “the arts” (at least not in a way that carries institutional recognition and value). The contrast between creating original music using available tools (whether using a computer to compose or creating beats with sticks on pails of paint) and re-creating music from a score under the strict rule of an orchestra conductor helps to illustrate this point. While the former surely involves a great deal of creativity …, the latter is mostly about decoding notes on a musical score, following directions, and getting along with others in a group. Yet, it is far more likely that high school students – if they are lucky enough to attend a school with a music program – will learn to play an instrument as part of a band program than have the opportunity to compose their own music, and the annual school concert is more likely to focus on music composed by someone else (usually a dead White male) than on music created by the students themselves. (2018, 13-14)

Creativity in music classes is often limited. Music classes in particular are traditionally structured around teaching students to recreate art under the strict supervision of the teacher/conductor.

There are few if any chances for students to compose their own music or even to select the music they learn (see also Hess 2018, 328-329; McKoy and Lind 2016, 135).

Ultimately, Gaztambide-Fernández, Kraehe, and Carpenter combine these two lenses to offer an understanding of arts education as a cultural phenomenon with a dual nature:

on the one hand, “the arts” operate as a way to categorize the whole range of creative and symbolic modes of cultural expression and creation and, on the other hand, “the arts” are also a set of discourses, ideologies, and modes of perception and appreciation that set the terms of distinction for which practices and objects come to be recognized as such. (2018, 14-15)

They then go on to explain how this understanding of “the arts,” which considers both the possible range of creative practices and the structural limits placed on these practices by
education institutions (state and local education policy, school boards, teacher training programs, etc.), ultimately places “the arts” as White property.

Gaztambide-Fernández, Kraehe, and Carpenter trace the concept of “the arts” to European epistemologies, distinguishing high art from other forms of art and using European aesthetic sensibilities as part of justifications for colonialism and racial violence (2018, 14-17; see also Vaugeois 2018). They describe that:

“The arts,” as a marker of all that is beautiful and culturally superior, are thus implicated in, and therefore belong to, whiteness, not only because it was White Europeans who invented the concept but also because the terms by which any symbolic practice or creative object come to be considered under the category of “the arts” are themselves set by discourses and ideologies that are similarly intended to demarcate, and thus to protect, the property value of whiteness. (2018, 17)

So, seeing “the arts” as White property allows us to see that creative endeavors typically classified as “art” “are indexed by whiteness” and “serve as evidence of European cultural superiority” (2018, 17, emphasis in original). Furthermore, calling other traditions and practices “art” and placing them in the spaces where “the arts” traditionally exist (museums, schools, etc.) makes them subject to White European modes of consumption and regulated by White European cultural understandings of the world (2018, 17-18). They conclude their musical example:

In short, to call something “the arts” is to risk being appropriated by whiteness. This is why, when classifying practices such as rhythmically beating sticks on pails of paint as “the arts,” we run the risk of removing them from context and therefore extricating them from the cultural values and orientations that give them their meaning. (2018, 18)

The implications of this claim run deep. If calling a practice “art” and engaging it in a public-school classroom risks appropriation and whitewashing, what can teachers do to facilitate learning, as culturally relevant pedagogy requires, through a lens of their students’ lives and culture into their classrooms?

Music education scholar Juliet Hess investigates the presence of Whiteness in music classrooms in more detail. She highlights the expectations that are often held by music educators
These practices include the requirement of still comportment while listening and performing, the prevalent place of musical notation and Western musical elements, the dominance of Western classical repertoire and Western European composers as the primary curricular material, and the limited use of aurality in school music. (2018, 325)

Hess identifies how schools amplify the Eurocentricity of music education structures:

Approaches that conform to the Western ensemble paradigm – the paradigm that privileges bands, orchestras, and choirs to exclusion of other possibilities – are distinctly Eurocentric; repertoire, mode of transmission, emphasis on Western standard notation, and the director-focused classroom are practices associated with White, middle class values. Conversely, practices relegated to periphrastic space in the music class typically demonstrate values that do not conform to the raced and classed nature of the dominant paradigm of music education. These practices include movement and dance in response to listening and performing music and privileging aurality and learning music by ear (instead of through reading). In this case, the consequences for non-conformity with the Eurocentric paradigm are significant. (2018, 329)

Together with valuing Eurocentric musical practices, students who do not identify culturally with these practices – often students of color – are also decentered and their practices are devalued in school settings. This can include students who connect music inherently to bodily movement, who conceptualize music using different musical structural frameworks than Western ones, and who learn to participate in musical traditions aurally (beyond simply reading written notation or repeating lines of music) (2018, 329-337). As teachers recognize and understand these modes through which schools teach and reinforce Eurocentric musical practices, Hess calls on music educators to redesign their classes in ways that center more diverse musical traditions (2018, 342-343).

Offering an alternative to the music classrooms typically found in the United States, and to combat the underrepresentation of students of color in elective music classrooms, music education scholar Ruth Gurgel applies Ladson-Billings’s culturally relevant pedagogy (2015). Gurgel first points out that students who are not enrolled or engaged in music classes are often still engaging music elsewhere in their lives, and music is often a central component of their
identities. What teachers can do, then, is actively recognize the value of all types of musical participation and center a diversity of practices, especially those represented among their students, in their classrooms. Creating culturally relevant music classrooms validates students’ cultures and identities as meaningful and welcome in schools.

Like Hess, Gurgel outlines how students’ bodies and voices are disciplined into Western European elite cultural standards in the traditional United States music classroom. In her classroom ethnography, she found that students wanted to engage in “challenging, clear, [and] interesting” musical experiences, which teachers can only provide if they are able to communicate with their students about expectations and assessments in a culturally relevant way and if they provide students with a structure within which students can guide their own learning processes. In her theorization of a culturally relevant music classroom, however, Gurgel does not go so far as to decenter the Western European canon. Instead, she describes how this canon can be taught using cultural tools that are drawn from the communities to which the students belong:

The application of Ladson-Billings’ theory of academic achievement to the area of music includes obtaining knowledge about and performing music from the Western European classical canon. This is the knowledge that presently allows students to audition for most music schools and enter into music teacher education programs, should they so desire. Importantly, the students in this study described not only their willingness, but also their desire to make music from within the Western European tradition. (2015, 65)

This approach, although student-centered, does not necessarily align with Ladson-Billings’ original tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy, which incorporate critiques of the educational systems in place.

As Gurgel finds, many students (and often their parents as well) expect and desire traditional Western European music education. This is the only musical training that has historically been valued by public schools as well as by institutions of higher education, and, as Hess points out, over time, students internalize the external value placed on elite, Western
European music (see also Good-Perkins 2021). Yet, Gurgel’s approach does not encourage students or teachers to question why, historically and structurally, elite Western European music and its accompanying pedagogical traditions are so entrenched in public schools. Furthermore, the approach that Gurgel describes is indicative of the approach that many well-intentioned music educators adopt in their own classrooms. While moves towards a more student-centered pedagogy are present, many teachers stop short of the critical component.

In their application of culturally responsive pedagogy to music education,28 music education scholars Constance L. McKoy and Vicki R. Lind connect with the research of Gay. They develop a theory of culturally responsive music pedagogy that is similar to that of Gurgel but that develops the pedagogical benefits of an underlying connection to students’ cultures further. Like Gurgel, McKoy and Lind recognize the pedagogical value of drawing on students’ cultures in the classroom:

Ultimately, the goal of culturally responsive pedagogy is to improve the academic experiences of all students by providing equitable experiences in the classroom. We can re-envision our classrooms in ways that allow us to move away from an exclusively Eurocentric model to a more inclusive process, one that allows all students opportunities to access learning in ways that are respectful and congruent with different ways of knowing. For music education, this involves broadening the curriculum to include diverse music genres and also looking at different ways of promoting musicality. (2016, 30)

McKoy and Lind further elaborate that:

A culturally responsive approach to music education means valuing what students already know and finding ways to expand upon that prior knowledge. We are not saying that music education will become exclusively centered on contemporary music practices, nor are we calling for the elimination of Western European classical music performance. Rather, … [b]y bringing the music our students are familiar with at home into the classroom, we can build upon an already established foundation for musical understanding. (2016, 132)

This describes the culturally relevant use of students’ prior knowledge to facilitate music

28 See also Abril 2013 for the application of culturally responsive pedagogy to music classrooms.
learning.

From this foundation, McKoy and Lind delve into the connection between music learning and cognition in a similar way to Hammond, pointing to the cognitive need for new material to be presented in a format that is comprehensible within students’ past experiences. McKoy and Lind advocate for a music learning system that reflects language acquisition inasmuch as “learners should have frequent and extended aural engagement with music in order to understand the syntax of musical communication before they are expected to decode music staff notation” (2016, 43). Yet, as Hess also points out, music classrooms maintain a structure that is based on “traditional performing ensembles (i.e., band, chorus, orchestra)” that create music using European notation, in a format that reinforces notions of tabula rasa pedagogical theories, and that exclude cultural practices that emphasize or exclusively use aural musical transmission (2016, 44).

As an alternative, McKoy and Lind describe how culturally responsive music pedagogy recognizes that:

cognition involves changes that occur in all areas of cognitive processing as a consequence of our experiences with others as we build on the cultural practices and traditions of our cultural communities. Specific facets of culture such as social engagement and communication are important to cognitive development and account both for variations in the definition of intelligence across cultures and considerations of variance in the methods and modes of knowledge construction among different cultural communities.

Extensive aural experiences are central to the process of cognition in music and lead to greater musical understanding. While we, as music educators, are responsible for helping [students] to be able to understand and decode standard and devised musical notation, we also must be careful that we don’t unintentionally create barriers to that greater understanding by requiring students to read standard notation before they’re ready or by devaluing the role that aural learning plays in the music making of many cultures. (2016, 55)

This philosophy also aligns with the lighter engagement of Gurgel that recognizes the pedagogical benefits of cultural engagement but does not necessarily enact a full prioritization of
the diversity of cultures and pedagogies available to educators. McKoy and Lind implicitly reinforce the notion that school music programs should ultimately teach Western European practices (like “standard notation”) and that aural practices are only valuable insofar as they help students feel welcome in and capable of accessing that elite, Western European (again, White supremacist) culture.

Music education scholar Emily Good-Perkins outlines a critique of culturally responsive teaching that emphasizes its colonialist shortcomings:

Within the field of music education, the seemingly innocent emphasis on standards, musical literacy, and the elements of music, among other things, have provided a neo-liberal glossing over of the ways in which these goals and their Eurocentric origins allow for perpetuated racism. Of course, musical standards are good. Why would a teacher or music teacher education program say otherwise? Why shouldn’t we emphasize the elements of music and musical literacy? The inherent problem with this discourse is that it implicitly privileges the Western classical music knowledge system thereby deeming “bridges” necessary. Children, whose musical cultures fall outside of the Western classical epistemology, come to believe that their musical cultures are only important enough as a bridge to more appropriate school knowledge. In this form, culturally responsive music teaching, therefore, allows for the reproduction of hierarchical relationships between dominant knowledge systems – reinforced in school settings – and the knowledge systems of students’ cultural and familial backgrounds. (2021, 13)

Maintaining a pedagogical approach that is driven by standards and music literacy inherently upholds a Eurocentric approach to learning and to culture as it uses non-Western European cultures as access points to elite, Western European forms of knowledge.

McKoy and Lind do emphasize the importance of music in individual identity as well as cultural identity, a facet of relating to music that is especially salient to young people as they navigate youth cultures. As they point out, “People use music as a means to establish personal and social identity. Music serves a variety of functions that are at once common across cultures and uniquely specific to each one” (2016, 35). While music may not be more connected to culture than any other academic discipline, and while the separation of music from other arts is Eurocentric understanding of music, music does hold a special place in the lives of many young
people in the United States. Because students often come to school with such an extensive knowledge of music from their homes, places of worship, social groups, and other communities, students enter school with vast frameworks for understanding and engaging with music.

At the same time, however, music can be an area with an especially expansive “hidden curriculum” that teachers often inadvertently reinforce through their own backgrounds (approximately 80% of K-12 teachers in the United States are White) and through training in culturally homogeneous teacher education programs (2016, 72-73). To address this disparity, music teachers in particular must be reflective, work on their biases, and be critical of their perpetuation of biased systems (see also Good-Perkins 2021). McKoy and Lind encourage teachers to draw on the musical expertise of their students and of the local communities to fill gaps in their own knowledge. They also encourage teachers to structure their classrooms as democratic spaces in which students work collaboratively to build musical knowledge and skills, and they encourage teachers to shift the focus from the quality of the music being produced to the experience of music-making (McKoy and Lind 2016).

Moving beyond these pedagogical theories that gained traction in the late 1980s through the early 2000s and that were limited in their rejection of Eurocentric learning outcomes, Good-Perkins applies culturally sustaining pedagogy to music classrooms (2021). Like Alim, Paris, and Wong, Good-Perkins goes further than discussing how teachers might implicitly or explicitly teach Western European musical standards through diverse cultural practices to a culturally diverse audience. To Good-Perkins, “Culturally sustaining pedagogy requires that educators challenge the White gaze in teaching and research. By doing so, racist structures and practices can be revealed and dismantled” (2021, 13). In her history of music education in the United States, Good-Perkins details many of the ways in which music education in public schools, from
its inception in the eighteenth century, has classified, ranked, and disciplined students, the sounds they produce, and how they use their bodies while making that sound. Her emphasis on connecting today’s methods to their historical origins comes from her conviction that:

To discuss how music is taught in K-12 schools in the United States within a framework of culturally relevant pedagogy without recognizing the broader, historical, philosophical, and epistemological influences allows for the perpetuation of neo-colonialist discourses about music and culture. (2021, 109)

These elite, Western European (i.e., White supremacist) cultural standards have survived into current music education standards that guide classrooms and teacher training programs today. Change requires deep programmatic reconceptualizations and constant self-reflection on the part of teachers and administrators.

Through her classroom ethnography, Good-Perkins finds that “[t]he implicit message the students internalized was that their musical epistemologies were inappropriate for this particular [school] music setting” (2021, 109). Furthermore:

School music values, rooted in colonialism and European bourgeois ideals, delineate the “appropriate” way to listen to music, experience music, and make music. Although these values clashed with the students’ own musical “ways of knowing,” they had accepted them as the dominant discourse. (2021, 115)

Like Gurgel’s research, Good-Perkins’s classroom ethnography also demonstrates that students internalize the implicitly communicated hierarchies of cultures that are communicated through school music pedagogies. Good-Perkins, however, pushes farther than Gurgel and finds that this elevation of elite, Western European musical practices in schools and the subsequent association between these practices and schools places students’ wellbeing at risk: “[s]ome students … responded to this alienation by retreating, thus feeling inhibited in their musical expression. Others responded to the alienation by reacting and thus subjecting themselves to discipline” of their bodies, voices, and modes of expression (2021, 115). This violence against students of color in music classrooms is amplified by other structures in schools, like tracking and school-to-
prison pipelines.

By connecting these hierarchies not only to broader societal hierarchies but also to specific, colonial histories and theories of music pedagogy, Good-Perkins is able to form a more incisive critique of school music programs that more accurately and honestly recognizes the extent to which White supremacy continues to be enacted in music pedagogies. In doing so, Good-Perkins lays bare many of the ways in which music educators continue to reproduce, knowingly or unknowingly, the White supremacist notions of cultural hierarchy in their own classrooms. For example:

Embedded within traditional American music teaching curriculum are Western classical aesthetics and values which delineate acceptable ways of receiving and making music. While these aesthetics and values certainly provide meaning for many, the unquestioned veneration of these values at the expense of other music epistemologies is problematic. In the area of vocal pedagogy, the traditional emphasis on “pure” head voice and the quiet listener, both in body and in voice, allows for the racialization and marginalization of diverse students in music classrooms. … Remnants of these discourses are woven into the fabric of contemporary music practices but unrecognizable as such. However, because of these normalized discourses, children continue to be excluded from music classrooms. This exclusion oftentimes occurs on the epistemological level. (2021, 111)

In addition to bodily comportment, many pedagogies, like the Kodály method, the Orff method, and the Suzuki method, rely on a colonial understanding of music making that places aural music as less evolved than notated Western European music; this ideology justifies using aural music as an entry point for children to “elite” musics, as children within this pedagogical framework are also seen as analogous to the primitive.

Engaging with Nina Sun Eidsheim’s theorization of sound and power (2019), Good-Perkins finds that the discourse of “appropriate” and “inappropriate” appears in school music programs, categorizing and ranking students’ musicalities in racialized ways (2021, 18). This parallels the larger systems of standards-based testing and the exclusionary education models that Youdell analyzes. Good-Perkins states that:
Culturally sustaining music pedagogy, therefore, if enacted within a Western classical framework, will continue to perpetuate coloniality. Instead, [culturally sustaining pedagogy] in music education requires humility and a willingness to concede expertise and the traditional master apprentice model. As we strive to disrupt discourses of appropriateness, linguistic and musical hierarchies, deficit language like “urban” and “achievement gap,” and racist ideologies in our curriculum and practice, we must center the cultural knowledge and values of our students while reconciling the ways in which the White gaze and the White listening ear have allowed for the racialization of children of color in the music classroom. (2021, 20)

Thus, enacting any version of White supremacist pedagogies – even in hidden forms – in music classrooms in particular reinforces power hierarchies through the objectification of students as producers of sound. In this way, culturally sustaining pedagogy can only decolonize music classrooms if teachers actively and continuously interrogate dominant White, elite, Western European, aural and physical surveillance over sounds and the body.

Such colonial epistemologies are so deeply embedded in music teachers’ understandings of culture that they are often invisible to educators, especially without training that is specifically aimed at rendering these epistemologies visible. Good-Perkins offers a warning around how attempts at applying these progressive pedagogies and teaching diverse cultural practices so often fall short of their aims precisely because, while teachers are certainly capable of learning about other cultures, they are not always ready or willing to acknowledge the oppressive aims of their own White culture, nor do they always understand how narrowly applicable elite, Western European epistemologies are:

Oftentimes, unfortunately, what is implemented in the music classroom is in fact a fixed notion of culture, sometimes unrecognizable to students for whom the culture is in fact relevant. The problem, therefore, is not that teachers do not have access to relevant resources or that teachers are not creative enough to discover more relevant musical options. The problem, rather, is that the field is defined by and continues to perpetuate the assumption that musical culture can be fixed, preserved, and taught in the music classroom much like a Brahms symphony or a Beethoven sonata. … Therefore, … not only must we dismantle the Western classical hierarchy in order to allow for diverse musical epistemologies, we must find ways to change the mindset that provides the foundation for all musical teaching and learning. How might we move from a fixed notion of culture to one that is fluid, adaptable, ever-changing; one that values the
person, the student, the teacher over the score and the method? (2021, 14)

This fixed approach to culture renders other musical practices unrecognizable to the students who identify with those cultures, which risks further alienating those students.

To create a truly culturally sustaining pedagogy that decolonizes the music classroom, Good-Perkins offers an extensive list of reflective questions for educators to consider in relation to their own practices. These questions are aimed at the fundamental understanding that the fault in schools does not lie with the students nor with their families, communities, and cultures and center on the idea that, “What if the achievement gap were in fact the gaps and epistemologies of ignorance perpetuated by our educational systems? Perhaps the gaps lie in our teaching methods, curriculum, repertoire, and pedagogy rather than in students’ achievement” (2021, 16). Teachers must ensure that their practices do not hinder students’ learning, and they will know that their pedagogy is culturally sustaining when all modes of engagement are welcome and all of their students are engaged and learning:

For White educators, who are privileged by dominant discourses, the saliency of culture in minoritized children’s lives is undetectable, particularly because the children’s cultural epistemologies are not recognized within dominant epistemologies. The invisibility of minoritized students’ cultural epistemologies within normalized education discourses does not, however, make them unimportant. Quite the opposite, it is their invisibility that makes their uncovering and recognition all the more pressing. … By not recognizing students’ epistemologies within our musical framework, we can never fully equitize music education. An understanding of epistemology reaches far beyond the confines of repertoire, method, and curriculum. An understanding of epistemology accounts for the nuanced interactions, and complex manifestations of culture in every aspect of a child’s life. By understanding students’ “ways of knowing” music, we can begin to uncover the unquestioned assumptions and normalized rituals within our music classrooms that perpetuate the cycle of exclusion and contribute to the disempowerment of students. (2021, 115-116)

For teachers to do so, they must dismantle ideas of what might be “appropriate” for musical creativity and “[recognize] children’s musical cultures as ends unto themselves. From this vantage point, all knowledge systems and cultural ways of being are appropriate for school
settings” (2021, 16). As an alternative, Good-Perkins describes some possibilities for classrooms that are student-driven and centered on learning about and through diverse cultural practices. This culturally sustaining music pedagogy requires “dismantling” the invisible, normalized, colonizing music pedagogies, “expanding” the music pedagogies used in classrooms to include all cultural epistemologies, and “embracing” these epistemologies as valuable in their own right.

1.5 Guiding Research

I use these theorizations of neoliberalism to understand the political mechanisms of the music education policy, funding and advocacy, and nonprofits that I investigate in this dissertation. When investigating the content and pedagogical practices that are supported by public policies, funded by public and private groups, and implemented by nonprofits, I use the standard of Ladson-Billings’s culturally relevant pedagogy in its current iteration as culturally sustaining pedagogy. My analyses of the public-private partnerships in music education are not meant only to enumerate the deficiencies in policy and application, but to provide practitioners with information that they can use to create more equitable public education structures that support culturally sustaining classrooms.
Chapter 2: Music Education Policy History

I begin this history of Arts Education Policies in the 1960s, as this period saw two important and, as I argue throughout this chapter, deeply intertwined movements: one is the civil rights movement;\textsuperscript{29} the other is the emergence of neoliberalism. We cannot fully understand music education today without also understanding the systemic racism embedded in public education policy in the United States, despite civil rights laws like the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, a law that has continued to be reauthorized by all subsequent administrations (20 U.S.C. § 6301). With the growing penetration of neoliberal logics into public education, and despite their often-professed honorable intentions, we cannot ignore the historical place of private-sector organizations, along with other privately funded groups, in supporting oppressive forms of public education.

To create better practices, we must work to understand how nonprofits and other education groups that receive private funds can shift their articulations with public schools and reform their relationships with communities to counter structurally discriminatory forces and support pedagogies that are in the best interests of the students. Of course, students’ best interests will always be contested, but for as long as public education is underfunded by governments and private groups are serving students, entities receiving private funds will be better equipped to serve students if they are aware of the histories that have made it such that democratically elected bodies are not in full control over the education that public schools offer their students. From there, privately funded educators serving public school students can enter partnership in decision making, curricular design, and other pedagogical processes from a stance that more fully

\textsuperscript{29} While the extent of the direct and intended effects of the civil rights movement is contested, the role of the civil rights movement and the Black liberation that it symbolizes in the public imagination, especially as portrayed by news media and politicians, is substantial.
embraces the anti-racist aspirations they claim to have, as discussed in the following chapters.

In this chapter, I examine the systemic racism found in the policy framings that contribute to macroaggressions within the logic of music education implementation, keeping in mind that the language of systemic racism is not always obvious. These White supremacist policy framings help to create an environment in which music educators and administrators are more likely to commit microaggressions on community and individual levels, as I explore in the next the chapter. These policy framings also support the ideological macroaggressions promoting White culture over all other cultures. I focus in particular on two aspects of federal education policy: 1. how it deals with the role of the community and other privately funded groups in providing educational services to public schools; and 2. the difference between music as supplementary education and music as an educational requirement. These two elements determine which privately funded groups qualify to offer music education to public school students and how music education generally is funded. I then proceed to consider these aspects of education policy at the state level within New Jersey.

First, I outline some of the overarching themes found in federal education policy and national education trends, focusing on a shift in the last twenty years towards regimes of punishment and considering recent attempts to address the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Next, I explore how the privatization of education in New Jersey in particular has resulted from both federal and state policies and how this has affected music education programming in public schools. Finally, I examine New Jersey state music education policy, which is struggling to support the progressive vision it professes for a number of ideological and fiscal reasons. Uncovering these metanarratives works towards opening pathways to more inclusive learning environments by making invisible constraints visible so that barriers to
inclusion, both those created by design and by unawareness, can be addressed head on. Understanding the metanarratives is also essential to understanding the roles of various music education actors (policy makers, advocates, funders, administrators, teachers, students, and parents) and the meanings that their actions and decisions hold within the larger education systems.

Understanding the policies that I present and analyze below is key to understanding what is currently occurring in music classrooms in New Jersey. These policies shape which students access music education, who their music educators are, what content they learn in music classes, and how their families and communities are able to engage with and influence their children’s learning experiences. Likewise, these policies – and whether these policies are fully funded – determine which students are excluded from music education classes (and arts education classes more generally). Though all aspects of education policy in some way affect how students are served by schools, I focus on the components of these policies that most directly influence student experiences specifically in music classes. Demanded by federal funds and executed at the state and local levels, high-stakes tests, meant to check whether the state’s high education standards have been met, have determined school access to federal funding as well as their accreditation for the past twenty years. Yet, these tests do not account for the many factors that determine academic success, nor the many forms and areas of knowledge, nor the many ways of demonstrating student learning. Schools must also attempt to engage local stakeholders in decision making processes, a potentially strong route for creating equitable structures and inclusive learning environments. Yet, the dominance of hegemonic content in state supplied resources is sustained and the privatization of public education is a continuing process, shifting control away from communities.
2.1 The Privatization of Public Education: Federal Efforts to Fully Fund Public Education

With these analytical goals in mind, I analyze the language of the key federal education policy that has directly influenced the form and quality of music education in public schools: the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) (20 U.S.C. § 6301). ESEA is generally considered to be the first major federal policy addressing education; it was originally signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on April 11, 1965, in the midst of the civil rights movement, as part of Johnson’s “War on Poverty.” ESEA targeted low-income communities in the United States, which primarily existed at the time in rural and urban areas (not suburbs). ESEA has been updated and reauthorized by subsequent administrations to include, among other amendments to the law, increased quality of education for bilingual students (the Bilingual Education Act of 1968), the prohibition of discrimination against teachers and students based on race (the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974), the introduction of standards-based testing (the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001), and localized accountability for testing results (the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015). The vast majority of these bills have passed with bipartisan support.

In this section, I consider how ESEA and its evolutions incentivized the privatization of music education in a way that prioritized partnerships with dominant, White cultural institutions. I first examine Title III of the original version ESEA and Title IV of certain later iterations, which involve areas of education (such as music) that supplement the fundamentals (initially only English and math, though what is seen as necessary for an education has expanded greatly since 1965). I then examine Title I and the role of high-stakes testing in privatization trends. Finally, I briefly address the recent and temporary yet highly impactful American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (ARP ESSER), with initial funds
disbursed in 2020, to consider its present and potential future implications (15 USC § 9001).

2.1.1 Title III: “Supplementary Educational Centers and Services” and the Introduction of Federal Funding for the Arts

In its original iteration, ESEA was comprised of six titles. Here, I highlight Title III,\(^\text{30}\) which funded “Supplementary Educational Centers and Services.” Title III was considered to be the most revolutionary title. In this original form, Title III of ESEA was the primary way that schools might have accessed funds for music education (along with arts education and other areas considered to be extra-curricular). Title III originally funded “Supplementary Educational Centers and Services” through a matching grants program. It allocated funding to an array of programs that supplement what were considered at the time to be the basic requirements for an education: reading, writing, and math skills, which Title I has always addressed.\(^\text{31}\) By aiming to address this gap between Title I and the robust education that most parents want for their children, Title III aimed to fund programs created through cooperation between public schools and non-profit educational groups that target the needs of the local community. Thus, since the beginning of federal funding for public schools, low-income schools have been expected to partially rely on private funds to offer anything more than a basic education in reading, writing, and math.

Title III funds were distributed for “special courses in science, foreign languages,

\(^{30}\) In 1965 there were six total titles. A seventh title was introduced in 1967 addressing bilingual education. ESEA was extensively restructured under President Nixon in 1969 (20 U.S.C. § 6301).

The original 1965 structuring of ESEA was:
- Title I: reading, writing, and math.
- Title II: adult education.
- Title III: supplemental education.
- Title IV: education research and training.
- Title V: supplemental matching grants to states.
- Title VI: definitions and limitations.

\(^{31}\) Title I funds have also been applied to partnerships between arts groups and schools, especially after Title III was changed so drastically in 1967. While I discuss creative applications of these funds by schools later, here I focus on the intended application of ESEA rather than the changes and applications.
literature, music, and art,” programs for students with mental disabilities, summer programs, “common” school facilities like theaters and laboratories, programs for gifted students, and curriculum development. It was seen as “[a] way of tapping the community’s extra-curricular resources for the benefit of students – museums, concert and lecture programs, and industrial laboratories” (US. Committee on Labor and Public Welfare 1965). Especially for students in urban areas32 where cultural institutions are concentrated, this funding connected schools to the cultural, academic, and scientific institutions of their cities. A 1965 report on accessing Title III funds, subtitled “A Manual for Project Applicants,” clarified its aims and scope. It described that Title III was meant to close the gap between pedagogy research and in-school practices (U.S. Office of Education 1965). “Already Title III is rapidly becoming the symbol and the force for educational change in American education” (U.S. Office of Education 1965, 2): Title III was meant to encompass innovation in the areas of education that the more narrowly designed other ESEA Titles did not address. Highlighting the power of local groups, the report stated that Title III “offers educators and other community leaders an opportunity to contribute directly to educational improvement in their own communities as well as in the surrounding region” (U.S. Office of Education 1965, 4).

Title III stipulated that, “[w]ithin each community, public and private non-profit schools and agencies will cooperate to devise a plan and administer the program for the supplementary centers. Their services should be adapted to meet the pressing needs of each locality.” The “Manual for Project Applicants” clarified the broad scope of initiatives that may qualify for Title III funding, such as “science and art museums, theaters, music academies, opera houses, community centers, multiple purpose centers, public schools, and other cultural and educational

32 The embedded anti-rural bias is notable.
institutions” (US. Office of Education 1965, 5). In this way, the federal government recognized that funding schools through local taxes alone could not provide a robust education, and that federal taxes and private funding were acceptable ways to supplement funding and to begin bridging those gaps. It also recognized that the tools for a robust education could be found directly in the communities in which the schools were located, and that the local schools themselves should be able to identify and fill their own needs using the resources found in their own communities. While this reads as a radical stance today, the language of ESEA offers a very specific idea regarding which local institutions could help schools. By listing “museums, concert and lecture series, and industrial laboratories” as the exemplary local resources on which schools could draw, we see that the authors of ESEA expected schools to draw on dominant institutions with Western cultural and scientific values.

Future iterations of ESEA decreased funding for supplementary education, making it more difficult for schools to offer arts programs than it had been in the past. Starting just two years after ESEA was originally passed, Title III largely shifted to apply to services designed for Limited English Proficient students, with funds also allocated to teacher training. By offering the standard that underfunded schools should rely on local private institutions to supplement basic educational offerings and then removing federal funding for these programs, ESEA’s partial reliance on private funding for “supplementary” education has persisted across its reauthorizations, but without the funding necessary to offer this supplementary education to all students. A look at urban public schools today is evidence enough that Title III of ESEA did not bridge the gap between pedagogical research and classroom practices (nor has any other title made significant strides). I suggest that one of the main reasons for this persistent struggle to influence positive change is that ESEA offered a very specific idea regarding which local
institutions could help schools.

What arts nonprofits and community groups existed in Black communities in 1965, when ESEA was passed, to form partnerships with local public schools to supplement the education that they were offering? In other words, where did the authors of ESEA expect schools to turn with their new funding stream, and what exactly did these authors hope for students to gain? While I do not claim that New Jersey students were necessarily the ideal intended audience of ESEA, and I recognize that education policy varies greatly by state, there did exist multiple urban areas of New Jersey that were going through the deindustrialization and White flight so common to urban areas across the United States. In this sense, and because primary funding for education across the United States is derived from local taxes, New Jersey can, perhaps, allow us some insights regarding the quality of education available in predominantly Black urban communities nationwide.

Identifying museums, universities, and industrial laboratories in New Jersey cities in the 1960s demonstrates the connection between ESEA intentions and Western ideals of progress and innovation. The political and economic experiences in urban areas of New Jersey in the 1960s can be explored through the tensions around White flight and disinvestment that culminated in rebellions in Newark in 1967, Plainfield in 1967, Trenton in 1968, Camden in 1969, and Asbury Park in 1970. As I consider what was available to students in this area under ESEA, I will focus on the three largest cities in New Jersey according to the 1960 census: Newark, Jersey City, and Paterson, in that order.

Until the civil rights movement, public museums in the United States were centers of hegemonic, colonial culture that perpetuated narratives of White supremacy. Public museums of Black culture began to be established during and after the civil rights movement. Prior to that,
African American and African diasporic studies and architecture, planning, and preservation scholar Mabel O. Wilson writes that “private citizens, historical societies, and black colleges and universities” were the only holders of collections of Black cultural artifacts (2012, 246). Wilson describes the new, public, Black-owned museums that grew in prevalence around the Black liberation movements:

The establishment of new black museums allowed for the long-term presentation of ideas of black pride and self-improvement and for the collection of artifacts of black heritage. The new museums forged ties within the social networks and institutions’ missions. Importantly, since the founders established these new museums in the buildings that blacks owned, there was no longer the issue of white-controlled exhibition halls and their inflated fees or restrictions on time allotted for use. Liberated from these constraints, new public institutions developed exhibits and programming – a hybrid of 1940s radicalism and 1960s black cultural nationalism – that were calibrated to respond to the fast-changing civil rights era and to reach the broad constituency that lived and worked in the black neighborhoods where the museums were located. (2012, 246-257)

Quickly investigating the higher education institutions in these cities tells a similar story. Newark has housed a campus of Rutgers University since 1908 and New Jersey Institute of Technology since 1881. Essex County College was established in Newark in 1966. Jersey City has housed St. Peter’s University (the only private university on this list) since 1872 and New Jersey City University since 1927. Hudson County Community College was later established in Jersey City in 1972 through grants from the Exxon Educational Foundation. Paterson has housed William Paterson University of New Jersey since 1855. Passaic County College was also established in Paterson in the 1970s. Each of these three cities, in other words, has housed a university since the nineteenth century, with new institutions forming during the 1960s and 1970s. As with museums, we see that public institutions of higher education for the working classes of Essex, Hudson, and Passaic counties were established during and shortly after the civil rights movement in the mid-

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33 Rutgers University was founded in 1766 as Queens College, a private university in New Brunswick, where the main campus is still housed. The name changed to Rutgers University in 1845 and became a public university in 1945.
1960s through the 1970s.

Finally, New Jersey has long been an industrial hub in the US with its position between two major rivers, close proximity to New York City and Philadelphia, and access to Europe. While industries may have provided supplementary education in science and economics, they were not involved with arts education, so I will only discuss them briefly here. Industries in the United States have historically played a hegemonizing role in the lives of their employees. Then, with the deindustrialization and lower rates of employment in cities such as Paterson\textsuperscript{34} in the 1960s (Owusu 2014), even industrial cities no longer had the industry to sufficiently supplement education in urban areas.

It is not, I think, a coincidence that these shifts in the nature of cultural and economic institutions available to cities in the 1960s coincides with the revoking of national funding for supplementary education. The politicians who wrote and passed ESEA in 1965 were basing their decisions on the cultural institutions at the time, the vast majority of which supported hegemonic cultural views, likely thinking that they could rely on these institutions to reinforce the hegemonic purposes of public education. With deindustrialization and the introduction of radical Black cultural institutions and higher education institutions that catered to working class values, their education bill gained the potential of introducing Black institutions and their ideologies to public schools. Any speculated hegemonic intentions were not realized, since ESEA’s Title III funding was quickly directed away from supplementary education.

By revoking federal funding for supplementary education and forcing schools to rely on private funding instead, ESEA created an environment in which private wealth, mainly held by

\textsuperscript{34} I highlight Paterson here as Paterson holds special significance in the history of industrialism. Paterson was the first planned industrial city in the United States, an undertaking led by Alexander Hamilton in 1792, with the site chosen for its proximity to the Great Falls on the Passaic River (Paterson History 2022). Paterson’s deindustrialization, which culminated in the 1960s, was a totalizing shift in the life of the city.
White citizens, gained immense control over education in low-income areas. This allowed dominant groups to ensure that a hegemonic education continued to be funded despite the increased diversification of local organizations that occurred during the civil rights movement. Rather than maintain federal Title III funding of partnerships between public schools and arts organizations in Black communities such as those explored above, future iterations of ESEA redirected Title III funding to address issues of language in schools (ESL programs) and teacher development. Decision-making power was thereby transferred from democratically elected and local groups to private, almost exclusively White-owned foundations and donors. Public schools in low-income urban and rural areas suddenly had to rely exclusively on private funds to maintain arts education programs. While arts groups certainly still existed within communities, the idea was now introduced that pedagogical decision-making could be in the hands of private foundations and philanthropic groups and not public schools and their democratically elected boards. These private funders could now decide which arts groups received funding to provide educational services to public schools.

Funding for supplementary education through ESEA lasted only two years, but its brief existence at the cusp of neoliberalism and abrupt ending offers insights into the philosophy behind education funding that has extended since the civil rights movement until today. Political scientist and Africana studies scholar Lester K. Spence describes that “[t]he economic shocks” that lead to the privatization of public services “occur at the same time people of color begin to garner political power in the United States and elsewhere” (2015, 114). Considering education specifically, desegregation created a new set of anxieties among White families. The question that continues to preoccupy adherents to hierarchized racial structures is how to maintain the higher social, political, and economic status of White families when Black and White families
are now theoretically drawing on the same pool of education resources. With the myth of resource scarcity that underlies capitalism, White neighborhoods became convinced that giving more to Black communities necessitates taking away from White communities. While this is true in a sense (increased taxes without loopholes generally accumulate more income from individuals who hold more wealth, especially within progressive tax structures), any anticipated effect on wealthier families would not lead to any deterioration of predominantly White schools, which is the argument that has been weaponized by White communities against Black and Hispanic communities.

White families have gone to great lengths to prevent their wealth from being used to benefit Black children (and, in their minds, thus be unable to benefit their own children). When White and Black communities live within the same school district, White communities have removed their children from public schools and, with their political power, cut taxes for public schools, so that White families do not have to pay to upkeep schools for Black children; public schools are then either radically underfunded or shut down due entirely to lack of funding. Other White families move out of districts that also serve Black students, again taking their wealth, and leaving the schools without enough funding to properly run. White families who keep their children in schools with Black children create educational tracks so that resources within the school are funneled to the classes that mainly enroll White children and removed from those that mainly enroll Black children. This process began with school desegregation and proceeded slowly over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, with the worst of the poverty and divestment being seen in urban areas across the United States in the 1990s (for more on these trends, see, for example, Ladson-Billings 2004).

In tandem with ESEA and Johnson’s War on Poverty, the 1960s saw a shift in public
discourse around race and poverty was redefined in the public eye to be a cultural issue, rather than a socioeconomic issue of systemic racism, as many understood desegregationist policies to signify the end of systemic racism. A “post-racial mentality” began to enter public thinking, which claims that society is now free from any institutional forms of racism and thus no longer needs to consider race (Au 2015; Dixson et al 2015; Scott 2009). Furthermore, practices of integration have repeatedly been called into question for their veiled reinforcement of racist educational structures, for example, by Dei, who notes, “The dominant paradigm of integration, as presented in opposition to segregation, masks questions of who is expected to be integrated into what and at what costs” (2014, 25).

Post-racialism is also a major component of the neoliberal mentality that justifies selective education. Within a state of intellectual, financial, and infrastructural inadequacy, low-income public schools that mainly serve minoritized students in particular struggle to offer their students the quality of education that their high-income peers typically receive. As I’ve argued, democratic, central bodies, namely state and local governments, relinquish power to private entities in an attempt to overcome the insufficient educational offerings that persist due to the legacies of racist policies and their contemporary post-racial successors. Acting from a variety of positions, private or semi-private organizations have been entering the education scene with the intention of providing the services that are missing from low-income, urban schools. The people determining which services exactly are missing and how they should best be provided are rarely from the community to which the school belongs. Members of the community frequently protest their lack of involvement in the decision-making process. Many aid programs impose neoliberal standards of education, especially valuing privatized education efforts targeted at a

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35 For one instance of this phenomenon in the context of Native American Residential Schools, see Troutman (2009).
limited number of students over public efforts that aim to reach all students (Au 2015; Dixson et al 2015; Scott 2009).

Following this public and private divestment from Black communities, a handful of private foundations stepped in under the tradition of philanthropy to provide supplementary education in low-income areas. In New Jersey today, the primary private funders of music education are the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation (local to New Jersey) and Save the Music Foundation (nationwide). This redistribution of monetary control through ESEA from local schools to private philanthropists is an early mechanism of neoliberal governance that has increasingly penetrated public education over time. I discuss philanthropy and nonprofits further in the following chapter.

One of the major theories that has spurred and supported post-racial policies is the class-based theory of the “culture of poverty.” The idea of a “culture of poverty” was spearheaded by politician Daniel Patrick Moynihan (U.S. Dept. of Labor, Office of Policy Planning and Research 1965) in his publication, “A Nation at Risk,” and later within academia by sociologist William Julius Wilson (see, for example, Wilson 1978, 1987, 1996, 2009). Wilson has repeatedly argued for over forty years that class culture, not race, has created and maintained Black people as working class. Wilson claimed that such factors as joblessness, which deprives people of skills, solidify families as low-income. To fight this, Wilson suggested race-blind means of addressing class divisions, such as universal healthcare and government sponsored jobs (Wilson 1978, 1987, 1996, 2009).

While better resources in low-income areas, including universal healthcare and sufficiently funded public schools, would certainly raise living standards within working class communities, they would not be able to address generations of racial bias in other areas, such as
hiring practices and the whitewashed histories that textbook authors choose to portray.

Furthermore, as with post-racialism, attributing poverty to culture hierarchizes cultures by attributing financial success to lifestyles associated with the White upper-class. As gender studies scholar Miranda Joseph notes:

Moynihan equates the now fearsome groups—sexual and racial minorities …—with the groups that are now relatively nontargeting to the status quo, that is, white ethnic groups … Moynihan implies to his colleagues that government funding, the lack of censorship, will induce those funded to make that same equation, to read themselves into the narrative of assimilation, and I think he is not entirely wrong. Moynihan holds out assimilation as a beneficial carrot to potentially disruptive social agents, and many of us run after it, with complex consequences." (Joseph 2002, 28)

With the goal of assimilation, politicians like Moynihan create and interpret policies like ESEA to strongly guide groups that do not conform to middle-class Whiteness towards conformity.

Title IV is now more directly applicable to music education, though; it is an echo of ESEA’s Title III. Title IV was overhauled in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), adding the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (in addition to an extensive section on drugs, alcohol, and violence, which has since been reduced and rearranged). The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) expanded Title IV to include: A. Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants; B. 21st Century Community Learning Centers; C. Expanding Opportunity Through Quality Charter Schools; D. Magnet School Assistance; E. Family Engagement in Education Programs; and F. National Activities. Most directly relevant to arts education are A, B, and F (United States Congress House Committee on Education and Labor 2015).

Part A, Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants, can be applied to music

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36 “The purpose of this subpart is to improve students’ academic achievement by increasing the capacity of States, local educational agencies, schools, and local communities to—
“(1) provide all students with access to a well-rounded education;
“(2) improve school conditions for student learning; and
“(3) improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students.” (2015, 168)
education programs as part of supporting a “well-rounded education” to all students (United States Congress House Committee on Education and Labor 2015, 172). Funding for arts integration into STEM programs is also available (2015, 178). Part B, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, supports centers that offer education outside of school hours and that work towards meeting state-wide student learning standards and involving students’ families in their education (2015, 183). These centers are typically non-profits, but can also be other organizations in the event that a relevant non-profit is not present in a community (2015, 184). Finally, Part F, National Activities, includes a number of grants for innovative education programs, especially in high-poverty areas. This part includes the Assistance for Arts Education fund, which is a carry-over from the NCLB Arts in Education fund. This fund is designed for “arts education for disadvantaged students and students who are children with disabilities” (2015, 233). Assistance for Arts Education grantees must “coordinate, to the extent practicable, each project or program carried out with such assistance with appropriate activities of public or private cultural agencies, institutions, and organizations, including museums, arts education

37 “The purpose of this part is to provide opportunities for communities to establish or expand activities in community learning centers that—
“(1) provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including providing tutorial services to help students, particularly students who attend low-performing schools, to meet the challenging State academic standards;
“(2) offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities, such as youth development activities, service learning, nutrition and health education, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, arts, music, physical fitness and wellness programs, technology education programs, financial literacy programs, environmental literacy programs, mathematics, science, career and technical programs, internship or apprenticeship programs, and other ties to an in-demand industry sector or occupation for high school students that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students; and
“(3) offer families of students served by community learning centers opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children’s education, including opportunities for literacy and related educational development. (2015, 183)

38 “Awards … shall be used for a program (to be known as the ‘Assistance for Arts Education program’) to promote arts education for students, including disadvantaged students and students who are children with disabilities, through activities such as—
“(A) professional development for arts educators, teachers, and principals;
“(B) development and dissemination of accessible instructional materials and arts-based educational programming, including online resources, in multiple arts disciplines; and
“(C) community and national outreach activities that strengthen and expand partnerships among schools, local educational agencies, communities, or centers for the arts, including national centers for the arts.” (2015, 233-234)
associations, libraries, and theaters,” prioritizing “national nonprofit organizations” (2015, 234). An “eligible national nonprofit organization” is one that is supported by workers at the state and local levels and that “demonstrates effectiveness or high-quality plans for addressing arts education activities for disadvantaged students or students who are children with disabilities” (2015, 234). This specific grant is the section of ESSA that is most specifically applicable to music education, although most federal funding for music education now arrives through the heavily funded Title I.

### 2.1.2 Title I: High-Stakes Testing and Systems of Punishment

In response to “A Nation at Risk,” in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s and 1980s, many schools began collaborating with music education departments and music departments at local colleges and universities to improve their music class offerings and align their teaching philosophies more closely with the dominant ideologies on teaching found in higher education (Apfelstadt 1988). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Arts Assessment, established in the 1970s to determine whether arts classes being offered were effective, investigated music education specifically for the fourth time in 2016. The results of the 1997 NAEP Arts Assessment were used to further develop the National Standards for Arts Education, originally published in 1994 (Cassidy 2000).

The 1990s, which saw the peak of the multiculturalist movement, also saw the Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994, the Clinton administration’s reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. § 6301). The Improving America’s Schools Act reiterated the importance of an arts education for all students. Multiculturalism itself was based on an idea of pluralism that avoided histories of conflict, in line with liberal ideologies that ultimately do not effect change (Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995). In the same year, the federal
legislation entitled Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 (20 U.S.C. § 5812), aimed at helping states and local school districts establish education reform frameworks, was the first federal law to classify arts education as a core subject (U.S. Department of Education 2003). The National Standards for Arts Education were released for the first time in 1994 in conjunction with the improved status of arts education through the Improving America’s Schools Act and Goals 2000.

Education sociologist Kenneth Elpus describes the conflicts surrounding the development of educational standards for arts education. Both the Improving America’s Schools Act and Goals 2000 went, for the most part, unenforced due to early political disagreements around the implementation of area-based standards. The majority of arts educators weighing in on the subject of arts standards at the federal level supported the development of arts standards as a way to move the arts away from the peripheries of education and qualify them for better funding as “core” subjects. They used arguments about the value of arts education in providing students with creative thinking and higher-order thinking skills. Conversely, the few arts educators who were vocal at the federal level in their opposition of the development of arts standards criticized the goals for being unrealistic and dominated by teaching rather than driven by learning. Within two years of the release of the National Standards for Arts Education, twenty-four states had adopted standards that were similar or identical to the federal standards, resulting in the elevation of arts education to a core subject in these states. Elpus demonstrates, furthermore, that a significantly higher number of local school districts adopted arts graduation requirements; this was especially true for districts in states that did not have arts mandates prior to 1994. Still, the number of music courses offered by high schools specifically did not change overall, perhaps

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39 These debates were in the context of the “Mozart effect” study (Rauscher, Shaw, and Ky 1993). This popularized the idea that studying art, classical music in particular, has concrete academic benefits in other areas.
because schools that were expanding arts education offerings expanded non-music subjects instead (2013b).

Within the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), arts education is defined as an essential component of a “well-rounded education.” This makes music education eligible to receive Title I funding, which is the largest pool of funding within the bill and which goes towards providing equitable access to the defined “well-rounded” education for all students. Schools can also receive funding for arts education through an Assistance for Arts Education fund and 21st Century Community Learning Centers (retained from NCLB), in addition to “Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants” for arts in STEM education (United States Congress House Committee on Education and Labor 2015). These are, however, largely hortatory federal policies with no consequences for failing to offer arts classes.

Title I comprises ninety-nine pages of ESSA, so here I focus only on the components germane to my arguments regarding music education. Testing for subjects other than math, English, and sciences that receive Title I funding must:

- involve multiple up-to-date measures of student academic achievement, including measures that assess higher-order thinking skills and understanding, which may include measures of student academic growth and may be partially delivered in the form of portfolios, projects, or extended performance tasks (2015, 26)

These tests must be applied to all students and must have appropriate testing options for students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Regardless of whether there is only one summative assessment or multiple smaller assessments leading up to a final assessment, students must ultimately receive only one score “that provides valid, reliable, and transparent information on student achievement or growth” (2015, 27). Assessments must also “produce individual student interpretive, descriptive, and diagnostic reports … that allow parents, teachers, principals, and other school leaders to understand and address the specific academic needs of
students” (2015, 27).

Finally, testing data must be disaggregated by demographic groups (as long as the groups are large enough for statistically significant data) to ensure that schools are serving all of their students. Any local district is allowed to create their own means of assessment in line with the criteria outlined in ESSA. Some schools may administer an “innovative assessment.” States invite districts to apply to administer an “innovative assessment” being tested by the state. Up to seven districts may be placed in a three-year demonstration period after which their ability to administer the “innovative assessment” may be extended for up to two additional years. If the “innovative assessment” is shown to align well with student learning standards and to be reliable and valid, the state (or consortium of states) testing the assessment can publish best practices for that form of assessment to be disseminated by Departments of Education.

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40 Demographic groups include:
(I) each major racial and ethnic group;
(II) economically disadvantaged students as compared to students who are not economically disadvantaged;
(III) children with disabilities as compared to children without disabilities;
(IV) English proficiency status;
(V) gender; and
(VI) migrant status (2015, 27)

41 Assessment criteria:
(I) be aligned to the State’s academic content standards under paragraph (1), address the depth and breadth of such standards, and be equivalent in its content coverage, difficulty, and quality to the State-designed assessments under this paragraph (and may be more rigorous in its content coverage and difficulty than such State-designed assessments);
(II) provide comparable, valid, and reliable data on academic achievement, as compared to the State-designed assessments, for all students and for each subgroup of students defined in subsection (c)(2), with results expressed in terms consistent with the State’s academic achievement standards under paragraph (1), among all local educational agencies within the State
(III) meet the requirements for the assessments under subparagraph (B) of this paragraph, including technical criteria, except the requirement under clause (i) of such subparagraph; and
(IV) provide unbiased, rational, and consistent differentiation between schools within the State to meet the requirements of subsection (c). (2015, 32)

42 Examples of possible “innovative assessments”:
1) competency-based assessments, instructionally embedded assessments, interim assessments, cumulative year end assessments, or performance-based assessments that combine into an annual summative determination for a student, which may be administered through computer adaptive assessments;
(2) assessments that validate when students are ready to demonstrate mastery or proficiency and allow for differentiated student support based on individual learning needs. Otherwise, local districts must select one of the state-approved tests. (2015, 85)
Title I schools, which receive Title I funding to offer basic educations to their students, include at minimum:

I. not less than the lowest-performing 5 percent of all schools receiving funds under this part in the State;
II. all public high schools in the State failing to graduate one third or more of their students;
III. public schools in the State described under subsection (d)(3)(A)(i)(II) [having to do with the percentage of English Language Learners] (2015, 37)
as well as any other schools the state decides to include. Students attending “failing” schools\textsuperscript{43} are permitted to enroll in other district schools that are not failing, with priority given to low-performing students from low-income families (2015, 39). States ultimately create School Performance Reports, or “school report cards.” for the schools in their state, composed of the students’ disaggregated data on testing and graduation rates, with methodologies outlined and “failing” schools identified. Additional data on “school climate”\textsuperscript{44} and teacher qualifications are also published, among many other statistics. These “report cards” must be written in a style that is accessible to the general public and published openly on the websites of each local education agency (2015, 50).

Funding from Title I is allocated for schools with a significant percentage (at least 40% for full support, though schools with less than that are also supported) of students who are identified as requiring increased financial support (namely, from low-income families). Funding can be used to bolster in-school programs and to add extra-curricular programs that supplement

\textsuperscript{43} “Failing” schools are “schools identified by the State for comprehensive support and improvement” (2015, 39).
\textsuperscript{44} This includes:
- “measures of school quality, climate, and safety, including rates of in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, school-related arrests, referrals to law enforcement, chronic absenteeism (including both excused and unexcused absences), incidences of violence, including bullying and harassment” (2015, 48);
- “preschool programs” (2015, 49);
- and “accelerated coursework to earn postsecondary credit while still in high school, such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses and examinations, and dual or concurrent enrollment programs” (2015, 49).
the in-school learning and that work towards giving the students the instruction needed to meet a “well-rounded education” as outlined in the student learning standards. Funding can also go towards: professional development for educators serving these students; initiatives to increase parental involvement in students’ education; and offer “violence prevention programs, nutrition programs, housing programs, Head Start programs, adult education programs, career and technical education programs, and comprehensive support and improvement activities or targeted support and improvement activities” (2015, 66). Title I requires that schools involve parents and families in education decision-making and requires that state governments provide local districts with the tools required to ensure that all parents, working to address barriers such as language and time (2015, 68-71). Any parent is allowed to opt their children out of these high-stakes tests.

Additionally, now that Title I of ESSA defines music education as part of the “well-rounded education” that ESSA aims to support, the funding connected to other titles is more easily construed as applicable to music education. Title II is especially important as it provides funding for professional development for educators and school administrators. Since ESSA included music education as a component of a “core” education, music educators may qualify for federal funding for professional development through Title II. These trainings range from certifications and courses in education, curriculum development, and technology integration, to development and auditing of high-stakes tests and proper use of data, to creating equitable training, recruitment, and hiring processes (2015, 119-123).

In line with the professed local emphasis of ESSA, states are required to “meaningfully consult with teachers, principals, other school leaders, paraprofessionals …, specialized instructional support personnel, charter school leaders …, parents, community partners, and other organizations or partners with relevant and demonstrated expertise” in professional
development for educators (2015, 124). Educators can also receive funding for training in community engagement to “effectively engage parents, families, and community partners, and coordinate services between school and community” (2015, 128). Additional federal grants are available to “high-need schools,” mainly geared towards bolstering school leadership and meeting literacy standards, with an eye towards US history and civics (2015, 130-153). This ongoing and local teacher training can potentially rectify older racist and institutionalized forms of music teacher training as more research is completed on decolonial music education practices such as culturally sustaining music education.

Still, this funding is tied to high-stakes testing. Philosopher and historian Michel Foucault created a framework for understanding the implications of high-stakes testing and the resulting disciplinary measures imposed on the schools that do not meet national standards. He describes the French education system in which, similarly to the United States system, “the examination is at the centre of the procedures that constitute the individual as effect and object of power, as effect and object of knowledge” (Foucault 1975, 192). It is by examination that institutions are able to form hierarchies and distribute individuals into particular levels of the hierarchies. Foucault describes how examinations classify the individual, in this case, the individual student as well as the individual school district as decided by geopolitical lines of race and class. High-stakes tests classify individual students and schools as either some level of acceptable, or as failing. In other words, in order to receive the funding necessary to meet the basic New Jersey education requirements, the federal government dictates that low-income schools must take on the near-impossible task of preparing for the test without first gaining access to the necessary

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45 The definition of “high-need school” changes throughout the law, depending on the section of the law being discussed. It typically refers to schools with at least 30, 40, or 50 percent of students belonging to families with incomes below the poverty line. (2015)
resources. High-stakes tests thereby pressure such schools to use a disproportionate amount of their resources to teach only skills that appear on the test, namely, math and English, with other “core” subjects gradually being added to the standards-based testing system. Students from low-income families are forced to spend the majority of their time in school practicing rote memorization outside of any context that may be applicable or familiar to their daily lives. Because the tests are standardized, the lowest scoring schools will fail, regardless of what their scores are.

ESSA claims to rectify the issues around top-down testing mandates found in NCLB by shifting the responsibility of designing high stakes tests from federal to state governments. This purports to make tests more applicable to local districts, though states are still mandated to intervene in “failing” schools, schools with low graduation rates, and schools with large performance disparities among demographic groups; as with NCLB, states that fail to intervene are not eligible for ESSA funding. This shift from federal test design to state test design was, in part, an appeasement of conservative groups that have criticized ESEA, and especially the increased federal involvement in NCLB, for taking over a public program that was described (loosely) in the constitution as being a responsibility of state governments. In all ESSA components, funds are given to each state based on their alignment with ESSA standards; states then administer funds based on their own internal allocation systems.

If or, more realistically, when low-income, racial and ethnic minority schools fail to meet the national standards decided by classed and raced examinations on a standardized curve, they are financially punished. As Foucault states:

[Punishing] measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the ‘nature’ of individuals. It introduces, through this ‘value-giving’ measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved. … The perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions
compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it normalises. (Foucault 1975, 183)

Thus, through localizing primary funding and through laws like ESSA, the state and federal governments punish local school districts based on their marginalized racial, ethnic, and class status, further culturally and financially marginalizing these groups.

Since the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 was passed, however, high stakes testing has diminished public funding available for a robust education in low-income areas and therefore has been accompanied by the semi-privatization of public schools and their faculty. The post-racial logic of NCLB denies the relevance of histories and structures of violence and oppression against communities of color. Meanwhile, NCLB created an education environment ripe for privatized, national education complexes to replace local education systems by closing schools that repeatedly fail standardized tests, which are culturally specific to the White middle- and upper-class (Scott 2009; Alexander 2012; Dixon, Buras, and Jeffers 2015; Spence 2015; see Youdell 2006 for international iterations of this phenomenon). Within the repercussions of NCLB and the subsequent Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, “failing” schools, which most frequently serve low-income students of color, are in desperate need for funding to satisfy even students’ basic physical needs.

The current state of urban education has a long history of policy research, a body of literature that has exploded since *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Sociologists have repeatedly, and with varying conclusions, traced the arc of desegregation (or attempts at desegregation) and arguable re-segregation. Inequalities in resources and outcomes are evident between schools that have a majority of White or Asian, high-income students and those that have a majority of Black, Hispanic, or Indigenous, low-income students. Scholars, policy

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makers, and community members still debate over whether to continue pushing for more comprehensive integration or, instead, to push harder for better resources for low-income, segregated schools that educate mostly underserved, minoritized students (Orfield and Thronson 1993; Ladson-Billings 2004; Reardon and Owens 2014; Orfield et al 2014; Delmont 2016; Kirkland and Sanzone 2017). As it stands, the basic educational needs of many low-income schools are not being met due to racialized failures of education policy and resource distribution (Baker and Weber 2016; United States Commission on Civil Rights 2018). Furthermore, increasing proportions of resources are being spent on English and math due to pressures from high-stakes standardized testing to the detriment of other subjects, especially the arts.

Education funding in the United States is drawn primarily from local tax dollars, a situation which reinforces divisions of class along lines of race, as local taxes are indexed to real estate values. Dei notes that, “in asking local communities to take responsibility for the education of the youth, we are fed with innocent discursive practices that avoid talk of institutional accountability to local communities when schools fail youth” (2014, 21). These funding conditions contribute to sustained racial achievement gaps, the roots of which are not addressed by colorblind policies like NCLB and ESSA (United States Commission on Civil Rights 2018; see also U.S. Dept. of Labor, Office of Policy Planning and Research 1965; Wilson 1978, 1987, 1996, 2009; Kozol 1991; Dixon, Buras, and Jeffers 2015). ESSA provides supplemental funding for schools based on the math and English scores of high-stakes tests, in order for schools to reach an adequate funding amount and provide an adequate education.

Conversely, ESSA revokes funding and eventually accreditation from schools that fail these tests. The vast majority of “failing” schools serve low-income, minoritized student bodies. Because federal funding is given or revoked based on supposedly objective tests, NCLB and
ESSA are both portrayed as “colorblind.” According to this logic, uniform tests that judge the quality of education allow students access to academic success regardless of other societal or economic factors. This “colorblind” logic, however, denies histories and structures of violence and oppression against communities of color. It does so by encouraging a zero-tolerance learning environment, in which even legitimate reasons for and modes of addressing sub-standard work are not considered when disciplining students or their schools (including reasons as dire as food scarcity or housing instability). Additionally, the high-stakes tests that determine access to funding are repeatedly shown to be biased in favor of the experiences of middle-class, White students (Baker and Weber 2016; McGuinn 2016; Ladd 2017; United States Commission on Civil Rights 2018).

2.1.3 The American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (ARP ESSER)

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States public and the federal government began to acknowledge not only how desperately underfunded schools are, but that the funds needed to fully support schools do, in fact, exist. Public discourses about “learning loss” (a more appropriate term for this might be “slowed learning”) and emotional trauma became ubiquitous, especially in states like New Jersey that maintained virtual learning environments across all public schools from the start of the pandemic in March 2020 through the end of the 2020 to 2021 school year in June. As an early response to this crisis, congress created the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) on March 27, 2020 (15 USC § 9001). Over the subsequent two years, approximately $189.5 billion was allocated to ESSER, to be distributed to schools until September 30, 2024 (schools are allowed to continue spending their

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47 “Colorblind” logic also places much of the responsibility for student success on the teachers, even when many of the learning challenges among low-income students have roots outside of the classroom.
money after this date) (U.S. Department of Education 2021). For comparison, for FY 2020, only $26,323,926 was allocated to ESSA (National Education Association and Education Policy and Practice 2019); yearly, ESSER funding is, on average, approximately 1,600 times the amount of ESSA funding, for the four and a half years that ESSER is lasting. New Jersey alone is receiving $4.3 billion in ESSER funds (Arts Ed NJ 2021c).

Groups like Arts Ed NJ, Arts ARE Education, and the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) have been coaching music educators and other administrative and community advocates for music education on the use of ESSER funds (Arts Ed NJ 2021b; 2021c; email communications). Because of the widespread concerns around “learning loss” and because schools have a high degree of flexibility around how they use ESSER funding, these music and arts education advocacy groups are concerned that schools will revert to an NCLB-mentality, focusing all resources on math and literacy at the expense of other programs. ESSER funding, however, is plentiful. If allocated to music, ESSER may become a bridge for formerly privately funded, underfunded, or defunded music programs to now be funded by public, locally controlled monies going forward. This would require sustained advocacy work leading up to the end of ESSER funding in schools and local communities if the communities do value music education in schools. The ultimate use of ESSER funding by schools and any sustained changes to public education funding allocations will be interesting and important to follow over the upcoming years. Data on the local use of ESSER funding in New Jersey are not yet available.

In conjunction with their advocacy for ESSER funding going towards music education, and especially as we near the end of ESSER dispersions, groups like the NAfME and Arts ARE Education are also encouraging educators and administrators to apply Title IV funding to music education (Palmarini et al 2022; NAfME 2022; email communications). Title IV can continue to
supplement local taxes once ESSER ends, making the continuation of full funding for music
education programs more realistic going forward. Still, while locally and democratically
controlled funding is one component needed to create an equitable music education program, this
alone is not sufficient to enact culturally sustaining music education programs. As such, now is
also the time for music educators and administrators to reconsider their pedagogies as they plan
ways to grow and maintain their programs.

2.2 The State of New Jersey’s Role in the Privatization of Public Education

In this section, I first consider how New Jersey applies current federal education
legislation. New Jersey is typically considered to be among the states that are most supportive of
public education, with generally high student test scores, graduation rates, and college
matriculation rates. While New Jersey has followed federal policy and, as a relatively wealthy
state with a high cost of living, many New Jersey communities have funds to support strong
music education programs, New Jersey also suppresses education improvement efforts in
minoritized communities. Through state takeovers of local school boards, the New Jersey State
government undermines and defunds local democratic efforts to determine educational paths for
their own young people. In music classrooms specifically, New Jersey’s adoption of unrealistic
standards supported by hegemonic lesson plans further reinforce class boundaries along lines of
race.

Ultimately, this dichotomy of experiences between high-income (predominantly White)
and low-income (minoritized, predominantly Black and Brown) New Jersey residents highlights
the racialized and classed failures of federal education policy. The post-racial language of federal
policy leaves room for highly racialized interpretations of how federal policies are enacted at the
state level. Without explicit mandates shifting education away from its historical role as a
normalizing force towards hegemonic values, state support for public education continues to reinforce forms of education that reify and reproduce existing societal hierarchies.

2.2.1 New Jersey’s Enactment of Federal Policy

New Jersey has extensive state laws for enacting the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), along with documentation to guide local districts in applying for and implementing ESSA funds. The flexibility and location specificity of ESSA was marketed as the main difference between ESSA and NCLB. As such, most of the state documentation on ESSA applies to how local school districts can work with their communities to develop plans to use ESSA funds that are relevant to their local situations. First, I review the sections of this guidance that can potentially support music education. Then, I review the various standards for community engagement when using ESSA funds.

One key document is the three hundred and ninety-five-page “Every Student Succeeds Act: New Jersey State Plan,” published in August 2017 (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2017a). Arts education and, more specifically, music education are mentioned a few times throughout the document, always included in the “well-rounded education” that ESSA aims to support. Part of the way that New Jersey purports to support the arts is through its connection to forms of literacy, for example in ways that English Language Arts (ELA) literacy efforts can be expanded to other areas if proven successful:

The results of the analyses [of ELA literacy efforts] will inform a plan for professional development that will include research-based instructional strategies and the effective use of technology to provide personalized learning opportunities for students through the development and can be expanded to other content areas, including arts, science, social science, career and technical education and physical education.” (The State of New Jersey Department of Education 2017a, 94)

Because arts education and music education are mentioned as components of a “Well-rounded and Supportive Education for Students” (Section 6.1, 115-132), the New Jersey Department of
Education (NJDOE) will support “English, reading/language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, or physical education” (2017a, 118). The focus of the support that the NJDOE provides to Local Education Agencies (LEAs), which are mostly local school districts, is on data gathering and analysis and on recommendations for how to leverage federal funds. The purpose of the data gathering is to leverage that data to provide evidence of areas of student need in access to and rigor of courses. Leveraging data, however, can be difficult and result in misleading analyses without complete data and culturally relevant categories being placed under consideration.

The NJDOE and other advocacy groups encourage engagement especially with Title IV Part A, addressing “Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants.” The NJDOE recommends that, “To maximize the use of Title IV Part A funds, NJDOE will encourage LEAs to partner with entities, including: nonprofits, higher education institutions, museums, libraries and community organizations to expand upon programs and services offered to students” (2017a, 120). This language is very similar to the language originally used in ESEA Title III for supplemental learning in 1965. It promotes partnership with cultural institutions, though the cultural institutions available in the 2010s and 2020s look very different than those available in 1965.

ESSA’s Title IV Part B also now influences supplementary education by funding “21st Century Community Learning Centers.” These Centers are defined as enrichment opportunities

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48 Title IV Part B Part 1 allocates specific funds for Rural and Low-Income Schools. New Jersey, however, being the most densely populated state, has only one or two districts each year that qualify for these funds, and they do so in very low amounts (2017a, 157-158). As such, I will not incorporate Part 1 funding into my discussion.

49 New Jersey specifically has the following aims for its 21st Century Community Learning Centers:

The vision for New Jersey’s 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is to support the development of high-quality, out-of-school time programs through community learning centers.
that take place outside of school hours and that focus on helping students meet core academic standards, highlighting reading and math as the priority. Part of these funds go towards training program administrators and educators to meet federal standards (2017a, 151). 21st Century Community Learning Centers can be virtually anything, with a preference for nonprofits as elaborated in ESSA verbiage. This opens opportunities for local arts education institutions with histories of community engagement to partner with schools in offering arts education. These centers, though, are meant to offer instruction only outside of school hours, making these extra-curricular learning opportunities optional and only serving some students.

All Learning Center NJDOE grantees must fall into either “STEM; Civic engagement; Career awareness or exploration; or Visual and performing arts” (2017a, 153). LEAs must prove that the student(s) in question cannot access these services elsewhere (2017a, 154-155). Finally, while NJDOE relies on these groups to help educate its students, “NJDOE neither certifies the

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50 The official purpose of 21st Century Community Learning Centers as defined by New Jersey is to: offer, during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session, academic remediation and enrichment activities in tandem with a broad array of additional services, programs and activities that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students, including youth development activities; service learning; nutrition and health education; drug and violence prevention programs; counseling programs; arts, music, physical fitness and wellness programs; technology education programs; financial and environmental literacy programs; mathematics, science, career and technical, internship or apprenticeship programs; and other ties to an in-demand industry sector or occupation for high school students. The centers also offer families of students served, opportunities for active and meaningful engagement in their children’s education, including literacy and related educational development. (2017a, 152)
quality of activities provided by the organizations nor endorses any organization listed” (2017a, 156). This leaves a huge amount of variability in the quality of education that students might receive from outside, privately funded groups.

Performing arts appears in the “Every Student Succeeds Act: New Jersey State Plan” on the extended list of indicators recommended for assessing school quality. Eventually, the school quality is shared on the publicly accessible School Performance Reports, or “school report cards,” which are often used by parents within marketized public education structures to decide where to send their children to school. This list of indicators was compiled in 2016 by extensive meetings and focus groups with “professional organizations, parents, students, teachers, administrators and other stakeholders” (2017a, 204). Of these stakeholders, the ones that most consistently brought up the need to consider the availability and quality of arts education when assessing schools was the New Jersey Arts Education Partnership (NJAEP) and, to a much lesser extent, New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), as well as approximately one hundred survey respondents51 and parent advocates. Among the many NJAEP recommendations was the request that “NJDOE should collaborate with the New Jersey Arts Education Partnership and other arts education stakeholders to provide a detailed listing of materials and resources available from arts organizations to assist schools and districts support the implementation of local plans” (2017a, 290).

Here, schools are being assessed on their arts education offerings. While “Enrollment/availability of arts curriculum” is currently included in School Performance Reports, future reports may also include such indicators as “School partnerships/collaboration,” and the more specific arts education indicators of “Enrollment in arts curriculum by subgroup,”

51 The only other topic that received as much attention from survey respondents appeared, in this report, to be the removal or diminution of standardized testing from schools and from teacher reviews.
“Arts teacher/student ratio,” and “Full-time equivalent teacher assignments for each arts discipline” (2017a, 280). This is different than the high-stakes testing that qualifies schools for funding based on student test scores. At the same time, school “report cards” do also rely on data on high-stakes test scores; all of the statistics are taken together to determine whether schools are meeting standards set by ESSA to qualify for funding. Though this aspect of the report card – whether and to what extent schools are offering arts classes – is not based on individual student performance, it is an iteration of the same theme. In order to receive funding, schools are pressured to partner with private music education entities, regardless of pedagogical quality, with the State preferring partnerships with non-profit businesses that rarely if ever serve all students.

As mentioned above, however, community stakeholders do have a voice in determining which groups form partnerships with public schools. In December 2017, New Jersey published a forty-five-page document titled, “Local Stakeholder Engagement Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): A Guide for District and School Leaders,” to help schools use ESSA Title I funding. For extracurricular groups to receive ESSA funding, schools must create systems of “meaningful engagement” between these groups and their students’ education. This document offers an important definition of “meaningful engagement:”

Meaningful engagement means: representation of all stakeholder groups in the process of developing and implementing local plans for improving outcomes for students. In New Jersey, meaningful engagement, beyond mere consultation, drove a more sustainable and representative ESSA State Plan development process. Therefore, the NJDOE encourages schools and districts to integrate meaningful engagement in their annual planning process. (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2017b, 5)

The guide explains exactly how schools should engage with which local stakeholders, including individuals, community-based groups, and public and private institutions.52

52 This list of stakeholders includes:
Teachers; Principals; Other school leaders; Parents/family members; Paraprofessionals;
Specialized instructional support personnel; Administrators; Other appropriate school personnel;
Much of the “Local Stakeholder Engagement” guide outlines best practices and key questions for maintaining a consistent, bidirectional flow of information, with schools eliciting and incorporating stakeholder needs and knowledge and with schools providing digestible policy information to stakeholders so that they know what is possible:

These experiences show that when district, school and systems leaders approach stakeholder engagement as a mandated, superficial process, they are less likely to achieve their goals. However, when leaders encourage and invite stakeholders who are integrated in the local community to contribute to policy decisions about schools, students are more likely to be supported and achieve success. (2017b, 5)

The guide includes extensive lists of techniques for engaging low-income families, immigrant families, families where the adults are not fluent in English, families in rural areas, and families of students with disabilities, as well as students, educators, policy makers, and community partners. (2017b, 24-30). The guide then offers a compilation of public and private resources on supporting engagement with stakeholders. This list, too, emphasizes resources on engaging families and parents, though there is considerable information on engaging community groups and policy makers (2017b, 32-36). Next, the guide includes definitions of key terms found throughout ESSA that are related to stakeholder engagement that can be used by schools as they engage with stakeholders to aid in clear communication (2017b, 38-41). Finally, the guide includes a “Stakeholder Meeting Checklist” and a “Comprehensive Engagement Checklist,” the former of which is also accompanied by its own set of links to outside resources on facilitating inclusive and accessible meetings from a variety of ideological standpoints (2017b, 42-44).53

53 Some of the linked groups are strong proponents of the philosophy of ESSA, advocating for the use of assessments to track learning progress towards meeting state-wide student learning standards. Educators for High
This emphasis on stakeholder engagement and extensive documentation on how to best engage stakeholders underscores the potential influence of families and communities in making decisions about public education. This also points to the need for parents, students, teachers, and communities to have the capacity to work with local districts in reviewing school “report cards” (as described in Title I), assessing student needs, and developing plans of action. Additionally, it generates an expansive yet localized understanding of what the influencing community might entail. Miranda Joseph observes that:

Conservatives enabled a dismantling of the apparati of the state that help to produce the nation as a community … and thus, despite their highly nationalist rhetoric, helped to relocate the power to constitute social formations from the state to the market. Meanwhile, the pluralism of the liberals, despite their nationalist rhetoric, promoted the elaboration of the nonnational niched communities embraced by post-Fordist capital. (2002, 25-26)

In shifting education decision making from democratically elected local school boards to broadly construed community entities, New Jersey’s enactment of federal education policy leaves music education in low-income school districts teetering between the control of national market forces (namely foundations, corporations, and nonprofits) and local expertise (namely educators and families).

2.2.2 Privatization in New Jersey: State Takeovers of Public Schools and the Proliferation of Charter Schools

The privatization of public education cannot be fully understood without understanding the process that formally introduced the overt handing-over of the public governance of Standards, for example, is a group of educators who back standards-based testing and the Common Core and are opposed to teachers’ unions, and who want to work with policy makers on education reform (Educators for High Standards 2017). Some of the other links were to corporate websites, like Kaplan, outlining their own best practices for partnering with schools. Still other links were to websites that focused more on the nature of partnerships and how to make them most productive. The Learning First Alliance (Learning First Alliance) and the IDEA Partnership (The IDEA Partnership 2016), which are comprised of a variety of stakeholder groups, each offer advice on eliciting effective consultations from stakeholders when creating plans for ESSA funds. The Leadership Conference Education Fund also has documentation for parents and local leaders to leverage how ESSA is implemented in their communities to be as supportive of equitable practices as possible (Ariza et al 2017).
education to private entities: state takeovers. State governments began passing laws in the late
1980s through the 1990s that give them the power to take control of local school districts. While
this process is now seen across the country, New Jersey was the first state to take control of a
local school district, passing the law permitting state takeovers in 1987 and first taking over a
public school district in Jersey City in 1989; this district is still not fully returned to local control.
The state later took control of, among others, Paterson Public Schools in 1991, returning control
in 2021, Newark Public Schools in 1995, returning control in 2017, and Camden Public Schools
in 2013, still under full state control. These cities all have prominent Black and Latin American
communities. States claim to take control of school districts to improve student outcomes,
primarily when outcomes are thought to be hindered by corruption or mismanagement at the
local administrative level.

The success of these takeovers depends on a variety of factors, most significantly the
extent to which administrative corruption really contributed to the undesirable student outcomes
to begin with. In reality, students’ performance in schools was more directly a result of
increasing racial and class segregation in deindustrialized areas (Spence 2015, 78). Most, if not
all, of these state takeovers have been viewed generously by local administrators as ill-
conceived, more accurately viewed as the racist undermining of minoritized groups’ local control
over schools by the dominant White politicians at the state level, and ultimately as failures. State
takeovers are direct descendants of the racial tensions and disinvestment in Black urban
neighborhoods in the mid- to late-twentieth century. State takeovers in New Jersey came about
after decades of political tensions, beginning with the corrupt White city officials who refused to
appoint Black leaders, a situation that culminated in the Newark Rebellion of 1967.
Unsurprisingly, Hudson and Passaic Counties, home of Jersey City and Paterson (early sites of
state takeovers), see the least access to arts education in northern New Jersey (Arts Ed NJ. n.d.b).

Political scientist Domingo Morel analyzed the first five years following the takeover in Newark (1995-2000), for example, and found that the takeover had hugely detrimental effects on the Black community (2018). Shortly after their state takeovers, a series of lawsuits were filed by Jersey City\textsuperscript{54} and Newark\textsuperscript{55} against the State of New Jersey for the unconstitutionally underfunded education budgets. They repeatedly and successfully argued that local taxes were not enough to fund a “thorough and efficient” education in low-income areas and that the state government should contribute funding. Despite the courts’ rulings that were in the cities’ favors, state politicians and representatives of middle-class White communities resisted providing the extra funding, a problem that still persists. These racially and economically powerful groups demanded that accountability measures be put in place to monitor the use of state funds in low-income school districts.

As Morel describes, “Legislators incorporated mechanisms that would monitor not only student academic achievement but also district governance and fiscal management. It was the first time in the state’s history that student academic achievement and district governance would come under such scrutiny” (2018, 26). This history of maintaining racial and class hierarchies through controlling education is directly related to the high-stakes, standards-based tests that are now required for obtaining Title I funding. While ESSA allows local districts to create their own testing regimes, many minoritized students are still in schools that are under control of the State, eliminating the ability for local, democratically elected school boards to control the educational experiences of their students.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Robinson v. Cahill}, 67 N.J. 35 (1973) 335 A.2d 6
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Abbott v. Burke}, 100 N.J. 269 (1985) 495 A.2d 376
In the state takeover of Newark Public Schools, schools were under fire for a plethora of problems with the actions of the Board of Education, mainly including a select few problems of corruption among administrators and a host of problems resulting from a lack of sufficient funding. The takeover has since been described as a thinly veiled colonization of the Newark schools, including their democratically elected offices. Rather than use the state takeover to properly fund a “thorough and efficient education” for all students using state funds, school budgets were drastically cut. Among the hundreds of layoffs, the vast majority were Black Newark residents (Morel 2018). To supplement the public funds, the state gathered some funding from private foundations, including the Victoria Foundation and the Prudential Foundation, though the total amount collected remained far from the amount that was detracted from the original, publicly funded budgets. These privately-collected funds started the Newark Fund for Excellence, a nonprofit that would begin working to manage the expanding private component of school funding (Committee Meeting 1996).

As in the case of Newark, state takeovers of school districts are often quickly followed by the privatization of public education as the state attempts to control and limit public education budgets. As Missouri House Representative Maria Chappelle-Nadal describes, “The pattern, here, is that the companies will almost always profit whether the students perform well or not” (2007, 19). She goes on to explain:

The win-lose reality of the competitive model in education can more fittingly be described by the laissez-faire approach to economics – “an economic model that assumes the existence of self-interested consumers” (in this case, politicians and education management firms), who wish to maximize their profits and political control, while maintaining the least amount of state government interference and accountability. (2007, 20)

Privatizing education does not improve students’ experiences in schools as privately funded groups are responsive primarily to capital, not to members of the school community.
The privatization of public education continues around the country in many sectors with the rise of the neoliberal privatization of traditionally public services. Aside from partnerships between public schools and private organizations, like those classified as 21st Century Community Learning Centers in ESSA, to which I dedicate the following chapters, the most common insertion of private groups into public education is through charter schools. Charter school proliferation often follows state takeovers because of their semi-privatized funding structures. Charter schools can also be funded by ESSA Title IV, in addition to receiving state and local funds and private funds, drawing money away from fully public schools in the same district. With their acceptance of private funding, they are allowed more flexibility than fully tax-funded public schools. While charter schools are no longer proliferating at the rate that they were in the 2000s through early 2010s, their presence in communities, especially in urban communities, is still strong, and they still hold considerable influence in their districts.

Boutique charter schools that offer high quality education in culturally relevant ways do exist, caring for the students and their communities. Most charter schools, however, are parts of large networks that are run by corporate-style bodies wholly removed from the lives of the students they serve. This latter group of charter schools fails to take education research on serving low-income, minoritized students into account. Rather, they opt for impossibly high student standards in areas that overlap with state content standards and strict behavioral standards. These charter schools’ norms are not pedagogically relevant and can even be pedagogically detrimental; like federal funding, they are enforced through a system of punishment (Scott 2009; Dixon, Buras, and Jeffers 2015; Spence 2016, 78-82). All charter schools draw on the same public funds as public schools, further limiting the amount available to area public schools. Charter schools do not need to follow as stringent testing criteria as public
schools under ESSA, since they primarily draw funds from Title IV, not Titles I or II. Additionally, charter schools in twenty-one states are still able to hire uncertified teachers (Spence 2016, 78-82; Quillen 2020).

Many public schools, especially those that serve minoritized students from low-income families, also enforce systems of punishment that involve strong police presence and the school-to-prison pipeline. This is an obvious, traditional method of societal punishment and an unacceptable way of treating young people. What we are seeing with charter schools, however, is evidence of neoliberal shifts towards privatization that still fail to address the racism that undergirds systems of societal punishment. While we still have public schools that are overpoliced and underfunded, we now also have another system for punishing Black and Brown students – the charter school – that masquerades as colorblind and is more difficult to alter in some ways, because their semi-private status reduces their accountability to community voices.

As with the national education standards enforced through “colorblind” high-stakes testing, charter schools uphold high standards enforced through “colorblind,” punishment-focused repercussions. These repercussions do not account for out-of-school influences on student behavior and focus, like hunger, housing, and community violence. Furthermore, because charter schools often force local public schools to close by drawing away funding, and because charter schools are not obliged to serve all students as traditional public schools are, students who are expelled from charter schools often end up bouncing between charter schools or schools far from their own neighborhoods and communities. The expectation that these students are bad students grows, and their capabilities become diminished (Spence 2016, 78-82; for a review of this massive body of research, see Weinstein 2018).

Teach For America (TFA), a nonprofit that places people without teacher certification in
educator roles in low-income schools, is often discussed in similar terms: TFA and privatized charter networks are frequently accused of taking advantage of schools deemed “failing” by NCLB/ESSA standards. TFA, for example, replaces well-trained and often highly respected faculty from local communities with transplanted, untrained, temporary, young adults who are typically from middle-class, White backgrounds, who often accept even lower pay, and who are often unaware of local histories. This is done to cut budgets of schools, as long-time faculty members have higher salaries funded locally, while TFA teachers are minimally paid and are funded by the TFA program. By these avenues, rather than meeting the reasonable demands of qualified teachers, an increasing number of underfunded publicly funded schools are forced to dip into private resources to hire uncertified teachers through TFA who often have vastly different backgrounds than those of their students (Spence 81-82; White 2016; Trujillo et al 2017).

In this way, the privatization of music education in public schools has introduced a new iteration of education patterns that started with desegregation. As with desegregation in the 1960s, Black teachers are continuing to be pushed out of education and replaced by culturally unaware, often less qualified White teachers. Taking staffing decisions out of the hands of local school boards who answer to their constituents in low-income districts has become a national practice: high stakes tests remove the funding necessary for schools to offer the state education requirements, so they outsource to non-profits, or else they close entirely and are typically replaced by semi-privately funded charter schools (Dixon, Buras, and Jeffers 2015). These teacher replacements come in tandem with high teacher turnover in low-income schools that have high-stress working environments (low pay, large classrooms, and inadequate material resources) (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond 2019).
In a 2020 study on arts in charter schools (Quillen 2020), the Education Commission of the States and the Arts Education Partnership reported that charter schools are less likely than public schools to offer arts education despite, or perhaps due to, their private funding and looser regulations. This phenomenon is also occurring despite charter schools having more curricular freedom than fully-public schools and thus the ability to create and implement innovative arts education programs. At the same time, there are select individual charter schools that are taking advantage of their freedom and administering rigorous arts programs and integrating arts holistically throughout school curricula. This is mostly seen in charter schools that specifically specialize in the arts. Most of the arts charter schools described in the report are not part of charter school networks, while those that are part of networks are part of state-wide (not national) networks. This pattern is in line with Representative Chappelle-Nadal’s analysis that capitalist approaches to education, as seen in national charter school networks, do not serve the best interests of the students, but rather serve their own economic profitability. This pattern is also in line with classed and racialized notions of talent, in which some select students are able to gain access to arts education based on “talent,” which is a code for “access to prior (often private) training.”

This “Arts in Charter Schools” report is an example of how, with proper funding, schools can benefit from the lessons learned in innovative or experimental schools. The report is short (only eight pages), written in accessible language, and full of evidence-based recommendations for how schools can build and support comprehensive arts education programs. Yet, without proper funding that is controlled by the communities with their students’ best interests constantly at the fore, the innovative programs cannot be adopted, nor can they be adapted to effectively utilize local resources. Additionally, adopting innovative arts education programs within schools
that emphasize punishment to control grades and behavior will still replicate systems that disadvantage students from low-income and other marginalized communities.

While these are problems across all disciplines in schools in low-income communities, the colorblind practices exhibited as a result of state takeovers and, in a connected way, by most charter schools are exemplary of the broader whitewashing that is prevalent in the privatization of education. Civil rights education policies like ESSA and its predecessors, though by no means perfect in writing or in implementation, do focus funding on students from low-income families and involving families and communities in education. Privatized funding for public education, on the other hand, has lower or no standards for inclusivity and, on a national level, is profiting from disinvestment in public services.

2.2.3 New Jersey’s Support for Music Education

Music education policy in New Jersey is, at first glance, quite progressive. New Jersey adopted academic standards, titled the Core Curriculum Content Standards, in 1996, before NCLB and high-stakes testing. New Jersey revises these standards every five years; the most recent revision was implemented in 2021. Revisions are done by “panels of teachers, administrators, parents, students, and representatives from higher education, business, and the community, [and] the standards are influenced by national standards, research-based practice, and student needs” (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2017c). These standards are meant to define a “Thorough and Efficient Education,” as guaranteed by the New Jersey state constitution, with the aim of preparing students for college educations and careers (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2017c). The report that the Arts Education Working Group developed was the first to recommend the adoption of the Core Curriculum Content Standards in the Visual Arts by all public schools as well as to recommend requiring an arts education for all
high school students (Americans for the Arts 2017, 9).

The 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Visual and Performing Arts (NJSLS-VPA) are based on the following vision:

The New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Visual and Performing Arts (NJSLS-VPA) describe the expectations for literacy and fluency in five artistic disciplines: dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and media arts. Each artistic discipline has independent skills, knowledge, and content. However, as a field, the arts are interdependent, connected, and inclusive. The NJSLS-VPA are designed to guide the delivery of arts education in the classroom with new ways of thinking, learning, and creating. The vision of all students having equitable access to a quality arts education is only achieved when the five arts disciplines are offered continuously throughout the K–12 spectrum. (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2020, 1)

This vision describes an approach to education that recognizes and explores the benefits of fostering the inherent musicality of all students (Campbell 2010; Kingsbury 1988). My investigation of the state of arts education in New Jersey, however, leads to the conclusion that this vision is not supported in many schools.

New Jersey mandates that “At the middle and high school level, students are required to demonstrate proficiency in only one … subdiscipline” (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2020, 3). In New Jersey, the middle school mandate is that students either continue studying an instrument that they began studying in elementary school to reach an “intermediate” level, or begin studying a new specialization to reach a “novice” level. The state explicitly dictates that any middle school student may choose to study music and all public middle schools must be equipped to offer a music education to the level of “intermediate:” “By the end of grade 8, students are expected to communicate with competency in their self-selected arts discipline” (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2020, 5). Students will reach an “intermediate” level in NJSLS-VPA’s four areas of artistic processes: creating, performing/presenting/producing, responding, and connecting (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2020, 5).
The standards for music in eighth grade appear, at first glance, quite rigorous for this level, and open to diverse interpretations of how they might be applied. While more open than previous standards, they do still rely on culturally specific notions of music. Here is an example from each of the four areas:

1. Creating: “Present the final versions of documented personally and collaboratively created music that demonstrates craftsmanship and originality to others. Apply compositional techniques to achieve unity and variety, tension and release, and balance to convey expressive intent.” (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2020, 74)

2. Performing: “Apply collaboratively and personally developed criteria for selecting music of contrasting styles for performance and explain expressive qualities, technical challenges and reasons for choices.” (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2020, 74)

3. Responding: “Identify and compare the context of programs of music from a variety of genres, cultures and historical periods.” (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2020, 75)

4. Connecting: “Demonstrate how interests, knowledge and skills related to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.” (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2020, 76)

Ideas of “unity and variety, tension and release, and balance” are not relevant to all musical practices, for example.

Out of these standards, the state, in the past, has built a model curriculum. Unfortunately, the model curricula offered by New Jersey have not been updated since NJSLS-VPA was created in 2020, so I will continue looking at the existing model curriculum, which was created in 2014 for the previous set of standards. The eighth-grade model curriculum organizes units (Creative Process, Performing, Aesthetic Responses & Critique Methodologies, and History of the Arts and Culture), which roughly correspond to the new areas, into highly specific “Student Learning Objectives” (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2019a). Some examples of these objectives are:

1. “Analyze how harmony evolved from the late Romantic Period (e.g., Strauss, Mahler), to the Second Viennese School (the group of composers comprised [of] Arnold Schoenberg and his pupils) to early 20th century music (e.g., Stravinsky).”

2. “Perform an improvised solo using the blues scale over a twelve-bar blues
3. “Distinguish among artistic styles, trends, and movements in dance, music, theater, and visual arts within diverse cultures and historical eras.”

4. “Create an original piece of music in the style of Musique Concrète using appropriate digital audio software. Compare and contrast the process and final product to Musique Concrète created in the 1940’s to [that] created using today’s computer technologies.” (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2019a)

Now we see that the content of the model curriculum is both rigorous and relies heavily on dominant cultural approaches to music education content.

I analyze the model curriculum within the context of low-income public schools with large populations of racially minoritized students. Researching education in low-income areas necessitates an understanding of the intersection of race and class in the United States. Of particular relevance is the place of adolescence within this intersection. In Policing the Crisis, cultural theorist Stuart Hall and his coauthors provide a productive starting point for this consideration (1978). They clarify and expand on the Marxian logic of class reproduction to encompass:

class in a racially divided and fragmented form. … Race has become a crucial element in the given economic and social structures which each new generation of the working class encounters as an aspect of the ‘given’ material conditions of its life. … Black youth begins in each generation from a given class position, produced in an objective form, by processes which are determinate, not of their making; and that class position is, in the same moment, a racial or ethnic position. (Hall et al, 1978, 346-347)

As Hall also describes, education plays a key role in constructing racial and class hierarchies. Youth within low-income, racial and ethnic minority groups are ushered through education complexes that are “not of their making;” rather, they are designed by dominant powers, namely, state, and federal governments. In the United States, these education complexes have functioned to reproduce the socioeconomic positions of low-income minority groups. They do so partly through the distribution of cultural knowledge and enforcement of a cultural identity deemed suitable for the societal position towards which low-income marginalized groups are firmly
guided (Hall et al, 1978, 340-7). This approach to education justifies exclusively teaching hegemonic norms in public schools by declaring marginalized cultural practices unrelated, if not detrimental, to academic success (Warikoo & Carter 2009).

These larger structures of subjugation are at play within the model curriculum for eighth grade music classes. The content of this model curriculum suggests that any music education supplied by the state will likely be constricted to a normalizing version of music education. The learning objectives appear arbitrarily restricted to a hegemonic framework that focuses on various genres of European art music, American popular music, blues, jazz, and folk music. There is no explicit objective dedicated to local, student-driven, globally diverse, or otherwise alternative forms of music making or learning and thus no explicit place for them within this model curriculum. Rather, students are expected to engage such topics as the Second Viennese School, which are largely irrelevant to the students’ lives and for this reason difficult for students to engage in a way that is meaningful to their learning experiences. The purpose of middle school students studying such a topic is to inculcate knowledge of an upper-class European intellectual tradition in all students.56

Even with sufficient financial resources, the content of this model curriculum is so advanced and so densely packed that teachers who wish to include other content will not have the class time to do so without extensive revisions (e.g., Shockley Bisplinghoff 2002; Merritt 2016; Santoyo and Zhang 2016). This prioritization of hegemonic music to the exclusion of all else reinforces the norm of education in the United States as it spotlights hegemonic culture while leaving no space for other histories, narratives, or pedagogies (e.g., Gramsci 1971; Berman 1984).

56 See also Good-Perkins 2021, 133-138, for a decolonial analysis of core music standards.
In addition to the content of the model music curriculum, the implementation also highlights how public education structures reify the dependent relationship between class and race in New Jersey. As it stands, many low-income schools are not able to offer the state requirements for a “thorough and effective” education, due to racialized failures of education policy and resource distribution. Understanding the failures of public-school funding structures is necessary to understand the implementation of music education in low-income public schools. State governments are responsible for organizing public education. Every state has chosen to relegate primary financial responsibility to local governments, be they at the city or county level. Because local taxes fund schools, low-income areas are not able to spend as much per student as high-income areas. Due to the strong racial and economic segregation in New Jersey at the local level, localizing the tax base reinforces divisions of class along lines of race (Baker and Weber 2016; United States Commission on Civil Rights 2018). Because of this, state and federal efforts do exist to address the resulting vastly uneven distribution of education resources (Pelissero and Morgan 1987; Morgan and Pelissero 1989).

All states have passed bills that provide supplementary state funding for education, though they are rarely effective largely because these state-wide bills are so often underfunded. Some districts that are in need of funds are often excluded from receiving supplemental aid while some wealthy districts receive more than enough. In other cases, states distribute funds to all districts, providing an even greater excess to wealthy districts while low-income districts still do not have adequate funding (Stein and Hamm 1987; Pelissero and Morgan 1992; Howell and Miller 1997). In the summer of 2018, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy updated the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) of 2008 with the goal of making it more equitable by providing equalizing aid to address the difference between local taxes and the amount of funding needed to
provide the basic New Jersey education requirements (State of New Jersey 2018). In 2019, education scholar Bruce D. Baker published an analysis of this funding act that found that, while the funding is directed towards under-resourced schools, these schools are still not receiving enough state or local funding to adequately support each student in meeting the NJSLS (Baker and Weber 2019).

Low-income schools that do manage to provide some music education will likely not have the resources to develop and apply more progressive curricula. Still, as outlined previously, NJSLS-VPA demand that, in order to provide the promised education, schools must be able to instruct all students from sixth to eighth grade in the arts to an “intermediate” level, and all four identified areas of focus within the arts must be available to all students (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2020). Without proper funding allocated to hire trained instructors and provide them with regular professional development opportunities, and without access to well-kept instruments and technology, and classroom time and space allocated for music classes, students will not have access to their promised, albeit hegemonic, education. Thus, due to the limited financial resources, in the instances that low-income students are able to access music education, the form of education reinforces the very cultural hegemony that creates the social hierarchies that marginalize low-income and racial and ethnic minority groups.

Such an elite approach to education is contradictory to the vision of NJSLS-VPA. Considering the implementation of music education in New Jersey in contrast to this professed vision allows us to see how public education, touted and often marketed as a social equalizer, actually opens opportunities for select groups of students without addressing systemic restrictions to access that other groups experience. Because music education is typically at the

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very bottom of state education priorities to the point that it is often neglected, its content and implementation become the canary in the coalmine, testing the adequacy of education provided by a given district. The inadequate education that many low-income schools are financially forced to offer reinforces the pathway that leads marginalized students towards low-income employment and perpetuates, in Hall’s terms, “the class position” as, also, “a racial or ethnic position.” (Hall et al 1978, 346-347). By examining the content of the model music curriculum and the funding structures that determine implementation and access, we see how public education manages to hierarchize, purposefully making impossible the theoretical potential for public education to equalize.

It is encouraging that New Jersey is now partnering with such groups as the Amistad Commission and the Holocaust Commission to create new curricula that will prioritize historically accurate portrayals of the contributions of people of color and the role of racism in shaping our world. As it stands, however, the model music curriculum content, with its emphasis on the Western canon and the elision of genres that are immediately relevant to many students, normalizes a hegemonic music education experience for students throughout New Jersey, while its implementation restricts access to even the basic requirements for a basic, “thorough” education in low-income, minoritized communities.

2.3 Conclusion

On a national level, through the privatization of education in low-income areas and the accompanying diminishing of democratic, locally-run, culturally relevant education systems, music education becomes a carrot, its removal a stick, within the various levels in which these systems of punishment act. In a system where music education is privatized even in public schools, not all students are served, and music becomes co-opted by external private and state
groups into an instrument of politics and power. The students who are able to access music classes are typically the ones who are already doing well in school. Their academics often improve even more, which is an exciting outcome for these music programs and may, in some cases, lead to the expansion of these programs, a perspective I discuss more in subsequent chapters. Conversely, students who already struggle in school also miss out on the additional social and academic skills that school music programs can offer when those music programs only service an elite subset of students. The selective nature of privately funded music programs, thus, perpetuates the systems of punishment that recreate the class and racial gaps in each new generation of students.

This history demonstrates that arts education is one of the many areas of Black life where successful control is not only underplayed but actively attempted to be undermined by dominant political forces. Federal and state governing bodies remove power from public educators and communities and shift it into private hands in order to maintain White dominance. The patterns we see in arts education today are not new or unpredictable, but rather the products of slowly and purposefully built public policy that has been finding ways to disrupt efforts towards equity in education even if it means placing education out of the reach of democratic processes, especially since the civil rights movement and the liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, when United States democracy began progressing (albeit slowly and unevenly) towards more thorough and meaningful incorporation of Black voices.

Going forward, researchers, policy makers, and advocacy groups influencing music education must rethink how their work is done. Rather than creating colorblind theory that masks the maintenance of racial hierarchies, policy makers need to base their decisions on how the local communities envision good educations for their children. Education scholar George J. Sefa Dei
states that:

Policy itself must be a reflexive and reflective process whereby communities (the stakeholders in any given society) are understood as knowers whose knowledge counts and is validated in processes of educational codification and dissemination of knowledge. Policy writing must be an exercise in popular education, which wears its politics on its sleeve instead of relying on false notions of objectivity, historical universalism, and fairness. (2014, 17)

This shift towards making invisible constraints visible and valuing community members as “knowers” is a required step in creating equitable access to quality music education.
Chapter 3: Music Education Funding and Advocacy

New Jersey public schools in under-resourced, urban areas that serve large populations of minoritized students see less than complete access to music education. This uneven and inequitable access results from: funding drawn primarily from local property taxes; classed and racialized funding structures at the state and federal levels of government; and state takeovers of local school districts that further diminish public funding and forcibly privatize social services.\(^{58}\)

Public-private partnerships in music education exist within and due to the history of federal and state education policy, which does not fully supplement the insufficient local tax base. Within the education environment of underfunded and inappropriately staffed schools, arts nonprofits and other private community organizations including private and corporate funders, public school districts, and local communities (parents, students, etc.) are inserting themselves into the education system, providing some students with arts education, but simultaneously helping to justify the continued diminution of public funding for arts offerings. These groups also attempt to influence music education policy and funding.

Within this context, the COVID-19 pandemic, taking hold in the United States in March 2020, exposed these inequities to a greater extent than ever. The place of music education in public schools has been put under a new form of pressure. Problems that previously were hindrances to accessing education (especially issues around housing instability, family obligations, and internet access) now ended all contact between many students and schools (see, for example, DeWitt 2020). Throughout the 2020-2021 school year, music education groups gathered and coalitions formed at every level of government to advocate for music education. In

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\(^{58}\) As of the 2014/2015 school year in New Jersey Public Schools, 96.3% of schools offered at least one arts course. The schools that do not offer any arts courses are concentrated around low-income and urban regions (Arts Ed NJ n.d.b.).
addition to the constant struggles to obtain adequate funding for arts education, music education specifically was now under threat, in in-person learning settings due to public health risks associated with the strong presence of the breath in many grade-school music-making activities, and in remote, virtual learning settings for financial and logistical reasons, including the lack of instruments at home, poor or nonexistent internet connections, and lack of technology that is precise enough for synchronous music making. With the pandemic, arts advocacy efforts were increased across New Jersey in their attempts to influence federal decision-making. The heightened financial strains of the pandemic on arts organizations led to a number of webinars and open planning meetings aimed at developing new forms of support for the arts, especially in grassroots, community-oriented campaigns.

The constantly shifting combinations of virtual, hybrid, and in-person learning complicated education across the board. This destabilization and uncertainty drove a new urgency in music education advocacy. Now, not only did school policies look different in each state or even in each district, but whether students were learning in-person was frequently determined day-by-day at the classroom level based on COVID-19 exposure and testing. Some states were certainly stricter about taking public health precautions than others. New Jersey public schools met exclusively virtually from March 2020 through the end of the 2020 to 2021 school year. At the same time, this new and unstable reality united many educators on a national level in an unprecedented way as the pandemic exposed the inequities of insufficiently funded schools at levels heretofore unseen (see, for example, Allen and West 2020). As I concluded in the previous chapter, the education system has been working to oppress communities of color by design, both financially and content-wise; these effects are obvious in subjects like music that are constantly considered for budget cuts and that are deeply tied to culturally specific ideologies.
Now, all of the normalizing measures and tinkering around the edges of broken systems to hide these forms of oppression come into view, and the music education policy contradictions become explicit.

Music education nonprofits strive to offer services that have been publicly defunded due to limited local tax streams, state takeovers, and other punitive federal and state resource distribution policies. As they do so, many simultaneously advocate for increased federal funding for music and arts education. By forming coalitions among state advocacy groups, foundations, and nonprofits, private and semi-private voices in music education advocate for greater public funding of music education. Still, the presence of private funding and grantees in education settings provides the state with an excuse not to offer comprehensive public funding for those services. Thus, private advocacy groups that also offer education services are often working at cross purposes. Yet, refraining from offering education services would mean that, as advocacy efforts are underway, students would be passing through school systems with music education offerings that would likely be even less substantial than they are with the presence of nonprofits.

Within this relentlessly threatened yet persistently hopeful music education environment, music education nonprofits and foundations that fund private music education groups are spending a considerable amount of time advocating for various forms of music education. Some privately funded groups advocate for better public funding with the aim of their own obsolescence, while some advocate for stronger entrenchment of nonprofits in public schools; sometimes, the same groups are involved in both of these branches of advocacy efforts. Meanwhile, the New Jersey state government has yet to take full financial responsibility for music education in public schools, despite the requirement that all K-12 students must have access to music education. The neoliberal state benefits from this cycle: federal and state laws
delegate responsibility of funding music education to private and corporate foundations, who then delegate the responsibility of teaching music education to nonprofits, who are only able to offer music education to a small subset of the entire student body. Thus, many nonprofits simultaneously advocate for publicly funded arts education while they exist due to the privatization of music education in public schools.

Furthermore, as I explored in the previous chapter, New Jersey music education policy in the abstract is quite progressive, focusing on creativity and potentially inclusive of diverse cultures. Its major pitfalls lie in its inadequate funding and its support for implementation that often upholds hierarchized class and race structures. As such, much of the advocacy efforts in New Jersey are aimed at providing individual schools and districts with the tools needed for educators, parents, students, and other community members to convince boards of education of the importance of adequately funding arts education. With so much of advocacy efforts being aimed at simply financing music education in public schools, concerns about the content often fall by the wayside, and pedagogical approaches are rarely discussed at all. In addition to advocacy efforts that work towards gaining better funding from the state government and local school districts, private music education organizations also advocate for funding directly from private individuals and from private and corporate foundations. Because music education is written into state policy as one branch of arts education, much of this analysis references arts education more generally in a way that encompasses music education.

My aim for this chapter is twofold: 1. to analyze how nonprofits act, intentionally or unintentionally, with and against the systemic, policy-based macroaggressions I identified in arts education policy in the first chapter, especially as exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic; and 2. to understand how nonprofits are acting in and against the interests of the members of the
minoritized communities whom they serve, considering to what extent being an ally or an accomplice is possible within these perpetuations of systemic macroaggressions. Within the current funding structures, private money is inescapable in efforts to achieve a well-rounded education for all public-school students in New Jersey. With that in mind, in this chapter, I follow the advocacy efforts of music education nonprofits and their funders at the national, state, and local levels as they attempt to influence the classroom experiences of young people in the United States.

3.1 Advocacy Trends among National Organizations

In addition to accessing the newly opened Title I funds, music educators are looking back towards Title IV for music education for a well-rounded education more than they have in recent years, with Title IV funds being highlighted in, for example, documentation of The Performing Arts Alliance (n.d.) and meetings of the Arts ARE Education national advocacy group (Tuttle 2021a; Tuttle 2021c; Tuttle et al 2021). The Performing Arts Alliance: The Coalition of Performing Arts Advocates had the following funding demands for the 2021 FY federal budget:

- Appropriate $40 million for the Assistance for Arts Education (AAE) programs in the FY 2021 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill.
- Fully fund and implement the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants under Title IV, Part A of ESSA.
- Strengthen equitable access to arts learning through the following actions:
  - Make explicit opportunity for the arts to help achieve Title I objectives
  - Thoroughly implement the professional development opportunities for arts educators and school leaders in Title II of ESSA
  - Thoroughly implement the expanded STEM program eligibility for the arts in Title IV, Part A of ESSA
  - Fully fund the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (Performing Arts Alliance n.d.)

The Coalition of Performing Arts Advocates generally supports the efforts of the Every Student Succeed Act and wants to see the bill fully funded and implemented so that arts programs based on the hegemonic core competencies can be supported more robustly. The Literacy in Arts
Education program and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers were not included in early drafts of ESSA, nor were the arts – including music education – factored into the definition of core academic areas required for a well-rounded education (20 U.S.C. § 6301). It was only after extensive advocacy that these adjustments were made (Performing Arts Alliance n.d.). This advocacy work and subsequent inclusion of music education as a core academic area has expanded access to funding for music education in public schools drastically, but it has also increased the amount of testing that students in underfunded schools undergo.

Within ESSA and especially within Title I, support for the arts is tied to high-stakes testing, so advocacy for funding arts education through ESSA goes hand-in-hand with advocacy for hierarchizing state tests. Additionally, funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, through Title IV, encourages partnerships with nonprofits to supplement the still underfunded music education programs. In this sense, some arts education advocates continue to strive for the basic funds needed to supply every student with an arts education, even with music education being considered a core subject. In doing so, many arts education advocacy groups play into the high-stakes testing narratives of ESSA.

Being underfunded and under the constant threat of having their programs fully defunded, arts educators and administrators are often scrambling to pick up what funding is available, catering by necessity to the demands of the funders. So, for example, when the Performing Arts Alliance was advocating for increases in funding in 2020, they included requests for funding for high stakes testing:

**We urge Congress to strengthen equitable access to arts education through the Well-Rounded Education provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA):**

- Fully fund ($1.6 billion) the Student Support & Academic Enrichment Grants under Title IV, Part A.
- Make explicit the opportunity for the arts to help achieve Title I objectives and the professional development opportunities for arts educators under Title II.
• Fully fund ($1.1 billion) the 21st Century Community Learning Centers after-school program.
• Fund the Assistance to Arts Education program at $40 million … [and]
• Restore and appropriately fund the arts in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), including full and robust assessments in dance theater, music, and visual arts. (Rome, n.d., emphasis in original)

Without standards-based high-stakes testing, ESSA would not recognize the arts as worthy of funding by their own system that doles out funds based on test scores. Because of this, students enrolled in schools in high-income districts, in which local taxes are sufficient to offer students a high-quality education, do not need to take tests. These high-income schools recognize that state assessments are wasting the precious time students have in school to be actively learning. Low-income schools recognize this too, but are not in a position to turn down funding. Thus, music educators and advocates for music education are ceaselessly expending immense amounts of energy and time to have music education acknowledged as a key component of education and college-readiness at the expense of upholding the stratifying systems that determine what college-readiness entails. Stretched thin with balancing the immediate demands of teaching and of securing funding, the administrators of nonprofits and other advocates for music education at the federal level are not adequately reimagining better funding systems or better pedagogical tools for education.

Additionally, while the rhetoric espoused by advocates around fully funding music education appears progressive, inclusive, and expansive, local funding for music education remains insufficient and schools thus remain dependent on federal funds that are tied to standards based, high-stakes testing, which contributes to the continued class differentiation through the practices associated with music classrooms. Through the current system, students in low-income schools are punished: rather than spending time learning, they must be repeatedly assessed to prove that their schools are teaching them, even in music classes. With so much time spent
preparing for and taking tests, schools have less time for meaningful pedagogy. students are sent the message that they are not, in fact, inherently worthy of an arts education. The rhetoric used in ESSA conveys that arts education is part of a “well-rounded” education that every student deserves, and testing ensures that schools are offering that education to the prescribed standards. In practice, however, the testing required to access funding restricts the pedagogy that schools can offer.

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid these federal hierarchizing systems bare much higher up on the hierarchy than ever before, as music education programs were being paused in many schools regardless of prior funding status. With the pandemic, even the physical and social-emotional wellbeing of children in middle- and upper-class families were under threat in communities and schools at new levels. The pandemic has affected families of low socio-economic status even more drastically as many COVID-19-related health concerns are correlated with race and class. Families and their schools continue to seek more comprehensive support to serve their students and to remediate for the emotional damage and slowed learning pace caused by the pandemic. The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) has been extremely active and vocal throughout this process. They have tailored their advocacy to the political, economic, and public health demands of times by focusing on funding for music education and better working conditions for music educators.⁵⁹

As the 2021-2022 school year began, arts education advocates were concerned about

⁵⁹ For example: in June 2020, NAfME held a “National Rally for Music Education” to “Celebrate music educators who are committed to teach all students, and unite your voice with us as we continue to advocate for the inclusion of music in our schools” (Woodside 2020); in September 2020, NAfME held a webinar highlighting music education advocacy success stories and offering advice on advocating for music education in any state titled, “Music Advocacy: State Success Stories and Strategies Confirmation;” in April 2021, NAfME held a webinar titled, “How to Access Education Relief Funds to support Music Education,” offering advice and detailed resources for accessing funding through federal COVID relief bills; and in July 2021, the Maryland Music Educators Association in partnership with eleven other State Music Associations under NAfME held a virtual conference with a number of sessions on advocacy at the federal and local levels.
further budget shortfalls and an exaggerated emphasis on remediating the “learning loss” (or slowed learning pace) that occurred during the pandemic. Groups such as Arts ARE Education, founded during the pandemic, continue to organize to ensure that schools include a budget for remediation in arts education as well, and not focus exclusively on math, reading, and sciences. Lynn Tuttle, an arts educator and administrator who is currently the Director of Public Policy, Research and Professional Development for NAfME, described the funding situation in an Advocacy Roundtable:

For K-12 music ed, right now, I'm hopeful that we will take advantage of the ginormous amount of funding coming to public education from the federal level that I will never live to see happen again. I mean, the amount of money coming out right now is extraordinary. And we better get our fingers in some of those pies. And we better have some great success stories we can share and if not, shame on us, because the money's sitting there and districts are not gonna know how to spend it all, just based on my experience. … I get really frustrated right now when I hear about programs getting cut or positions getting cut because there's no financial reason for that to happen at this moment in time for pretty much any public school in the nation. But we're so used to things being cut because it's too expensive, or it's not enough money. We have to be in the mindset of like, no, that's not an appropriate response. It's not a budgetary issue right now. … It could be - this is where I'm really concerned - a remediation issue. I'm deeply concerned that we're gonna see districts knee-jerk back to No Child Left Behind era and be all paranoid about the accountability system and testing and students being behind because of the pandemic, and thinking of it in that way. I know we don't wanna use that kind of deficit language, but that's how the administrators are thinking and pulling students from our programs to give them more reading and more math because they think that's the solution. It wasn't the solution under No Child Left Behind, it's not going to be the solution today, and we need to gently remind them of that and be part of whatever that solution is. (Cohen et al 2021)

With the federal American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP ESSER), public schools across the United States will be sufficiently funded for the first time ever, until September 30, 2024 (though schools may also use ESSER funds past this date) (15 USC § 9001). Tracking the long-term allocations of these funds will provide important information about ongoing district priorities in relationship to student populations. As Tuttle
points out, schools that have been most affected by pandemic restrictions and austerity are at risk of reverting to an organizational mentality that prioritizes math and literacy to the detriment of other subjects.

While music education in a hegemonic form perpetuates colonizing ways of being, knowing, and sounding, the cultural capital that accompanies an elite, Western European music education also potentially provides access to and navigability within higher education and other powerful, White-dominated institutions for the students whom nonprofits do serve and who are often excluded from those spaces. At the same time, a culturally sustaining education practice provides students with the tools they need not only to navigate the world (including information on dominant knowledge) but to do so in an actively decolonizing way. By spending so much energy seeking to fund the current status of hegemonizing music education practices, music education advocates at these national foundations and nonprofits are perpetuating the hierarchizing systems that maintain underfunded schools in minoritized communities. Instead of using education as a means of inculcating students with hegemonic ideologies, and even instead of using education as a bridge between local, diverse practices and culturally hegemonic and capitalist practices, education could be used to sustain diverse cultural practice; in doing so, schools would acknowledge and mobilize the inherent and historical value of these practices as anti-hegemonic (Paris 2012; Paris and Alim 2014; Alim and Paris 2017; Alim, Paris, and Wong 2020; Good-Perkins 2021).

During this 2020-2021 mid-pandemic school year, advocacy for music education across the board also became intimately tied to discourses around social-emotional learning (SEL). A strong and vocal group of educators and their supporters throughout the country have begun to emphasize the urgent need for better SEL mechanisms in schools. As students and teachers
struggled socially and emotionally with the constant stresses, traumas, and changes of the pandemic, the need for SEL support became more obvious than ever. Many music educators as well as educators and administrators in general see music as a natural partner to SEL, believing in the use of music for social-emotional growth. By overtly establishing this link between music education and SEL within the context of the pandemic, music education advocacy groups hoped to tap directly into funding for SEL. Yet, in a rush to incorporate SEL into music education, much SEL discourse fails to address the need for cultural relevance.

Many districts have bolstered funding for SEL through their allotments of federal and state pandemic emergency relief funding as a way to address the immense emotional toll that the quarantine, illness, death, financial strains, and general uncertainty of the early pandemic took on students and educators. ESSER is disbursing funds from March 27, 2020 until September 30, 2024, and can potentially be applied to any education discipline (15 USC § 9001). ESSER funds in particular are being used by music educators as a way to fund COVID-19 safety measures (like covers for wind instruments and enough instruments so that students no longer need to share them), expanded scheduling and curricula to make up for learning loss in remote environments, and tying music more intentionally to SEL (Arts Ed NJ 2021c; Tuttle 2021b; Tuttle 2021c).

The pandemic’s exposure of these deep structural problems around access to music education and access to the spaces that might follow a more robust education is encouraging communities and, especially, politicians to rethink some of these education funding and application structures. A new focus on SEL, for example, is a significant shift in thinking about music education that moves away from justifying music education with a market-oriented mentality that supposedly correlates music classes with increases in grades and standardized test
scores (see Kelstrom 1998 for an overview of this literature) and even decreases in criminal activity (Cassel et al 2000). Emphasizing SEL identifies one of the sources of higher test scores and graduation rates: social-emotional wellbeing. It underlines the humanist view of students as inherently worthy of social-emotional support, as opposed to the longstanding (though increasingly frequently contested) pedagogical logic that students are blank slates to be filled with ideology and prepped for capitalistic contributions.

Still, these changes, including the new focus on SEL, must adopt a community-driven, intersectional, culturally sustaining approach in order to prevent the same hierarchizing forces of racial capitalism from controlling the new SEL structures as well (Hoffman 2009). This is an ongoing struggle that will last at least until federal and state governments properly and unconditionally fund music education, and that will further last until music education content and pedagogy are redesigned to be culturally sustaining as well. The United States as a whole may be closer to reaching this goal than ever with ESSER and with increased mobilization of local advocacy efforts emerging from the pandemic, as I discuss below.

New Jersey adopted SEL competencies for schools in 2017 (see fig. 1 for New Jersey’s outline for “Building Developmental Relationships Between Staff and Students”) (Social Emotional Learning Alliance for New Jersey 2018). The New Jersey state government reiterated the importance of implementing SEL curricula in schools during the summer of 2021, as schools transitioned back to fully in-person learning, emphasizing the need to address the traumas that many students and educators experienced during the pandemic:

The COVID-19 pandemic has created different types of traumatic experiences and high levels of stress for many of our students, educators, and families. Individuals may have lost loved ones, have family members who lost jobs, or may have experienced abuse or neglect. As we work to support students, the importance of SEL and attending to student and educator well-being has become even more critical. … Considering that students and staff have experienced some level of isolation from peers and colleagues, it is especially
important to utilize summer programming as an opportunity to build strong relationships between students as well as relationships between students and adults. (The Road Forward 2021)

New Jersey employs grade-specific SEL standards and, in professional development modules for educators, acknowledges briefly that culture shapes social and emotional frameworks (State of New Jersey Department of Education 2019b). Data on the extent to which SEL implementation in New Jersey is culturally relevant is not yet available.
These complexities within SEL implementation are indicative of the dangers ahead.
Coming out of the initial throes of the pandemic, it appears that administrators and policy makers will continue to view music education as a means to an end, whether that end is increased grades and standardized test scores or an easy (or perceived as easy) way to satisfy SEL demands from parents and educators. Without a culturally sustaining foundation, however, this approach to funding and justifying music education in schools will continue to reinforce the hegemonic and colonizing effects of schools as producers of neoliberal citizens, disciplining the bodies, voices, and even emotional responses of young people into elite, Western European ideals.

3.1.1 State and Local Advocacy by National Organizations

Other national advocacy groups are more focused on local solutions to arts education access barriers rather than federal funding solutions. National advocates can only achieve so much within the confines of current education frameworks; ESSA identifies music education as part of a “well-rounded education,” but ultimately the allocation of education funds and implementation is decided by each state, while local school districts plan how those funds are used at the school and classroom levels. Predating the pandemic, Americans for the Arts, with funding from the corporate foundation Vans Custom Culture, created a series of four Arts Education Navigator e-books (Getting Started [2015b], Facts & Figures [2015a], Making the Case [2015c], and Mobilizing Support [2015d]) that offer information and advice for local advocates at a policy level that is general enough for use in any state. The e-books include text and visuals that provide advocates with practical actions Getting Started, for example introduces the basics of music education policy, listing actors at the federal, state, district, and school levels (fig. 2) and explaining the history of major federal arts education policy, before introducing the themes covered in the subsequent three e-books (Americans for the Arts and Vans Custom Culture 2015b).
Figure 2: “Who is involved in arts education?” (Americans for the Arts and Vans Custom Culture 2015b, 9).

The Arts Education Navigator series sheds some light onto the moral and logistical complexities that music education advocates face. By offering methods for community engagement and tools for communicating with policy makers, Americans for the Arts provides individuals with support for creating grassroots communities who can work together towards better education opportunities for the students in their school districts. Engagement between communities and public institutions is often limited by lack of common public knowledge of the institutions’ policies and structures. By explaining these policies, structures, and their histories in plain language, Americans for the Arts gives community members practical tools for engaging with schools and education policy. Grassroots advocates are then better prepared to navigate
change efforts by translating their own understandings of situations into the language of those in control of funding. I do not, however, assume that this is what the *Arts Education Navigator* authors had in mind when creating the resource.

Though it may open access to corporate ideology and structures, the *Arts Education Navigator* is funded by a major corporation and uses language typical of dominant groups. For example, in the *Facts and Figures* e-book, data shows, “Students with high arts participation and low socioeconomic status have a 4% drop-out rate,” while students with low arts participation and low socioeconomic status (SES) have a 22% drop-out rate (fig. 3) (Americans for the Arts Americans for the Arts and Vans Custom Culture 2015a, 7). The e-book cites a 2012 study claiming, “The arts reach students who might otherwise slip through the cracks” (Americans for the Arts Americans for the Arts and Vans Custom Culture 2015a, 7). This argument ignores the reality that nonprofits in schools serving primarily students from families with low SES commonly choose which students can enroll in their programs based on such factors as attendance, grades, and in-school behavior. Students’ participation in privately funded music programs, then, is often a result of their good grades and attendance records, not a cause of them. Music classes – especially with hegemonic content and pedagogy – are not a blanket solution to systemic societal and economic problems that factor into student engagement in school. Politicians, however, frequently demand such “facts” and figures such as these before implementing policy changes.
Furthermore, amid statistics about academic achievement, the e-book reminds advocates that “72% of business leaders say that creativity is the number one skill they are seeking when hiring” (2013, 5, emphasis in original). The reality is that students are not always taught to be creative in school music classes, which often focus on reproducing music written by others. Still, music students can claim music education as evidence of their creativity regardless of any real connection when applying to colleges and jobs. While advocates fight in long-term struggles for better and more comprehensive music education, students in low-income areas who are currently
enrolled in music classes can still reap the benefits of social narratives around traditional music education. At the same time, these narratives uphold the very capitalist structures that hierarchize education experiences; as community organizer Paula X. Rojas notes, “One of the scariest manifestations of modern capitalism is the system’s ability to co-opt experiences, practices, even culture, and to then re-create and repackage them within a careerist, profit-driven (even in ‘nonprofits’), and competitive logic” (2007, 205). This balance hangs between navigating the system on an individual level (finding tools to survive capitalism) and fighting the system on a collective level (imagining conditions under which to thrive).

Other similar advocacy resources that are published by music education organizations are not explicitly tied to corporate funders. As examples, Americans for the Arts’s Arts Education Council also published *The Arts Education Field Guide: The Ecosystem of Partners, Players, and Policymakers in the Field of Arts Education* in 2012 (see fig. 4 for a diagram of the constituents covered in this guide). Americans for the Arts describes that “The Arts Education Field Guide illuminates the complexity of citizens, policymakers, government entities, and organizations that influence arts education from the schoolhouse to the White House and from the living room to the boardroom” (2012, 4, emphasis in original). NAfME also created a *Local Advocacy Action Plan* in 2019 and a *Civic Action Field Guide for Music Education* in 2020, both of which are more specifically geared toward professional music educators.

The NAfME *Local Action Plan* provides a multi-step guide on taking inventory, creating goals, forming coalitions, and forming and executing a strategy to implement a comprehensive music education program in a school or district. This document is also linked to other detailed documents available to their members including: standards for music education programs; an FAQ on Title IV funding and explanations of other ESSA regulations; and a “Grassroots
Advocacy Inventory.” The *Local Advocacy Action Plan* is a simple PDF and is designed to be interactive. Each of the ten steps offers an explanation, links to further material when relevant, questions for consideration, and a space to brainstorm. The document uses the language of funding spheres. For example, the very first step is “Strategic Planning” and describes how to create a vision for the program, while the fifth step, “Identify Stakeholders and Form a Coalition,” offers strategies for music educators to engage in grassroots organizing. This design gives users the language to navigate funding applications and detailed information about current policies and policy creation, while also allowing space for hopeful, creative envisioning of how best to serve students (2019). Finally, the *Civic Action Field Guide for Music Education* contains the following objectives for its readers:

- Understand how public education is governed and funded
- Identify key elected officials in public education and their election cycles
- Identify candidates and their stances on education issues
- Register to vote
- Understand the well-rounded education programs found in Title I, Title II, and Title IV, and learn how to advocate for the availability of these funding streams to your music program under ESSA (the Every Student Succeeds Act)
- Contact your elected officials and advocate for music education (2020, 2)

The two field guides are more detailed than the other community support publications, offering in-depth explanations of policy making processes. The Americans for the Arts *Field Guide* offers a one-page analysis of each of the constituents identified in the chart in figure 4, covering: constituency level; definition; potential forms of support for arts education; barriers preventing support for arts education; metrics the constituent uses to measure success; collaborations; funding; and national connections (2012). The NAfME *Field Guide* provides

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information about typical education governance and funding at the state and local levels; suggests specific questions and engagement tactics for politicians at the federal, state, and local levels; and offers advice for sustaining advocacy efforts (2020). These documents, along with NAfME’s *Advocacy Plan*, which are not overtly tied to corporate donors, provide a more complete image of how to effectively advocate for school music programs. They also communicate a deeper trust in community organizers to be able to engage deeply with all levels of government based on their own visions and understandings of local issues, especially in opposition to the eye-catching graphics and misleading facts of the corporate-backed *Arts Education Navigator*.

**Figure 4: “Arts Education Ecosystem: Tiers of Influence” (Arts Education Council 2012).**

These materials have been proliferating in recent years as hope for music education funding grows, especially with music education identified as a core subject in ESSA and with the
huge amount of school funding available through ESSER. With new music education access to Title I funds and, even more recently, with the scramble to prevent cuts to the arts coming out of the pandemic, many nonprofits are working to supply school districts with tools to secure these public funds for music education. As these materials become more common, their authors, especially those that are not overtly tied to for-profit corporations, are using rhetoric that shifts focus away from capitalistic narratives around the purpose of culture in education and instead provide communities with the information needed to develop their own logics and narratives around music education.

3.2 Advocacy by New Jersey Nonprofits and Foundations for Public Music Education

Within New Jersey, the rhetoric of political advocacy for music education dives even more deeply into student needs and how they relate to the legislation of New Jersey specifically. The first arts education advocacy group in New Jersey was the Alliance for Arts Education/New Jersey (AAE/NJ), which was established in 1975. AAE/NJ worked with the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts (NJSCA) to implement arts education related projects, especially in the late 1980s until the early 1990s. AAE/NJ was dismantled in the late 1990s. In 2004, the NJSCA organized the Arts Education Summit Meeting to fill the void left by the dismantling of AAE/NJ, creating the Arts Education Working Group. Key actors in this group included the NJDOE, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, and a number of professional arts education associations under Arts Plan NJ (Americans for the Arts 2017). The NJDOE now primarily works with Arts Ed NJ, a nonprofit coalition established in 2007 out of the Arts Education Working Group with the aims of providing an arts education for all students and ensuring that diverse voices influence policy (Americans for the Arts 2017, 7-10; Arts Plan New Jersey 2017).
Since its formation in 2007, Arts Ed NJ has had the same vision: “*arts education for every child, every day, every school, every year*” (Arts Ed NJ, n.d.a, emphasis in original). Arts Ed NJ was originally called the New Jersey Arts Education Partnership (NJAEP), but changed its name in 2015 when Arts Ed NJ itself was established as a nonprofit. It was originally funded by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the NJDOE, and the Music for All Foundation. Arts Ed NJ executes its vision through the following two tenets:

   a) Arts Education is essential to basic knowledge and a fundamental right of every citizen in our schools and across our communities, and  
   b) The collective voice of diverse stakeholders is the most effective means for advancing the arts in education. (Arts Ed NJ, n.d.a)

Arts Ed NJ aims to unify the perspectives of diverse groups working towards an educational system that offers arts education to all students. Like most initiatives at the federal level, the work of Arts Ed NJ has primarily focused on entrenching arts education in school curricula by strapping it to the federal and state policies on school standards and accountability, strengthening the Core Curriculum Content Standards for the Visual and Performing Arts, and including arts education in district accountability reviews and School Performance Reports (Arts Ed NJ, n.d.a). Arts Ed NJ also created an Interactive School Performance Dashboard that is open to the public and that allows users to view state-wide and school-specific data on middle and high school arts offerings. The dashboard uses data from the School Performance Reports from the 2014 to 2015 school year and shows that music is only offered in 89.7% of schools in New Jersey, while 3.9% of New Jersey schools offer no arts education (Arts Ed NJ, n.d.b).61

Arts Ed NJ shared their recent advocacy efforts in a webinar, “Protect Arts Ed Now!” led by Bob Morrison, Founder and Executive Director (at the time) of Arts Ed NJ, and Ennis Carter, Founding Director of Social Impact Studios. The “Protect Arts Ed Now!” webinar was held

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61 89% of schools offer visual arts, 4.4% offer dance, and 2.6% offer theater (Arts Ed NJ, n.d.b).
within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in January 2021, when schools were in the process of finalizing budgets for the 2021-2022 school year. This webinar presented Arts Ed Now as an ongoing effort mobilizing individuals to advocate for arts education in New Jersey (Morrison and Carter 2021). Arts Ed NJ established the Arts Ed Now campaign in 2016, “designed to furnish individuals with tools to advocate more effectively” (Campo and Wenger 2016). Arts Ed Now focuses on increasing arts offerings and participation in New Jersey middle and high schools. The campaign does so by partnering with a plethora of education groups across the state\(^2\) to encourage the creation of partnerships between public schools and arts resources within their communities as well as the development of “a statewide network of local stakeholders” (Campo and Wenger 2016).

The “Protect Arts Ed Now!” webinar focused on emphasizing the importance of attending school board meetings and advocating for maintaining arts budgets. Morrison noted that he saw that arts education was more disrupted by the pandemic than any other core content area, sharing feedback from a survey of arts educators in New Jersey schools who described their experiences in the fall of 2020:

> clearly, in many places, the arts are being taught remotely, either because the entire school is remote, or, in some instances, when schools are in a hybrid model, they’re forcing the arts to be taught remotely in the afternoon, using arts teachers in other ways that are not related to arts instruction; that facilities have been repurposed, so that many of our arts classrooms, music rooms, band rooms, orchestra rooms, some of our theater areas, have been taken over and repurposed for non-artistic activities, and that has impacted our ability to provide instruction in the arts; that instruction has been disrupted – clearly it has been. We’ve seen it by the number of students that are starting in beginning programs. There’s been a decline in beginning students because they don’t want to engage in remote beginning band programs, learning how to play an instrument remotely, and for many of our students who have been in programs, many of them have

left or just haven’t shown up, and that’s something that we’ve seen in other content areas as well. As much as a third of students not showing up in some cases. So, instruction clearly has been disrupted. (Morrison and Carter 2021)

Morrison highlighted the position of music education as uniquely affected by virtual learning environments, where commonly used technology is often not fast or sonically clear enough for music creation and pedagogy. As a result, and related to lingering ideas of music as less important than other academic subjects, despite its status as a core subject in ESSA and a required subject in New Jersey, music education was sacrificed in many schools. Morrison described that music education was sacrificed for two reasons: to create space for other subjects in overcrowded buildings when physical distancing was necessary to alleviate the spread of COVID-19; and to address teacher shortages that occurred at new levels during the pandemic.

Morrison also expressed concern that this trend would continue into the 2021 to 2022 school year as schools prepared their budgets. He emphasized repeatedly the need for school boards to consider these extenuating circumstances so that they might avoid the mistake of basing the 2021 to 2022 budget on the 2020 to 2021 pandemic scheduling, enrollment, and attendance data. In order to create new budgets that at least maintained current arts education funding levels, Morrison described that the winter and spring 2021 arts education advocacy efforts must focus on maintaining the paid position of the arts specialist in schools:

first and foremost, we have to have the arts specialists in place. Nothing else happens without the arts specialists in place. Here in the state of New Jersey, arts education is required, and it’s required at all levels, and the vast majority of our schools do that through our certified arts specialists, having them in place. So, having the certified arts specialist protected and in place is the most important thing. From there, then, we are able to build out the three legs of the stool. So, the one leg of the stool is our certified arts specialist, the second leg … is our collaborative work between our classroom teachers and our arts educators, and the third and very important leg of the stool is our engagement with our cultural community, our cultural and arts groups in our communities that support what’s happening in the school building and enhance what’s happening in the school building, either inside or outside of the building. Luckily, here in New Jersey, the vast majority of our schools engage with our cultural organizations in a meaningful way. But, right now, we’ve gotta get our programs back and stabilized
initially, while also showcasing the contributions that our cultural organizations make. But I would say, right now, it’s all hands on deck to make sure that the infrastructure is stabilized for arts education in the state of New Jersey, that we can then bring in the additional resources to support. (Morrison and Carter 2021)

While making a conscious effort not to alienate community partners (which, based on ESSA guidance, are typically nonprofits), Morrison focused on communicating the importance of publicly funded school arts programs. Without the established arts specialist and program leaders, music education in the schools become insecure, as I explore in more depth in the following chapter regarding partnerships between nonprofits and schools. Yet, again, the focus was on having any music education in place, while considerations for whether and how this music education might serve students’ growth were not addressed.

Arts Ed NJ also created materials to support grassroots organizing. Similar to efforts made by Americans for the Arts and NAfME at the national level, Arts Ed NJ materials provide individuals with tools to navigate bureaucratic processes, in this case with a focus on budget creation. Their flyer on school budgets (fig. 5) also links to other, more detailed resources on school budgets, such as the “Protect Arts Ed Now! School Budget Process Guide: Planning for Fall 2021/22 School Year,” which details the budget creation and approval actors and timelines (Arts Ed NJ 2021g). Arts Ed NJ created other informational materials for community-based advocates to use in school board meetings and in community-oriented campaigns that they presented in their webinar, as well, with every document available in English and Spanish. Arts Ed NJ argues that value for arts education comes primarily from three places: the inherent right that every New Jersey student has to an arts education, according to state policy; the support that arts education can provide for the students’ social-emotional wellbeing; and the opportunity for students’ self-expression through the arts (fig. 6 and fig. 7). Here, the value is not connected to financial profit, but rather relies on enforcing the already-won battle at the state level of making
arts education a requirement. The focus is on the argument that arts education is important to students on an emotional and personal level. The longstanding goal remains to adequately fund all five arts disciplines (music, visual arts, theater, dance, and media arts) in every school.

Figure 5: “Protect Arts Ed Now!” (Arts Ed NJ 2021d).
Figure 6: “Protect Arts Ed Now! Making the Case for the Value of Arts Education” (Arts Ed NJ 2021f).
The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation is another key player in music education advocacy in New Jersey. The Dodge foundation is the biggest private funder of arts education initiatives in New Jersey and is very active in advocacy efforts at the state level. Wendy Liscow, when she
was the Program Director of Education at the Dodge Foundation, encouraged asking such questions as: Why would these superintendents end music programs? If there are issues with funding, what is being funded instead? Where are the pressures coming from? Are they coming from high stakes testing? What can be done to remedy this? Liscow’s view was that arts education would not be sustained until the country as a whole values it. To build value in the public eye, Liscow felt that music education programs needed more analysis on the impact of music education on academics, social and emotional skills, family engagement, community, etc.63

To research these data points, the Dodge Foundation developed survey tools that many of the nonprofits funded by the Dodge Foundation are now using in focus groups. A more recently added survey question measures arts exposure by parents, which has shown to give children a more positive response to arts education. To Liscow, this also showed the importance of having a generation of children with an arts education, so that their children will all have more positive responses to arts education. Liscow attributed the trend to cut arts from schools to a large generation of school leaders who did not have great exposure to arts education.64 This analysis, however, does not account for the context of state-takeovers that remove decision making powers from local school leaders, nor does it incorporate a nuanced understanding of the implications of different types of music education. Still, Liscow is pointing to a key source of pressure that shapes school budgets: parents, whose organized voices will be heard at school board meetings.

At both the state and the federal level, advocacy efforts focus on getting arts into every school. At both levels, there is currently a push for grassroots advocacy paired with an

63 Wendy Liscow, interview by author, September 13, 2018, by phone.
64 Wendy Liscow, interview by author, September 13, 2018, by phone.
abundance of information about how education policy is created and how education is funded. In many ways, these are excellent resources, and grassroots mobilization is an admirable goal. Yet, there is no discussion of race or class, nor is there any engagement of what kinds of music is being taught or what pedagogies are being implemented. Most schools in New Jersey do at least have music and visual arts programs, and those should be maintained. The schools that do not have arts programs, or that have severely limited arts programs, tend to be the ones that serve low-income, minoritized students (Arts Ed NJ. n.d.b). Relying on the same tactics (like seeking Title I funding for the arts) will continue to propagate the systems that created such inequities in education originally.

The COVID-19 pandemic has spotlighted the precarity of the arts in schools and the need for SEL, but it did not introduce this precarity nor this need. Addressing them through the same paths that have been used (high-stakes testing, relationships with school boards, etc.) will continue to bring about the same educational structures that have inadequately served oppressed groups for decades. Focusing on returning middle- and upper-class communities to the stability that they have traditionally experienced with primarily locally funded schools and hegemonic state standards continues to ignore the intersections of oppression that students in under-resourced communities experience precisely due to the conditions (localized school funding, high-stakes testing, etc.) that have maintained wealth hoarding in middle- and upper-class communities.

3.3 Advocacy by New Jersey Nonprofits and Foundations for Private Music Education

While much of the grassroots advocacy being encouraged and supported by certain nonprofits is focusing on public policy and securing public funding, other nonprofits are more concerned with sustaining their own education programs. Organizations that, prior to the
COVID-19 pandemic, funded their education programs through ticket sales to performances and monetary donations suddenly had to rely exclusively on donations as the state of New Jersey went into lockdown. As they were able, organizations transitioned to virtual education and entertainment offerings. In the wake of the murder of George Floyd in May 2020 and the subsequent protests and anti-police brutality movement, many nonprofits, especially those located in low-income, minoritized communities, began to advocate for racial and ethnic diversification of their programming and administration.

3.3.1 The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation

Wendy Liscow, in her time at the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, saw that the law mandates music education for all students. Liscow also saw, however, that school districts often fulfill this with one general music teacher and maybe one instrumental music teacher. Even prior to the pandemic, these music teachers were frequently assigned to cover lunch duty, substituting, and other non-music teaching responsibilities so that math, language arts, science, and history teachers could teach more sections each day. Therefore, especially with no access to instruments, in practice, these music teachers only teach a few sections of general music a day. Liscow noted this to be the case, for example, in Trenton and Paterson. To remedy this, districts need to respect music educators’ time and prioritize scheduling music classes.

As one remedy to the dearth of music classes in public schools in under-resourced, urban areas, Liscow strongly supported El Sistema-style programs. The Dodge Foundation is funding an ongoing study of the impact of ensembles in El Sistema regarding developmental social-emotional impact. A survey is administered to students and parents at the beginning and end of

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65 Liscow was Program Director of Education at the Dodge Foundation until November 2020 when the position was cut as the Dodge Foundation underwent a restructuring process. They no longer have a specific education or arts program. Liscow is now the Executive Director of Arts Ed NJ, replacing Bob Morrison.
66 Wendy Liscow, interview by author, September 13, 2018, by phone.
the school year, and focus groups are held with students and parents as well. Like many music education efforts, music educator and consultant to El Sistema New Jersey Alliance (ESNJA) Tricia Tunstall and teaching artist Eric Booth describe that El Sistema was originally envisioned by Antonio Abreu in Venezuela as an effort, not necessarily to train professional musicians, but to shape “successful, happy, and good citizens” out of young people in impoverished neighborhoods through elite, Western European orchestral training (Tunstall and Booth 2016, 9).

The Dodge Foundation funds all but two groups of El Sistema programs in NJ. ESNJA was founded by the Dodge Foundation because Liscow found that many organizations in urban areas were co-opting the term “El Sistema” without upholding the model and community-focused principles of El Sistema. The purpose of ESNJA is to provide students with local events in which they can meet students from other school districts, opportunities to leave the city, and opportunities to perform in professional settings. For example, they have a summer camp in the woods, which is often a new experience for students and parents. Gustavo Dudamel, who is the director of the most advanced youth orchestra within El Sistema in Venezuela, was in residency at Princeton in 2019 and interacted with all of the students in El Sistema programs in New Jersey. ESNJA also informs teachers about El Sistema and its purpose of building communities, families, and students as a process, not a product.

The Dodge Foundation is also heavily invested in the Save the Music Foundation, the VH1 program that provides packs of orchestra and band instruments to groups of or all schools in a district, but only if the district allocates the space for music classes and hires a full-time music teacher. They also provide professional development for the music teachers that the

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67 Wendy Liscow, interview by author, September 13, 2018, by phone.
68 Wendy Liscow, interview by author, September 13, 2018, by phone.
district hires. As Chiho Feindler, Chief Program Officer at Save the Music, described, Save the Music does not provide instruments if the school relies on external funding for music teachers. They also will not partner with districts in which no school is able to financially commit to hiring a music teacher. This is done in an attempt to foster music education initiatives that are sustainable with public funds. Much of their work depends on the superintendent in office at the moment, and partnerships with the superintendent often take around five years to fully negotiate. For example, Save the Music partnered with Trenton and provided instruments for seventeen schools. Trenton only needed to hire eleven teachers, though, because they already had six. These teachers were previously not being used effectively and did not have access to instruments for the students. Liscow noted some problems with Save the Music: the instruments need maintenance, which is paid for by the district, and one pack of instruments in schools only serves about thirty-five students if the students are allowed to take their instruments home to practice.

The Dodge Foundation does not typically support organizations that send teachers into schools on temporary bases. They do have a few exceptions, though. They fund Jazz House Kids, for example, which sends teachers into schools to teach jazz when the full-time teachers are not knowledgeable enough about jazz to teach it themselves. They also fund NJSO programs that send teachers into schools. Liscow ideally would not have wanted to fund these because she wanted to effect changes in the system of music education, but she was willing to support sending in specialists that are able to teach more diverse musical practices than the teacher, like jazz, studio design, composition, hip hop, etc. For example, the New Jersey Performing Arts

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69 Wendy Liscow, interview by author, September 13, 2018, by phone.
70 Chiho Feindler, interview by author, February 4, 2020, New York City, NY.
71 Wendy Liscow, interview by author, September 13, 2018, by phone.
Center (NJPAC) has a hip hop education program that the Dodge Foundation funds. NJPAC receives a high amount of aid from foundations, so even though there is a cost to the program, NJPAC is able to cover tuition for many students. This program, however, is not situated in schools, but is an afterschool program that students attend at NJPAC facilities.72

The Dodge Foundation also funds Little Kids Rock (LKR), a national program based in New Jersey, which also receives funding from VH1 to roll out its program in Newark schools at a rate of seven schools each year for seven years. David Wish, the founder and CEO of LKR, has a vision to add modern band to state requirements. He started developing his program by not worrying about teaching the students how to read music and instead focusing on getting them to play what they’re interested in playing. He has since developed an entire pedagogy around modern band. LKR mostly serves urban districts and, to Liscow, appears to be the group that is closest to addressing the music interests that students take with them to school. LKR also partners with universities to teach educators. Their goal is for traditional teachers to branch out and teach more than elite, Western European music styles. LKR provides instruments to schools that implement their program. They have partnerships with many instrument makers, and David Wish even designed portable drum sets to be more accessible to teachers in low-income districts who may have to move between classrooms and schools throughout the day or throughout the week.73

As with many social justice initiatives, groups seeking to change music education access and content use the highest point of leverage available to them. Historically, Liscow saw that this highest point in institutional hierarchies has been the school or district level. Now, it is becoming the state level and the teacher education level. Universities like Montclair State University and

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72 Wendy Liscow, interview by author, September 13, 2018, by phone.
73 Wendy Liscow, interview by author, September 13, 2018, by phone.
William Paterson University are implementing changes in their music education programs through partnering with groups like LKR. Nonetheless, work at the district level is still needed. No new teachers in schools have the power to effect changes across the district or even necessarily in their own curricula. The Dodge Foundation tries to focus on movements within music education at the local and state levels as well as during pre-service and in-service teacher training in order to support and maintain systemic changes.\textsuperscript{74}

This level of change within districts, however, is difficult with so much turnover of superintendents and other administrators. For example, during the seven years leading up to 2018 that the Dodge Foundation had been working with the Trenton school district, Trenton had had five different superintendents. With each new superintendent, the Dodge Foundation, along with Save the Music and Trenton Music Makers (the local El Sistema program), had to rebuild trust in order to continue programs. Without funding and program policies aligning at the state and district levels, all of the work being done in these cities can be abruptly ended by a new superintendent or new foundation or program staff who envision something different. For example, in the 1980s, Trenton had a strong music program and, until more recently, so did Paterson, but these were both obliterated by new superintendents. Both Trenton and Paterson are now trying to rebuild their music education programs.\textsuperscript{75} The state takeovers in these cities allowed the superintendents and their policies to be controlled at the state level rather than at the local community level.

In 2018, after two years of internal development, the Dodge Foundation implemented a new theory of change based on cultural connection and, in their education grants, on culturally

\textsuperscript{74} Wendy Liscow, interview by author, September 13, 2018, by phone.
\textsuperscript{75} Wendy Liscow, interview by author, September 13, 2018, by phone.
responsive pedagogy. The foundation started asking grantees about their equity lens.\textsuperscript{76} The Dodge Foundation described:

>a new vision for the future centered on equity with a revised mission, values, a new equity definition, goals, and a strategic plan to guide us. We are proud that from this process emerged our vision for an equitable New Jersey through our support of creative, engaged, sustainable communities. Our board and staff together affirmed that, for Dodge, equity means aligning our resources to address historical, institutional, and structural impediments so that New Jerseyans of all races and communities have what is needed to realize a quality life. (Dehne 2020)

With this even stronger and more explicit focus on systems change, the Dodge Foundation is no longer focusing new grants on the arts or education, though they continue to work with longstanding grantees in these areas. Instead, their website states that:

>we will be increasingly directing our resources towards partners whose work addresses the underlying factors that make New Jersey a state with some of the worst equity indicators in the country, and that repair systemic harms that have long plagued low-wealth communities of color in the state. (Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation 2022)

This new approach “center[s] on strategies essential to systems change that bring about a just and equitable New Jersey” (Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation 2022). Many of these new grantees fall into categories of labor organizers, environmental sustainability, and community groups, including community-based arts centers (Dehne 2022). This shift does appear meaningful and will hopefully contribute to systemic change in a way that funding hegemonizing programs that only serve some students (as do many El Sistema programs) cannot.

On the heels of the Black Lives Matter movement, Arts Ed NJ created a Culturally Responsive Arts Education (CRAE) Workout for arts educators (Arts Ed NJ 2022) and a series of Anti-Racist Educator Talks (Arts Ed NJ 2021a). The CRAE Workout was developed out of an initiative by Liscow as Program Director at the Dodge Foundation, where she organized and led a day-long Culturally Responsive Arts Education Learning Community Kickoff on February 12,

\textsuperscript{76} Wendy Liscow, interview by author, January 21, 2020, Morristown, NJ.
2020, followed by a month-long CRAE and Anti-Racism Challenge that began in September of that year. The Learning Community Kickoff gathered arts educators and arts education program administrators from across the state whose programs have received funding, training, or other services from the Dodge Foundation. Urban social justice and teacher education scholar Michelle Macchia presented on culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings [1994] 2009), culturally responsive, culturally congruent, and culturally sustaining education (Alim and Paris 2017); arts education and human rights scholar Amelia M. Kraehe presented on culturally responsive arts education. In addition to those presentations, participants engaged with videos created by science education scholar Chris Emdin and teacher educator Zaretta Hammond. Participants also spoke with each other to build connections and explore ideas around offering culturally relevant arts education in schools. Participants in the CRAE Learning Community were predominantly people of color running or teaching in local programs.

Though the CRAE Learning Community only met once, the virtual programming that resulted continues to be available to educators, administrators, and activists. Arts Ed NJ describes the CRAE Workout as:

an eight-week curated asynchronous and synchronous experience that focuses on developing the capacity of educators and administrators to think about how culturally relevant and responsive approaches can shift curriculum, instructional content, and teaching practices to more effectively represent and validate all students’ cultures and lived experiences. (Arts Ed NJ 2022)

The programming focuses on “culturally relevant and responsive” pedagogies. With the direct involvement of scholars like Macchia, Kraehe, Emdin, and Hammond, educators learn the intricacies of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies. This discourages the watered-down

77 The Culturally Responsive Arts Education Learning Community was designed to be a monthly gathering, but was disrupted and eventually terminated due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Dodge Foundation staffing changes after the first event.
or surface-level versions of these critical pedagogies that many educators implement without making deep, systems-focused changes to their teaching practices. The Anti-Racist Educator Talks were moderated by Lauren Meehan of Arts Ed NJ and featured Alysia Lee, Founder and Artistic Director of Sister Cities Girlchoir (an El Sistema-inspired program originally based in Camden and Philadelphia that has since expanded around New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland), artist, and arts advocate. These talks also delved deeply and meaningfully into anti-racist actions that educators can and should practice in their classrooms.

This trajectory of the Dodge Foundation and their partnership with Arts Ed NJ suggests that a paradigm shift is occurring in local funding and advocacy systems. Especially in smaller organizations where change can happen relatively quickly, funding streams can respond to social movements quickly, but only if the organizational leadership quickly and effectively backs those changes. With strategic plans that aim for systemic changes instead of simply treating the symptoms of systems, foundations can work towards futures with more equitable distribution of wealth and all of the self-governance and societal access that comes with that.

3.3.2 “The Future of Arts in New Jersey” Roundtable

On June 17, 2020, a virtual roundtable was convened by NJ Spotlight and NJTV News titled “The Future of Arts in New Jersey: Role, Funding and Impact in the COVID-19 Age,” which convened “cultural leaders to explore how arts organizations can adjust to our new reality and build paths forward.” Panelists from the nonprofit arts sector and one panelist from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts responded to the following questions:

- What new roles can the arts take in fostering community and in helping us

78 Panelists included: Victor L. Davson, Co-Director of Express Newark and Founding Director of the Aljira Center for Contemporary Art, Newark; Tom Hall, Executive Director of the Montclair Film Festival; Linda C. Harrison, Director & CEO of The Newark Museum of Art; John Schreiber, President & CEO of New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC); and Allison Tratner, Executive Director of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Aside from Allison Tratner in her public position, the panelists mainly focused on private policy in their responses.
understand our changed times?

- What modes of action must arts fundraisers undertake to ensure the viability of their organizations?
- What role should public policy take in shaping the future of artistic and cultural programs? (Mooney et al 2020)

I quote some of the panelist responses at length to highlight the different logics presented regarding the current state of nonprofit arts education programming and administration.

Though this event did not exclusively cover education offerings by arts nonprofits, Linda C. Harrison, a Black woman, did emphasize from the start the need to diversify educational curricula offered by arts organizations, something that she saw as potentially being facilitated by virtual offerings. Allison Tratner, a White woman, brought in the issue of SEL as well, highlighting the role that arts organizations are playing. The New Jersey State Council on the Arts works in partnership with Arts Ed NJ and was involved with planning school reopenings. Nonprofits, teaching artists, and other entities that partner with schools now work with teachers in classrooms to contribute to the prioritization of SEL in classrooms. Regarding partnering with schools and the new SEL learning standards tied to the arts and the role of arts organizations in supporting this initiative, Tratner attested:

Many of our arts organizations were leading the way with social-emotional learning programs, and I think that right now, as we look at reopening and recovery, the State Arts Council has a seat at the table to help inform the reopening of schools in September through our partnership with Arts Ed New Jersey and the opportunity for culturally responsive curriculum development and programming offered by nonprofit arts organizations and also in school, these are things that we are working with our partners and nonprofit arts organizations and with teaching artists and with classroom teachers to continue to develop, so this is something the arts have been doing and doing well for many, many years, and we show no signs of stopping and actually it’s getting more sophisticated and complex as time goes on, as the needs evolve and change. (Mooney et al 2020)

Other panelists agreed with the importance of SEL, especially in the context of the traumas resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, which were especially concentrated in low-income, urban areas.
Yet, Victor L. Davson, a Black man, offered his hesitations regarding potentially employing social-emotional learning in culturally unresponsive ways or ways that are otherwise divorced from students’ lived experiences:

I think the social-emotional framework that we are not talking about, we are talking about most of the community as if it’s kind of monolithic or homogeneous. The community specifically of Brown and Black children is entirely different and it requires a certain kind of thinking around it, which has to do with a social and emotional framework. It has to do with developing enabling pedagogies, and that requires a certain kind of mindset for people who are running educational programs, who are doing curatorial work. It’s not one size fits all. … So, it’s not simply a matter of putting food on the table. We’re talking about this crisis as though the arts are kind of separate from our life. This is a transformative moment and we really need to talk about the arts in a way that relates to life in general, and to all of the other sectors and segments of life. (Mooney et al 2020)

Davson described how SEL frameworks are frequently created for an idealized White, middle class child and ignore cultural differences. He identified the problem stemming from the lack of diverse representation among curriculum designers. He also highlighted the importance of addressing SEL from a holistic perspective that considers how arts education and any accompanying SEL lessons articulate with “life in general.”

Harrison discussed more general approaches to offering programming that is sensitive to pandemic needs, specifically in light of the horrific spread of COVID-19 among the minoritized populations of Newark, which was at that time the fastest of any city in the country. At this point in the conversation, Harrison focused on the programming that the Newark Museum offers, how that can be planned and executed safely (without unduly adding to public health risks) with community input and in collaboration with community artists:

We must seek the input of our community partners and community artists. In doing this, it allows us not to be in the dark on: What is it that our stakeholders want? What does the community want? And this is a pretty scary place for us to ask the community what it is that they want, because here we are a museum and we are a museum with world class collections and … when I went out to visit different communities across Newark, a lot of the visitors who came to meet me and to hear me talk about the museum had not been at the museum. They didn’t think we really spoke to them. And so, this is where we have to actually flip the switch and embrace communities sharing with us: What is this now?
What will be a relevant museum? We are doing intensive programming around not only our collections but, as I say, with artists that aren’t even in our collections, that are local artists, like Kambui Olujimi. We are trying to set up a platform that has been very successful of people hearing: What does the artist want to do? What do they need from us? And we understand that they want to have a platform not just to show their art, but to talk with each other. These are the types of programming that we’re having that really is keeping us connected. … We can no longer be the museum that is not relevant to the various communities of the diaspora, of our African diaspora, our Portuguese diaspora, the Asian diaspora. All of these communities come together at the museum. We can be that … a hub that people can have conversations around race relations and what that means, that this could be a safe place for them to have those conversations and that we can be effective and have an impact on really working toward having it be a place that people want to be, not just because we’re a safe place from a health standpoint, health and safety, but that we are a place that we can really talk about relevancy of an institution that may not have appeared to be of value to people. And that’s where I think the work can be done. (Mooney et al 2020)

Based on input from community members, whom she identified as stakeholders, Harrison was reframing the role of the Newark Museum within Newark. The Newark Museum now also incorporates performances of spoken word, dance, and theater to connect the museum more to the community. Moreover, Harrison envisioned the Newark Museum as a space to grapple with issues around race in a way that is sensitive to the health-related traumas being experienced by the community.

The panel discussion covered more than simply programming, which does not directly put people of color in economic and decision-making power. Though he supported the diversification of programming, Davson even more urgently spoke of the need to diversify organizational management:

Even when we [people of color] are hired, … we are generally given positions that are highly visible, but we have no power and no resources … Look at the senior staff. Let me see who’s on your board. Who’s making decisions? Who’s setting policy for the arts? Who is controlling the resources and are those resources being directed to whom? It’s not just the programmatic piece. Yeah, you can put people of color, Black people, in positions that have to do with HR, that have to do with programs, but those are not line positions. Those are not structural. … We need to see a radical change before we are going to start to address all these lovely programs. Programming is one thing. But programming sits on an infrastructure. Let’s see what that infrastructure looks like. And then we can address talking about community. (Mooney et al 2020)
By emphasizing the difference between positions of visibility, seen by the public, and positions of power, with control of resources and decision making, Davson was pointing to the surface-level changes that are relatively easy for organizations to make without affecting structural change.

John Schreiber, a White man, took a much softer stance on change in arts organization leadership. He focused on change in the next generation, hoping that eventual turnover under current conditions will lead to increased leadership positions filled by people of color. Panel moderator Joanna Gagis of NJTV News asked Schreiber directly if he thinks that White people should step down to allow a person of color to run cultural organizations in Black communities: “Do you believe that now is a time for White males, White leaders, to step aside and say, ‘I may not be the voice to best represent my community?’” (Mooney et al 2020). In response, Schreiber skirted around taking a direct stance on whether he should or would step down:

I can’t answer that question for White males in general. As far as this White male is concerned, I am digging in deeper and harder and in a more engaged way than I ever have. I’m acutely aware that I’m a leader of a majority-minority arts institution in a majority-minority city, and so I feel I have a tremendous responsibility to be engaged in a variety of ways, so I think it forces me, as a White leader, to be more creative, to be more authentic in the way that I react and engage with my community. (Mooney et al 2020)

Schreiber evaded the problem of overrepresentation of White people, and especially White men, in organizational leadership and instead vaguely referenced his own attempts to “dig deeper.” This not only gives no indication of the anti-racist actions he is taking, if any; in addition, his response primarily works to remove himself from the systemic, racist hiring and promotion practices being discussed on the panel. He also used the outdated language of “majority-minority” to describe people of color, maintaining a colonizing understanding of race that others people of color even in their own communities. By derailing engagement with systemic racism and attempting to portray himself as an individual outside of the system in which he functions (“I
can’t answer that question for White males in general”), Schreiber propagated the systemic problem of overrepresentation of White men in organizational leadership.

In response, Harrison rebuked the approach that Schreiber suggested. Regarding how that infrastructural change might occur, Harrison explained:

We know that this work has to be done internally, that our internal culture equals the external culture, and that we have to have the conversations even amongst ourselves, and we know that we have to have tools to give to people. We expect to have a diverse internal community, and then we don’t give tools for our community, our staff people to be able to talk to each other, relate to each other, and have those different ideas. I’m sitting in a world in my culture of the visual arts. I belong to an organization, the Association of Museum Directors, about 225 major museums across the country. There are four people of color in that cohort. And we can’t just use the pipeline anymore. We’ve actually got to tear it down. I can list several examples where someone has moved into a position of a CEO and they were a White person and they didn’t have an arts background, and so I think we really have to look at, there are talented people in different parts of our nonprofit and profit industry that we have to actually just move into different positions so that there is a solid succession and we can’t just wait for the pipeline unfortunately. (Mooney et al 2020)

This analysis built on Davson’s attestation that people of color are not hired into positions of power, while White people (White men in particular) are hired within a pipeline that ultimately leads to increasing and then maintaining their power. Schreiber’s idea that, eventually, people of color will be hired into positions of power within the current system is fallacious in that it ignores the difference between the surface-level, often dead-end programmatic hiring of people of color and the hiring of qualified people of color directly into positions of power, the latter of which is still not happening to a meaningful degree. Rather than continue to uphold systems of White privilege that prioritize White people with connections, Harrison suggested an actual, equitable meritocracy, drawing on the expansive pool of people of color with the relevant training, knowledge, and skills to lead arts organizations.

Ultimately, all of the work of arts organizations is contingent on funding – ideally, equitable funding. Again, Davson pursued a yet more targeted line of questioning. Davson
connected funding to the structural problem of racism:

We have a structural problem. Racism is a structural problem. It’s not about the individuals. … There needs to be radical change within our cultural institutions. We need to talk about things like funding equity. Why is it that certain institutions get resources and others don’t? Why is it certain resources are defunded or destabilized? Why is it certain resources are trusted to program the very communities that they don’t even represent, they don’t even have the appropriate representation on their boards or in their leadership? They’re getting the money to program those very communities. And small to mid-sized organizations who are on the ground, doing the work, they’re defunded, they’re destabilized, and they’re the people who have real access into the community, they’re the people who are doing it, they’re doing it without an appropriate return on their investment. There’s a kind of sweat equity. When you look locally at small to mid-sized organizations, those are organizations that are just functioning off of the passion, the commitment, of their leadership. (Mooney et al 2020)

Looking past the large, often White-led organizations that have relatively stable funding, like the Newark Museum and NJPAC, Davson shifted the focus to organizations that already have strong roots in communities. These tend to already have programming and administrative leadership that is representative of the communities that they serve, yet are the groups that are suffering the most during the pandemic as the often already under-resourced communities that support them further lose financial resources.

Tratner expanded on two of Davson’s points: the issue of racism as a system issue that controls resource distribution, and the related issue of the inadequacy of financial resources provided to smaller community programs. The latter problem in particular was playing out to an extreme degree in the most difficult phases of the pandemic. Regarding system racism, Tratner offered:

To Victor [Davson]’s point, when we talk about this problem being systemic, I think the solution must also be systemic, and so as that applies to the work of the State Arts Council, we take the responsibility very seriously. We’re charged with investing public funds and we have an obligation to do that with the most meaningful impact. And I think that what impact means, what meaningful impact means, changes as society changes. And so, what it means for us as an agency when we talk about systemic change to have real meaningful impact, it means starting internally, it means looking at education for our staff, it means looking at education for our board. This is certainly a time that financial resources will be scarce. I think we all know that. But that’s not an excuse, it can’t be an
excuse. We at the State Arts Council, our team, our board, we have to find a way to move the needle on equity now, maybe with or without the resources. Some of the ways that we’re starting to do that, we’ve been working on it for a few years, but some of the ways that we’re really leaning into that right now is through research. We’re trying to understand where the inequities are. We need to be able to point really strategically with solutions by first knowing where the problems are. We know they’re there. And so, we work with partners cross-sector, we work with some of the leadership here on this panel and the hope is that we can really move the needle on equity and our biggest charge is equity in grant making. (Mooney et al 2020)

From the perspective of public funding, Tratner worked within her role towards equitable grant making. Yet, like Schrieber, Tratner focused on educating the current grant makers rather than affecting changes now to employment or on creating systems that will generate more diverse grant makers in the immediate future. Expanding on equitable funding as it applies specifically to small and mid-sized organizations during the pandemic, Tratner added:

The arts industry in New Jersey are a very visible part of pandemic relief and without the recovery or the sustaining of this sector New Jersey life won’t really fully recover. … I think we have to remember that we’ve been relying on artists and arts organizations and arts sector workers for so much of the healing and relief and the community building and the entertainment, simply, that helps all of us stay connected and get through the situations that we’re in. The hard truth is that many of those institutions that have been serving communities for decades face permanent closure right now without financial support. I think it’s important for funders, the State Arts Council included, to keep in mind this real need for life support for these institutions and for the sector and for these workers who are at the heart of this sector who right now are on the unemployment lines too, they’ve got families to feed as well, and I think the arts sector right now is in the later phases of recovery when we talk about safety, the safe reopening. Safety is obviously the highest priority, but if we wait, it could be too late. (Mooney et al 2020)

Bringing the issue back to what pandemic recovery means for the arts, Tratner expanded on Davson’s thoughts, emphasizing the importance of the survival of smaller organizations that tend to be closer to the communities they serve, and balancing that urgency with public health safety.

As a public funding body, Tratner saw the State Arts Council as one of the entities responsible for sustaining these smaller institutions.

By centering the discussion on smaller organizations, Davson invited the audience to question what the role of the larger institutions should be within the New Jersey arts ecosystem:
We’ve had a conversation but we’re not working with each other as though this is an equal system, because the biggest concern is that anchor institutions have a responsibility to small- to mid-sized institutions that we’re not seeing in this crisis and it’s not being discussed by the anchor institutions and by anchor institutions, I’m talking about NJPAC and the Newark Museum and Rutgers and the city. There is a responsibility to the work that is done by small- to mid-sized institutions. … I remember complaining to Claudine Brown, who was at the Nathan Cummings Foundation, that I would take people straight out of school as the director of Aljira, and they would get their first jobs in the arts, and then in three years they would leave, and it really upset me until Claudine sat me down and said, Victor, what you are is a feeder institution. You provide the NJPACs of the world, the Newark Museums of the world, with these kids after they’ve been introduced into the arts as a profession. And I think the value that small- to mid-size groups are contributing to the ecosystem is not being focused on, and these are fragile organizations. They don’t have the resources, they don’t have the systems in place that most major institutions have, and I think that anchor institutions in New Jersey – I don’t want to pick on Newark – they’re not doing their share. I also think there’s a mindset of top-down funding, rather than bottom-up funding, or rather than equitable funding, and I think we are still in part in the “winner takes all” mentality. (Mooney et al 2020)

Smaller organizations connect meaningfully with communities, rely heavily on grassroots funding, and train arts administrators from their communities for potential employment within larger, more heavily resourced institutions with wider spheres of influence. Davson advocated for larger nonprofits and anchor institutions to better support smaller and mid-sized nonprofits and supplement the grassroots funding that currently sustains them. The pandemic has spotlighted the weaknesses in society, reminding everyone of the precarity of financially under-resourced communities. Large nonprofits and foundations could alleviate some of this precarity by more conscientiously contributing to wealth redistribution among community-based and community-run organizations.

The responses shared in “The Future of Arts in New Jersey” roundtable demonstrate multiple stances and layers of engagement that private groups have as they navigate the arts, community outreach and education, and equity in their administrative structures. With the diversity of approaches that are found among privately funded groups, there are equally many different approaches that organizations use to advocate for themselves and for the communities
they serve. Some nonprofits, like the Newark Museum, are turning conscientiously away from catering to the financially well-resourced communities of New Jersey and instead are turning towards the communities that geographically surround the museum. Other nonprofits, like Aljira, are already smaller and very much have an ear to the ground in their local communities. Still others, like NJPAC, continue to work towards educating themselves, but are not yet at the point of making substantial, systemic changes to their administrative structures.

### 3.4 Conclusion

The advocacy efforts currently underway by public and private groups shed light on the intentions of various levels and factions of education governance. It betrays the deep damage caused by state takeovers, state-wide standards-based testing, and the privatization of education, which we find outside of and within democratic processes when democratic processes are corrupted by purposefully hierarchizing legislation that restricts self-governance. Groups like Americans for the Arts, NAfME, and Arts Ed NJ are advocating for public policy to be more expansive, yet rarely, if ever, broach issues of race and class. Meanwhile, groups like the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Newark Museum, the Aljira Center for Contemporary Art, and NJPAC are advocating (to varying degrees) for more equitable arts offerings and arts education structures, but have little influence over public policy, and thus have limited influence over improving educational experience for all students. Nonprofit groups that are offering music education within public schools persistently struggle to balance finding funding for the immediate future with long-term planning and designing culturally relevant curricula.

The traumas and slowed learning pace of the COVID-19 pandemic have renewed fears of defunding arts education, even in financially well-resourced communities. The focus on supporting grassroots advocacy by nonprofits and funders at the federal and state level
demonstrates their awareness of the importance of community-driven advocacy. Their underselling of the role of racial and class hierarchies in this struggle for comprehensive, quality education, however, betrays their unawareness (voluntary or involuntary) of the root causes of the problems that have led to the immeasurably worse pandemic conditions for under-resourced, minoritized areas. Without ensuring that grassroots advocacy is supported in these communities specifically and with a purposeful recognition of the oppression built into education policy historically, nonprofits and funders are perpetuating the withholding of resources from these areas and continuing to impose White supremacist notions of music education content and pedagogy, furthering wealth inequalities that are tied to culture and race.

Community-driven work, in which people who are deeply familiar with local, lived realities (students and parents especially) direct current and future education practices, is the key to striking the balance between assuaging the harm perpetuated in the present moment and preventing more harm in the future. Grassroots activism is being supported overall as a way to counteract the societal stressors of the pandemic. To break the cycle of hegemonizing and hierarchizing education funding and pedagogy practices, funders supplementing public education in low-income school districts must ensure that their work does not hinder or counter the grassroots efforts of the communities they serve, and advocates must work not only to secure funding, but to influence culturally sustainable changes to music teacher training and music education curricula.
Chapter 4: Music Education Nonprofits

Non-profit organizations that have established relationships with schools vary immensely in their approach to music education pedagogy and repertoire. In this chapter, I focus on some of the low-cost programs in New Jersey cities to offer some considerations of how music education nonprofits interact with public schools to achieve varying degrees of longevity and community responsiveness. With the dense, racialized and classed policy and with the limited funding that comes from federal and state governments, many schools in low-income areas are not able to fund the thorough education that New Jersey requires, so public schools are forced to turn to private entities to fulfill even the basic requirements. These private entities, usually in the form of non-profit organizations, can only serve public school students within the constraints posed by their private funders and within the constraints posed by the instability of the underfunded public-school administrations. Yet, even though these nonprofits typically do not have the capacity to serve all of the students in a district, without them, many, if not all, of their students would not receive in-school music education.

Within this reality, how can music education nonprofit administrators ensure that their services are benefitting their students in ways that are responsive both to the educational demands that are not being met by the public schools and to the local community’s values? I use theories of public-private partnerships and marketization within neoliberal capitalism as well as the values explored by the theories and practices of culturally sustaining pedagogy for this analysis. Ultimately, it is through a focus on lasting relationships between the nonprofit, public school administrators, and community members, along with a willingness on the part of the nonprofit and its funders to be flexible and responsive to changing community needs and dynamics, that nonprofits can responsibly fill educational gaps in a way that simultaneously
works to transfer financial and administrative power to democratically led, equitably and sustainably executed public school music education programs as these public programs form and grow.

4.1 A Snapshot of Funding Networks: Newark, 2018

As an example of the offerings found in New Jersey coming out of the state takeovers and the multiculturalist moment of the 1990s to 2000s, I examine the structure of free or low-cost music education with private funding in Newark, New Jersey, in 2018. Newark is one of the many New Jersey cities to have had its public schools taken over by the state government; this takeover lasted from 1995 until 2017. The programs I describe here were established during the political and economic restraints on public education that resulted from the state takeover.79

The free or low-cost music education for adolescents is provided mainly through the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra Youth Orchestras and through Arts High School, a free, public magnet (application required) school in Newark. Acceptance into these programs, however, requires years of music lessons, access to expensive instruments, and hundreds if not thousands of hours of practice time. The financial and temporal constraints of such a preparation are prohibitive for many families. To address these inequitable barriers to access, two major music organizations provide low-cost preparations for youth who are interested in learning music: New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (NJSO) and New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJPAC), both located in Newark, partner to provide Music Advancement for Newark-area Youth (MANY) and NJSO alone offers Character, Achievement and Music Project (CHAMPS).

MANY describes itself as “[a] partnership designed to provide students in the Newark area with high-quality instrumental music instruction” (New Jersey Symphony Orchestra n.d.c).

79 The research for this section was completed in 2018. Music Advancement for Newark-area Youth (MANY) is no longer running, though Character, Achievement and Music Project (CHAMPS) is.
Because it is low-cost,

MANY also aims to prepare young instrumentalists for acceptance into performance-based educational programs within the community, including Arts High School Orchestra and Concert Band, Newark School of the Arts, NJPAC Brick City Jazz Orchestra and Wells Fargo Jazz for Teens program, and NJSO Youth Orchestras. (New Jersey Symphony Orchestra n.d.c)

MANY offers band and orchestra lessons for grades five through ten. Tuition is only fifty dollars annually and financial assistance is available. Students without an instrument can pay an extra fee to rent one (New Jersey Symphony Orchestra n.d.c). MANY aims to teach students to play orchestral instruments in preparation for selective music education programs in the future:

MANY ensembles help students develop instrumental proficiency while building leadership skills and preparing them for acceptance into performance-based educational programs within the Greater Newark community. These include Arts High School Orchestra and Concert Band, Newark School of the Arts, NJPAC Brick City Jazz Orchestra, Wells Fargo Jazz for Teens and NJSO Youth Orchestras. (New Jersey Symphony Orchestra 2016)

This partnership between NJSO and NJPAC was announced in October 2014 (New Jersey Performing Arts Center 2014). A wide variety of charitable bodies fund MANY by funding the education endeavors of NJSO and/or NJPAC (see fig. 8 for a visual representation of MANY and CHAMPS funders). The extensive list of national, corporate foundations and small, family foundations demonstrates the variety of investors in this form of music education.

An organizer of MANY within NJPAC explained that MANY targets Newark area youth of all socioeconomic statuses. They do not hold qualifying auditions in order to join the program; rather, it is open to students of all skill and knowledge levels. On the first day of the program, instructors hold basic placement classes that inform the placement of students into various

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ensembles and theory classes. The ages of the majority of participants range from between ten to thirteen years old – around middle school-aged, though the program offers classes to more advanced students as well. The organizer expressed the hope that MANY will introduce Newark area youth to band and orchestra at a young age so that they may progress to similar other programs, including others offered through NJPAC. Enrollment numbers depend on the physical space available in classrooms and the number of staff involved. In 2017, for example, MANY was able to offer seats to around fifty students.\footnote{MANY Organizer, interview by author, May 22, 2018, by phone.}

Figure 8: Funders of MANY and CHAMPS.

CHAMPS is one of many El Sistema-based programs in New Jersey. El Sistema is a
system of music education initiated by José Antonio Abreu in Caracas, Venezuela, that has since spread throughout Venezuela and throughout the world. El Sistema programs are community focused and teach music to students from low-income families using low-cost programs. El Sistema in Venezuela is an orchestra program that mainly teaches elite, Western European music, though many programs that are inspired by El Sistema have branched out into other ensembles and genres. El Sistema USA, “A National Alliance of El Sistema Inspired Programs,” describes its vision as “an on-going inquiry into the most effective ways to achieve the youth development goals that we all share through the rigors and rewards of orchestral music instruction.” (El Sistema USA n.d.). Most of the students who participate in El Sistema-based programs in the United States are from low-income communities that generally do not have access to substantive arts education through public channels nor through individually funded lessons (Holochwost et al 2017). CHAMPS offers music instruction for up to fifty students in grades three through six. Their instruction is limited to violin, viola, and cello. Students in CHAMPS perform alongside NJSO and NJSO Youth Orchestras, a more competitive group of middle- and high-school students who must audition for a spot in the orchestra (New Jersey Symphony Orchestra n.d.b) (see fig. 8 for a visual representation of MANY and CHAMPS funders).  

CHAMPS offers after-school music instruction to up to fifty students through a partnership with Philip’s Academy Charter School in Newark (New Jersey Symphony Orchestra n.d.b). Philip’s Academy Charter School has two locations, one in Newark and one in Patterson, 

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NJ. Newark is the original location of the charter school, founded in 1988. It currently serves kindergarten through eighth grade. These two schools boast a teacher retention rate of 96% from the past year, with most teachers staying for about seven years.\textsuperscript{83} Teachers have an average of over ten years of experience. Class sizes are small and student retention is at 95% with a 95% college acceptance rate (Philip’s Academy Newark n.d.).

The CHAMPS website links to two reports that describe the potential positive effects of El Sistema-based music education programs. The U.S. National El Sistema Study, conducted through the Longy School of Music of Bard College and WolfBrown, attempts to measure “musical performance, socioemotional behaviors, and school success” among roughly 500 students participating in El Sistema-based programs around the United States (Johnson et al. 2016, 3). The findings showed that El Sistema-based programs do lead to a statistically significant degree of musical growth. Socioemotional growth, however, was not found to be statistically significant; this trait was measured in terms of “growth mindset (the belief that one’s basic qualities – such as intelligence or musical ability – are due to one’s actions and efforts rather than to a fixed trait or talent.)” (Johnson et al. 2016, 6; for a structural critique of growth mindset, see Bradbury 2019). Furthermore, among the 315 students for whom English Language Arts and Mathematics grades were available, the results, which measured school success based on grades and school engagement, were not statistically significant either (Johnson et al. 2016).

The following year, Longy School of Music of Bard College and WolfBrown supported further research on El Sistema-based music programs to continue investigating their original claims (Holochwost et al. 2017). The aim of this research was to determine whether and to what

\textsuperscript{83} For comparison, one source reported, “About 18% of Newark teachers left the district or retired between the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, according to the most recent data — nearly twice the statewide rate” (Wall 2019).
extent “participating in making live music might play a role in addressing the inequalities that many children and families face” (Holochwost et al. 2017, 3). This study limited its research questions to musical growth and socioemotional growth. It included 764 students from grades three through five across the United States. The study implemented surveys, musical assessments, and academic grades to compare students in El Sistema-based programs with other students in the same school classrooms. They again found that students did develop musical skills. They also found a significant increase in growth mindset among students who participated for at least two years. The other areas of socioemotional growth that were measured – perseverance and cooperation – were found to be statistically significantly higher for male students in El Sistema-based programs but not for female students. The researchers highlighted the need for those developing El Sistema-based programs to be conscientious of various means of fostering musical and socioemotional growth, as these types of growth are not inherent to any form of music education (Holochwost et al. 2017).

MANY and CHAMPS are part of the NJSO Academy, which also encompasses the Youth Orchestras for middle and high school students (low-cost but audition required). The NJSO Academy is the Coach-in-Residence Program that “fosters unique partnerships with schools and districts to provide regular coaching sessions by NJSO musicians in residence, supplementing instrumental music teachers’ weekly in-school instruction,” clinics, masterclasses, and performances in area schools, and a preschool program (New Jersey Symphony Orchestra n.d.a). Especially through the clinics, masterclasses, and performances, NJSO extends itself quite deeply into music education throughout the public school system. Similar to NJSO, NJPAC offers in-school residencies and visits to schools as well as extra-curricular programs. For participation in programs that are not low-cost, NJPAC offers financial
aid to all students who demonstrate need and acceptance is need-blind (New Jersey Performing Arts Center n.d.b). MANY and CHAMPS portray themselves as training programs to prepare their students for further study in music at the high school level. MANY and CHAMPS teach only elite, Western European music and jazz.

The most extensive free (publicly and privately funded) music education available to high school aged students is through Arts High School in Newark.\(^8^4\) It endeavors to prepare all of its students for careers in the arts. Harrison E. Webb, the first principal of the school, is quoted on school website as he described the basic philosophy on which the school was founded: “It was taken for granted that art and drama were to be regarded as major pursuits, comparable in importance to Latin, mathematics and the sciences in an academic high school” (Newark Board of Education n.d.d). The website also attests that “[t]he aim [of the school] is to provide all students with the artistic and academic knowledge, skills, and exposure necessary to develop into accomplished creative artists and performers” (Newark Board of Education n.d.d). Arts High School describes itself as a “tuition-free, donation-dependent, public magnet school” and boasts a medium-sized student body of roughly 700 students, a low student-teacher ratio, high graduation rate, and large number of honors and AP courses (Newark Board of Education n.d.a). Arts High School stops accepting new students after the tenth grade (while MANY offers instruction until the tenth grade). Like the preparatory MANY and CHAMPS programs, Arts High School only offers lessons in elite, Western European music and jazz. Arts High school offers instrumental, vocal, piano, and strings concentrations (Newark Board of Education n.d.a).

\(^8^4\) Arts High School relies on an extensive network of partnerships with private organizations. Examining the Arts High School website and its calendar in the spring semester of 2018 leads to a list of arts partnerships and non-arts partnerships that include: NJPAC, Colonial Symphony, Thelonious Monk Institute Peer-to-Peer Septet, NJSO, Newark Arts Council, Institute of Jazz Studies of Rutgers University – Newark, Prudential Center: Grammy Museum Experience, Hahne & Company Building: Express Newark, WBGO Jazz Radio; Partnership for a Drug Free NJ, NAACP, Whole Foods, Leaders of the 21st Century, Newark Mommies, Greater Newark Conservancy, Truzack Foundation, Newark Museum (Newark Board of Education n.d.b).
While NJPAC does offer a Hip Hop Intensive program with two levels covering ages ten through thirteen, the cost is $300 and each session only lasts eleven weeks (New Jersey Performing Arts Center n.d.a). Additionally, while financial aid is available for the hip hop program, it is not designed as an outreach and preparatory program in the same way that the Western European and jazz music programs are. The hip hop program is focused on developing skills related to hip hop. It does not, however, list any potential connection to future music education (New Jersey Symphony Orchestra n.d.a). Conversely, MANY is described as preparing students for more elite programs, such as “Arts High School Orchestra and Concert Band, Newark School of the Arts, NJPAC Brick City Jazz Orchestra, Wells Fargo Jazz for Teens program and NJSO Youth Orchestras” (New Jersey Symphony Orchestra 2017). Other forms of music, especially forms that may be more popular among young people such as pop, hip hop, reggaeton, and salsa still do not have the necessary elite cultural capital in education environments to win funding for large-scale programs in the same way that Western classical music and jazz are able to do.

Despite teaching only a limited range of music, these programs portray their offerings as universally relatable and beneficial. MANY, CHAMPS, and Arts High School all repeatedly use the broad terms “music” or “instrumental music” to describe their offerings. There are no references to elite, Western European music genres (like classical music, baroque music, etc.) in the website descriptions. Yet, their programs only include elite, Western European music, and they only offer ensembles that are organized as conductor-led orchestras and bands. Furthermore, within these elite genres, concert programs list only White, male composers of elite, Western European music and of jazz, most of them European with the occasional American (e.g., New Jersey Symphony Orchestra 2017; New Jersey Stage 2017). This gives the false impression that
elite, Western European music is a universal form of music that requires no descriptors, both highly culturally valuable and yet able to be consumed by all. It also upholds the idealization of the (often dead) White male as the creative genius, even in culturally Black genres like jazz. Music education programs that are formulated around conductor-led orchestras and bands also construct themselves as universal in their terminology regarding potential benefits. In its vision, El Sistema USA even goes so far as to claim universal “youth development goals that we all share” (El Sistema USA n.d.). As an El Sistema-based program, CHAMPS attempts to reach these unclear yet supposedly universal goals through teaching orchestral music.

According to the reports described above, El Sistema-based programs like CHAMPS do not focus entirely or even necessarily primarily on musical skill development; rather, their main focus is on how music might address societal inequalities in the lives of students in low-income communities (Holochwost et al. 2017). Yet, within this structure that largely allows elite, Western European music to monopolize music education spaces, the results of these programs are overall not promising, especially as they apply to academic achievements and socio-emotional growth (Johnson et al. 2016). The Longy School of Music of Bard College and WolfBrown study did highlight the need for programs to develop specific methods to foster musical and socioemotional growth (Holochwost et al. 2017). Their acknowledgement that El Sistema-based programs do not inherently offer non-musical benefits is significant. It suggests that the development of these non-musical skills are not associated with the genre of music that is taught, but rather the pedagogical methods. While the vast majority of research concerning the benefits of music education examines education in Western European music as universally applicable, culturally sustaining pedagogy is predicated on the diversification of content and pedagogy in music classrooms and the recognition and mobilization of political awareness.
among participating students. A larger focus needs to be placed on these elements of education if schools are to address systemic inequalities and if students across the board are to grow musically, academically, and socioemotionally.

MANY and CHAMPS, however, still function within marketizing structures that support the musical education of certain students over others. While El Sistema was founded in a socialist country, El Sistema-based programs in the United States are typically privately run. Additionally, through partnering with a charter school, albeit not a charter school that is part of a national network, CHAMPS further aligns itself with the broader project of privatized, marketized education. Because MANY only educates students until the tenth grade and CHAMPS until the sixth grade, students then have limited options outside of auditioning for Arts High School or NJSO Youth Orchestras for continuing musical studies in a way that does not pose a financial burden to the students and their families. To account for this possible transition to audition-based programs in order to continue their lessons, many El Sistema-based programs encourage their students to have a “growth mindset,” as advocated by the U.S. National El Sistema Study referenced above (Johnson et al 2016). Yet, encouraging a growth mindset fails to account for the systemic inequalities within neoliberal, marketizing education structures that limit the number of students who are served by each program.

The selection process for entry into Arts High School begins at a very young age, which is not acknowledged by the logic of Arts High School. Entry into Arts High School is determined exclusively by audition for performing arts programs or by portfolio for visual arts programs; academic grades, scores, and achievements are not considered (Newark Board of Education n.d.c). Students have access to this high school only if they have had years of lessons leading up to high school. MANY and CHAMPS do prepare students to audition for Arts High School; yet,
the privately funded programs like MANY and CHAMPS are not able to serve the entire youth population of Newark. Approximately one hundred students are served annually through MANY and CHAMPS together, for the entire Newark area. Other students are dependent on financial aid to attend pricier music education options. Yet, the education philosophy of Arts High School focuses on the preparation for “all students” to be able to succeed as artists. Even without lessons, musical instruments are prohibitively expensive, as well. While Webb stated that the Arts High School “regarded [the arts] as major pursuits,” this is true only for the students that have access to the years of preparation necessary to successfully gain admission (Newark Board of Education n.d.d).

This restrictive music education tracks students in under-resourced schools who have access to music lessons towards professional careers while it removes music education from the vast majority of minoritized students’ experiences in under-resourced schools. In addition to the artistically restrictive structures of conductor-led, institutionalized music creation, notions of talent in conservatories of both elite, Western European music (Kingsbury 1988) and jazz (Wilf 2014) support ideas that only some students have the ability to succeed as professional musicians. Combined with the increased pressure on students and their families to make the best use of students’ abilities and interests under neoliberal funding structures, the decreased access to publicly funded music education reinforces social Darwinist notions of ability (see Apple 1993 for a discussion of the social Darwinist effects of the marketization of schools). Furthermore, though not all of these programs aim to produce professional musicians, the limited focus on elite, Western European music is still counterintuitive to any end goals of producing professional musicians, who would benefit from versatility and a wide range of skills. Thus, as the marketization of arts education proliferates, control over access to music education tightens, and
minoritized students are further relegated to labor positions based on class and race.

Undergirding all of these approaches to music education is a neoconservative project that values elite, Western European music over other forms of music, portraying it as universal and broadly beneficial to multiple areas of youth development. Meanwhile, it gives other forms of music, like hip hop, a place in education at a cost. Private education is also only available to a limited number of students, so none of these programs address the roots of inadequate and inequitable education policies. Notably, the funders supporting and partnering with NJSO education programs, NJPAC education programs, and Arts High School have considerable overlap. NJSO and NJPAC receive funding from some of the same small and large foundations. Arts High School draws on partnerships with NJSO and NJPAC to supplement education opportunities, tying the funders together in intricate and somewhat self-propagating ways in that MANY and CHAMPS prepare students for Arts High School and NJSO Youth Orchestras, which all benefit from much of the same funding. Such neoliberal funding practices that mask the structural inequalities of competitive individualism reinforce the hidden structures that build strong cultural capital around elite, Western European music and jazz (as composed by White men) without questioning them. Other genres of music and other forms of pedagogy that do not depend on traditional orchestra and band arrangements struggle to build and maintain such an extensive network of funding and partnerships.

That being said, when attempting to research MANY and CHAMPS, I struggled to maintain a long-term connection with their overhead organizations – NJPAC in particular. My experience struggling to build a relationship with NJPAC, along with a number of other nonprofits, is indicative of the struggles that schools and nonprofits face when attempting to
create partnerships with each other. Despite the extensive funding networks that a large organization like NJPAC has built over time, the high personnel turnover at the service level sabotages many of the institutional partnerships that are ultimately built on interpersonal relationships; this was also the case with attempted partnerships between NJPAC and Concord Public Schools.

Turnover in the education and outreach positions of many nonprofits and foundations is high due to relatively low salaries and long hours. A similar trend can be seen in under-resourced public schools. Districts with many “failing” schools (per Every Student Succeeds Act definitions) tend to have high turnover rates of superintendents and school board members, a problem exacerbated by state takeover procedures. Each new school leader might offer drastically different ideas from the last regarding how best to serve students. Non-profit music education programs frequently face roadblocks when beginning and maintaining partnerships

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85 The instability of music education non-profit programs in public schools is clearly illustrated by Music Education Program A, located in a low-income, predominantly Black and Hispanic city that has fairly recently regained control over its own school district. Program A maintained a partnership with a particular elementary school for four and a half years, until the summer of 2019. After those years of successfully maintaining that partnership, Program A expanded into the middle school where they thought their elementary school students were headed. It turned out that their younger students were actually mostly going to a different middle school, but the partnership had already been established, so Program A had to bus most of their students over after school. The arts supervisor of the middle school, however, turned out to be volatile. He wasn't willing to see anything in writing and did not want Program A working with others. This arts supervisor wanted to be in control of all decisions. Eventually, the relationship turned sour over a staffing issue, an ugly personal situation. For a while, Program A was in ongoing conversations with the district to try to repair that relationship. After leaving the public schools, in the 2019-2020 school year, Program A changed their partnership to be with a local church instead. Partnerships are reliant on very positive relationships with schools. Nonprofits need clear agreements with the schools much earlier than Program A obtained one. A clear agreement could have prevented the relationship from turning sour. In their partnership with the church, Program A still employs three public school teachers. Partnering with the church, however, is a lot more expensive than partnering with the public schools because now Program A has to pay for the space they use. There is a lot more autonomy through the church partnership, though. For example, there is a literacy-based group in the church that partners with Program A, which is the type of interdisciplinary collaboration that would have been a lot more difficult in a public school. Additionally, the YMCA offers a food program to afterschool programs that needed certain paperwork that the public schools were not able provide regarding the quality of the building (public schools are allowed to lapse on building codes, so they did not comply with the YMCA requirements). The church, on the other hand, does comply and could provide the necessary paperwork, so Program A is now able to offer this food program to their students. Yet, their partnership with the public schools is over (Director of Music Education Program A, interview by author, May 18, 2020, virtual).

86 Melissa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, virtual.
with schools due to the high rates of turnover on both sides. While a particular music education non-profit may have had a productive relationship with one superintendent or arts supervisor, the next superintendent may decide to partner with a different non-profit or may decide to focus on other areas of education altogether. This further destabilizes the relationships between nonprofit administrators and communities as well as between the educators hired by nonprofits and their students. Because of their unstable position within school districts, advocacy by music education nonprofits at the local level frequently takes two forms: advocacy for music education generally and advocacy for their program specifically. For equitable education offerings to exist, the offerings need to be sustainable.

4.2 Nonprofit Administration at Concord Music Project

Concord Music Project (CMP) was founded in January, 2013, under Director Sarah, with Education Director Lisa, to serve Concord, NJ. Contrary to the high turnover trend among education nonprofits and schools in low-income areas, CMP has managed to maintain key personnel over time and, in a directly related way, has built a relatively secure, long-lasting, and even growing music education program. Periodically from the spring of 2020 to the spring of 2022, I spoke with Sarah, Lisa, CMP teaching artists, and Melissa, the Concord Public Schools arts administrator, to learn about CMP, its aims, and its relationship with Concord communities. What follows is primarily an account of CMP as told by Sarah and Lisa. This account outlines the beginnings of CMP, their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and their future within the Concord Public School District.

4.2.1 Concord Music Project: Beginnings

87 The role of an arts supervisor typically is to coordinate arts education and manage long-term arts education planning.
88 All names and locations have been changed for anonymity, including the name of the music education nonprofit.
89 Concord Music Project receives funding and support from a wide variety of local and national foundations.
CMP, one of the main groups offering music classes (in-school and extra-curricular) to students in Concord, is affiliated with the two major New Jersey music education nonprofits. CMP is also part of a state-wide group of similar music programs that meets to offer programming for students and professional development for teachers. As an El Sistema-based program, CMP is also part of El Sistema USA. They charge only a $75 registration fee. Until 2020, CMP exclusively offered string lessons, and was the only group in Concord – public or private – to offer affordable strings lessons. Since then, they have expanded to offer choir, drum, brass, and guitar lessons as well. Over the years, they have offered group after-school, weekend, and in-school lessons, summer camps, and private lessons.\(^\text{90}\)

When students go home from the CMP afterschool program, they take their instruments home to practice. Students hold two concerts in the 2021 to 2022 school year – one at Concord’s high school and one at a local university – as well as juries at the end of the year to test their progress. CMP students are also occasionally asked to play at galas and other similar events. Students are expected to show up ready to learn and to maintain satisfactory grades and behavior in school. If students’ grades drop or if they require some tutoring, CMP offers makeup lessons until the students’ grades return to the higher standards (CMP Parent Orientation, November 2021).

Concord houses one of the school districts that the New Jersey State Government took over in the 1990s; control was only recently returned to the local school district. In the 2010 to 2011 school year, the New Jersey state government eliminated all arts programs in Concord, to the point that an estimated three quarters of all New Jersey students without any access to the arts were located in Concord. 2017 saw a new superintendent who reinstated arts education in the

\(^{90}\) Sarah, interview by author, March 23, 2020, virtual.
2018 to 2019 school year after community groups pressured the schools to allocate funds to reinstate the arts. Again in the 2019 to 2020 school year, however, budget cuts led to the removal of music teachers because of teacher union contracts that dictate that the last person hired must be the first person fired.\(^{91}\) Additionally, Concord schools did not have an arts supervisor until the fall of 2021; previously, arts classes were under the humanities supervisor broadly, but school budgets were spread thin prior to the COVID-19 pandemic Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) funds from the Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, passed March 27, 2020, and music was not the priority (15 USC § 9001). As of 2020, no Concord schools offered string lessons, though some were able to offer band lessons.\(^{92}\) With state oversight now finally over and an arts supervisor in place, Concord is beginning again to build its in-school, publicly funded arts programming again.

The public school district has been a key partner in ensuring the survival of CMP. In a true public-private partnership, CMP receives money from contracts with public schools as well as from private donations and foundations. CMP started serving students in 2013 through a partnership with a charter school, primarily using private funding from the Dodge Foundation, which was interested in funding music education in Concord after the Arts Ed NJ report demonstrated that so many of the students in New Jersey who do not have access to music are in Concord (Arts Ed NJ n.d.b). CMP served thirty students at this charter school during its first year. Education nonprofits often begin serving schools through partnerships with charter schools since charter schools receive some private funding and therefore have more independence than public schools and are able to create partnerships with nonprofits without as much bureaucracy to sift through. Gaining a contract and proving a successful first year (or first few years) can

\(^{91}\) Bob Morrison of Arts Ed NJ, interview by author, February 13, 2020, by phone.
\(^{92}\) Sarah, interview by author, March 23, 2020, virtual.
open opportunities for contracts with public schools. The person running the after-school programs at this charter school with which CMP partnered also happened to be on the Concord School District’s Board of Education. She was able to connect Sarah with the superintendent, who agreed to open a new CMP site that would serve two public schools and gave $100,000 in funding to CMP to do so.93

Thus, after one year, the partnership with the charter school proved that CMP was then able to partner with the public schools. Sarah now works very closely with the assistant superintendent. Sarah sees this as partly due to timing because the district had already been interested in getting an El Sistema-based program started, and CMP was the first one to show up. Sarah and Lisa began working for CMP at this point, when they were recruiting their first students.94 CMP later spread into even more schools in the district, both public and charter. By 2020, CMP’s budget had grown to $500,000 per year, with about half coming from fundraising and grants and the other half from contracts with public and charter schools, and CMP had expanded to reach over 200 students in ten schools. The majority of the students they accept are in early elementary school, though they now offer lessons in grades one through twelve.95

There is plenty of advocacy within the district for more arts, but Concord also has a lot of challenges with lack of resources. Leading up to Concord regaining full control over their public schools, the city had been slowly and unevenly regaining some control from the state. The city budget was never big enough to offer a thorough education, however, resulting in more low standardized testing scores, so the state persistently and repeatedly reclaimed their power. CMP is relatively secure within this environment, with a good relationship with the superintendent,

93 Sarah, interview by author, March 23, 2020, virtual.
94 Sarah, interview by author, May 11, 2020, virtual.
95 Sarah, interview by author, March 23, 2020, virtual.
assistant superintendent, and school board. They also have good public relations from concerts around the state and preliminary data from an ongoing study shows improved grades and attendance in schools among students who attend their programs.\footnote{Sarah, interview by author, March 23, 2020, virtual.} For CMP going forward, even within the pandemic, there is currently a great deal of energy in the district for more arts. In addition to their advocacy for themselves through the network they have built, CMP is also a large source of funding for the school district, since they attract private funding, too.\footnote{Sarah, interview by author, May 11, 2020, virtual.}

Because of her experience, Sarah is a proponent of institutional partnerships, not personal partnerships, to create a stable presence in schools. Creating institutional partnerships requires trust and allyship that is built over time. CMP, for example, has grown to have one program parent, one student, and the original charter school contact on the school board, as well as the mayor's daughter enrolled in their program. This provides them with advocates that will remain vocal even with a superintendent or CMP leadership turnover.\footnote{Sarah, interview by author, May 11, 2020, virtual.} By establishing connections throughout the community, CMP models how non-profits, and potentially other community groups as well, can establish stable, long-lasting ties with schools.

At the same time that music education nonprofits are advocating for their own entrenchment in public school structures, a repeating theme in my conversations with music education nonprofits (including CMP) and their funders is their desire to become obsolete. They aim to use their experiences to provide the state and local governments with enough data supporting the value of a music education that the state will take on music education themselves and offer it universally. For example, Sarah understood that students in Concord Public Schools were not receiving an adequate education due to the cycles of oppression guided largely by the
state takeover process and by standards-based, high-stakes testing. Wanting to help, she stepped in to offer some students an improved education by adding music classes to their curricula. CMP also works to advocate for teachers and help districts strategize politically when planning future budgets and actions. Prior to the district hiring an arts supervisor, there were extensive gaps in communication between levels of education systems and a general lack of coordination. It was unclear what the district’s goals are for students in the short or long term. Ideally to Sarah, CMP would not be needed and the public schools would be able to offer an excellent and well-rounded education on their own. At the present time, though, this is not the case.  

The efforts of CMP to become obsolete, however, have encountered tensions with their efforts to serve students. The goal of CMP is never to replace music teachers that are already employed by public schools. According to Sarah, the pattern of replacement has been a point of contention between other El Sistema-based groups and educators, and it is a point that CMP is actively trying to understand and address as CMP grows large enough to appear threatening to the public-school music teachers. CMP experienced this when the school district, which at the time lacked an arts supervisor, decided that CMP would expand into a new school during the school day to offer strings instruction. They decided that this expansion would best serve students at a performing arts elementary school, where there was already a well-established and well-loved band program. Shortly after beginning this partnership, it came out that the established music teachers felt that CMP was taking students and resources away from the band that they worked so hard to build and maintain. The director of CMP did not foresee this problem, but worked with teachers to address it. The COVID-19 pandemic began before these tensions with the public-school teachers were able to be resolved, adding to the complication of

99 Sarah, interview by author, May 11, 2020, virtual.
100 Sarah, interview by author, May 11, 2020, virtual.
the situation. Ultimately, CMP decided to leave this school as it pursued a new strategic plan.

This sort of problem is easily avoided under the guidance of a district arts supervisor.\footnote{Sarah, interview by author, August 10, 2021, virtual.}

This overstepping of CMP on the established music education program appears to be an issue, in large part, of poor communication, yet with potentially severe repercussions. Activist Paul Kivel describes such conflict as common in non-profit activities:

Ruling-class policies, including development of the non-profit sector and support for social services, have led to the co-optation of substantial numbers of well-intentioned people. In this group I include all of us whose intention is to “help” people at the bottom of the pyramid, but whose work, in practice, helps perpetuate their inability to change the circumstances which force them to need this assistance in the first place. Ultimately, our efforts end up benefiting the ruling class by actively supporting the current exploitative structure. Rather than helping others, we need to develop ways to work together to create community power. (Kivel 2007, 140).

Directors of music education programs are, by and large, “well-intentioned people” who seek to help. They are not actively trying to place students in under-resourced schools at any further disadvantage. Yet, without extensive coordination among the various leaders (district administrators, nonprofit directors, school principals, teachers, etc.) who have knowledge and understanding of the mechanisms of subjugation through privatization within late capitalism, nonprofits can easily reproduce the “exploitative structure” that draws funding away from public education. By duplicating services that the public school was already offering due to poor communication within the district, CMP accidentally placed the publicly funded, democratically organized music education program at risk of losing some of its funding.

Even with an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms by which the privatization of public education is self-perpetuating, nonprofits cannot always find ways of sustaining non-exploitative relationships with public schools. Returning to Kivel’s solution, “Rather than helping others, we need to develop ways to work together to create community power,” drives
home one of the fundamental faults in many non-profit structures: the power differentials (social, political, and economic) between non-profit employees and the members of the communities targeted to receive their services (Kivel 2007, 140). Music education non-profits cannot break down the hierarchizing structures of education privatization to universalize access to quality education solely by working within those structures. At the same time, without these non-profits, even fewer students would be receiving music education in the present moment. As Concord, along with the rest of the world, plunged into the COVID-19 pandemic, CMP and Concord Public Schools, with unprecedented amounts of emergency funding from the federal government, took on some of these community-based changes with a new level of dedication.

4.2.2 Concord Music Project Adapts to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Calls for Anti-Racism

Once the COVID-19 pandemic started, CMP, along with institutions around the world, made sudden changes. CMP surveyed students to figure out who wanted to continue lessons in an online format and who needed access to the necessary electronic equipment. Approximately fifty percent of the students signed on, which was around the same amount or a bit more than similar programs in the area. The students who did not sign on were typically students whose parents worked out of the house, whose families were under added stress, or who individually had lower motivation to study music. Students began receiving between one and eight hours of virtual instruction each week, including a one-hour private lesson, a one-hour group lesson (which was less effective than virtual private lessons in terms of building musical skills, but still important for students’ socializing and ensemble practice), a virtual drum circle that practiced rhythm activities on any instrument or makeshift instrument, and a hangout with students and staff every other week, in which students and staff performed, played games, and worked
through some social-emotional learning (SEL) activities.\textsuperscript{102}

CMP also opened six new classes once a week to all students, not just those formally enrolled in CMP, including four more virtual drum circles, one general music class in English with a focus on music technology and making little instruments at home, and one bilingual general music class in Spanish and English taught by a Colombian woman on different rhythms and musical cultures from the communities represented by the students. Approximately one hundred students signed up for these open lessons and approximately sixty had logged on by the end of the first couple of months that CMP was offering them. After seeing their success and reach, Sarah wanted to continue the community (non-CMP student) classes in the fall as a way to realize the CMP mission under these very different circumstances.\textsuperscript{103}

In Sarah’s view, these new circumstances necessitated new interpretations of CMP’s goals; while still focused on music development and community development, CMP now executed that vision by expanding past group orchestra classes. She stated, “We need to continually rethink and redefine who we are within our mission.” Thus, at the start of the pandemic, Sarah maintained CMP’s relevance by offering more open classes and by taking advantage of students’ access to their own laptops to teach some basic music technology skills.\textsuperscript{104}

While navigating their new interpretation of their vision during the spring and summer of 2020, CMP was not told which schools would renew their contracts with CMP in the fall of 2020 until late in the summer, since budgets were still not finalized and schools again considered deprioritizing music in this time of crisis. CMP was also navigating the lack of clarity around

\textsuperscript{102} Sarah, interview by author, May 11, 2020, virtual.
\textsuperscript{103} Sarah, interview by author, May 11, 2020, virtual.
\textsuperscript{104} Sarah, interview by author, May 11, 2020, virtual.
whether lessons would remain virtual in the 2020 to 2021 school year, which they did, and whether they would still be affiliated with specific schools, a structure they have since moved away from.\textsuperscript{105} Despite the initial uncertainty, since lockdown began in March 2020, private foundations have provided exceedingly large amounts of funding to nonprofits everywhere; education nonprofits that partner with public schools are also seeing funding through the ESSER funds.\textsuperscript{106} With this, CMP was able to continue offering lessons and even expand their formal enrollment.\textsuperscript{107}

Sarah described a wonderful core of students – the majority of CMP students – who stuck with CMP throughout the pandemic, continuing their music lessons in full capacity virtually.\textsuperscript{108} Still, there was also significant attrition by students who did not want to learn virtually or who were unable to do so based on family circumstances. At the same time, CMP was also able to add some new students when they switched to virtual lessons, many of whom continued with CMP after they switched back to in-person learning in the fall of 2021.\textsuperscript{109} These students who newly joined CMP during the start of the pandemic received general music lessons in choir and hand drumming at first; those who continued to attend CMP at the start of the next school year began to also receive instrumental instruction.\textsuperscript{110} (Sarah was not sure initially if that was because

\textsuperscript{105} Sarah, interview by author, May 11, 2020, virtual.
\textsuperscript{106} On ESSER funds: the Department awarded these grants to State educational agencies (SEAs) for the purpose of providing local educational agencies (LEAs), including charter schools that are LEAs, with emergency relief funds to address the impact that COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on elementary and secondary schools across the Nation. ESSER Fund awards to SEAs are in the same proportion as each State received funds under Part A of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, in fiscal year 2019. (15 USC § 9001)
\textsuperscript{107} Sarah, interview by author, February 26, 2022, virtual.
\textsuperscript{108} Throughout lockdown, and especially in under-resourced areas, due to issues with internet access, housing instability, family emergencies, ongoing household disruptions, etc., teachers across the country struggled to keep track of or even keep in touch with all of their students (see, for example, Wall 2020). In Concord, for example, at the start of lockdown, only about 30% of students were logging onto the online learning platforms established for remote schooling (Sarah, interview by author, May 11, 2020, virtual).
\textsuperscript{109} Sarah, interview by author, February 26, 2022, virtual.
\textsuperscript{110} Lisa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, by phone.
of the virtual options, and if those students would remain involved once the setting switched back to in-person.\footnote{Sarah, interview by author, August 10, 2021, virtual.} In January of 2022 alone, ninety new students began taking lessons with CMP, reaching a new total of over 400 students.\footnote{Sarah, interview by author, February 26, 2022, virtual.}

In the virtual learning environment, parents could see what their children were doing, what class was like, and what was required. Parents still had to go to the CMP office for supplies, instruments, etc., but on a surface level, CMP was able to strengthen relationships with parents, who now had to respond to emails, and could no longer rely on simply running into Sarah and other teachers and administrators after class. Sarah maintains, though, that being in-person is irreplaceable, and relationships are able to go deeper when students attend classes in person.\footnote{Sarah, interview by author, August 10, 2021, virtual.} Before the pandemic started, parents used to attend all of the concerts and events, and it was during these that Sarah was able to connect with them the most.\footnote{Sarah, interview by author, February 26, 2022, virtual.}

In the 2020 to 2021 school year, CMP did manage to maintain its programming despite remaining remote throughout the year. Summer 2021 saw some in-person programming, and fall 2021 transitioned back to fully in-person lessons. Since returning to in-person lessons, speaking casually with parents has remained difficult because Concord Public Schools have a policy of only allowing students and staff into schools for public health safety reasons. Following these restrictions, in December of 2021, CMP held a semi-virtual concert: students were on stage together in person but there was no audience. This concert was filmed and streamed on YouTube for family and friends to watch from home. CMP held a concert outdoors at the end of the school year (spring/summer of 2022) as well as a concert at a local university so that family, friends,
and community members could be present.\textsuperscript{115}

Despite the many difficulties of teaching music remotely, the COVID-19 pandemic ultimately served as a catalyst to officially extend programming to all Concord students. Prior to the pandemic, CMP was school-based, meaning that they only served students who attended the schools that housed CMP programs: Public Schools 1 and 2 (located in the same building) and a charter school. CMP was attempting to expand their programming at the time by continuing to offer their services to students who had attended CMP at these schools but transferred to another school. The shift to virtual learning meant that CMP was now housed in only one location: Zoom. This allowed for students from anywhere across Concord Public Schools to enroll in classes.\textsuperscript{116} CMP began to make this transition towards serving any interested public-school students in Concord in March 2020 by offering a few free virtual classes each week that were open to the entire Concord community. Once students were on summer vacation in July 2020, CMP did not continue the community zoom classes in the same capacity. Instead, in Fall 2020, CMP made the complete shift towards a citywide model by opening all of their programming to all students of Concord Public Schools, now made possible with the single “location” of Zoom.\textsuperscript{117} Then, when CMP switched back to in-person classes in the fall of 2021, the physical location of the program changed to Public School 3. With CMP’s suggestion, the district agreed to open CMP enrollment to all public-school students. CMP now serves students from about twenty different Concord public and charter schools. As is the case for educators and businesses everywhere, the pandemic has made CMP think creatively about how they offer their services; CMP already wanted to shift to a more open model, and the deep impact of the pandemic gave

\textsuperscript{115} Sarah, interview by author, February 26, 2022, virtual.
\textsuperscript{116} Sarah, interview by author, February 26, 2022, virtual.
\textsuperscript{117} Sarah, interview by author, August 10, 2021, virtual.
them the chance to do just that.118

Another major change for CMP that the pandemic enabled was a structural change in their programming. Prior to the pandemic, students received four to six hours of lessons each week, either in the form of ensemble lessons or group lessons with other students playing the same instrument. Students just joining CMP continue to receive six hours of ensemble and group lessons, focusing on one instrument, along with the new additions of choir and hand drumming. The hand drumming ensemble focuses on Afro-Latin music. This much music instruction is far more than students are receiving from Concord Public Schools. Students who have been enrolled in CMP for at least a year focus even more on one instrument, without also attending choir and hand drumming classes. Prior to the pandemic, these older students would also attend additional programs, like NJYS or summer music festivals. Social impact, the core El Sistema tenet, requires an element of togetherness and community, so CMP programming has always been ensemble-based. CMP’s interpretation of what “social impact” means has changed over time, most dramatically with the upheaval of the pandemic. With the pandemic and many festivals being put on pause, CMP decided to allocate those funds instead to private lessons for all students past the beginner level, along with some beginner students who are especially interested in learning music and have indicated that they want to do more.119

In addition to the funds for private lessons opening up, CMP was able to incorporate private lessons into their programming because virtual learning, with its streaming lags, is much more conducive to individual music playing than to ensembles playing together. With the sudden shift to virtual learning and the temporary cancellation of NJYS and music festivals, CMP switched from offering six hours of group classes each week to offering only two hours of group

118 Sarah, interview by author, February 26, 2022, virtual.
119 Lisa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, by phone.
classes, plus a thirty-minute private lesson for the older students. Now that students have transitioned back to in-person learning, CMP has maintained their system of private lessons; all students past the beginner level continue to receive the thirty-minute private lesson (still held on Zoom for space and transportation reasons), a ninety-minute group lesson during the week, and a ninety-minute ensemble rehearsal on Saturdays. With the new, central location, some students are unable to attend weekday classes, so these students only attend their private lessons and Saturday ensembles.120

The instruments that CMP teaches are primarily orchestral instruments, and most of their teaching artists are classically trained, so there continues to be a focus on classical music. CMP is trying, however, to expand outside of that.121 The Black Lives Matter movement also influenced many aspects of CMP programming. Attention to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives has certainly increased. DEI initiatives were already present at CMP, and CMP along with its umbrella organization were thinking about anti-racism before George Floyd’s murder. With his murder, though, anti-racism is now being considered at all levels from the board down.122

One way that CMP is attempting to become more anti-racist is in their programming. CMP is programming more music that is relevant to the community and driven by students. Private lessons in particular have offered a space for students to branch out musically. Teachers are still required to teach Western European scales and techniques, but students are welcome to explore those within whichever genre they like, as long as they play with the desired technique. For example, one student likes to play in her church group, so she selects songs to study that can

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120 Lisa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, by phone.
121 Lisa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, by phone.
122 Sarah, interview by author, August 10, 2021, virtual.
also be played in her church. Anime is also popular among many of the students. Others are interested in fiddle music, pop, or hip hop. Many students, though, do not express a preference for types of music they learn in their lessons. They already have preconceived notions about what “should” be played on the violin.¹²³

To further allow for student-driven programming, CMP recently started a guitar program. Though, like with the other instruments, CMP is teaching classical guitar, CMP hopes that offering guitar lessons will open the door to other styles, since so many genres center the guitar. For example, three brothers in CMP play traditional norteño music from Mexico. These students are studying cello in CMP, but are self-taught norteño musicians on accordion, guitar, and saxophone. CMP does not have an accordion teacher, but does try to support these students with occasional guitar and saxophone lessons.¹²⁴

Part of the reason that CMP added the guitar is that so many students are interested in studying it. When they first started the program, instrument and genre decisions were not guided by any community or student input. CMP has since realized that community and student guidance is important. The pandemic in particular has allowed CMP to reevaluate how they approach music education in this community, and have decided to incorporate more of a focus on student-led education. It is too early to say what kind of impact guitar instruction will have on students and on the program, but CMP is hoping that it will attract more students. Guitar classes filled up the fastest among the instrument classes this year. CMP wants to give the students the opportunities that they desire. At the same time, however, CMP feels that if students have not been exposed to the orchestral instruments as much, they might not have the chance to develop interest in those other instruments. To address this concern, CMP tries to encourage some

¹²³ Lisa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, by phone.
¹²⁴ Lisa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, by phone.
students to explore these other instruments, but if they insist, the student can stick with guitar.\textsuperscript{125}

The ensemble music still tends to be elite, Western European music, but CMP is gradually integrating other genres. For example, the orchestra learned a hip hop piece, which was arranged by and performed with the classically trained hip hop duo Black Violin. Black Violin has worked with El Sistema-inspired programs in the past, and Lisa described a very positive experience with them. There was an immediate connection to the music among the students, which meant that there was no need to convince them to practice.\textsuperscript{126}

Additionally, within the confines of elite, Western European musical styles, CMP is conscious of diversity, programming not just centuries-old European composers, but composers of all backgrounds.\textsuperscript{127} CMP now also prioritizes working with vendors from Concord rather than other places for any business needs, including in their work with local composers and composers of color. For example, the state-wide group to which CMP belongs commissioned a local New Jersey-based composer of color to compose a piece of music for CMP, which is expected to be performed in the summer of 2022.\textsuperscript{128} Prior to the pandemic, the funding used for this commission had been used for a yearly music festival and a sleepaway camp. The composer is now working with ten CMP students, along with students from the other music programs in this state-wide group, to write the piece. Once completed, there will be a separate score for each nonprofit program according to the ensembles and instruments they offer; these scores can either be performed by each program separately or by all of the programs together once they are able to gather in large numbers again.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{125} Lisa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, by phone.
\textsuperscript{126} Lisa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, by phone.
\textsuperscript{127} Lisa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, by phone.
\textsuperscript{128} Sarah, interview by author, February 26, 2022, virtual.
\textsuperscript{129} Lisa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, by phone.
In addition to diversifying programming, with the Black Lives Matter movement, CMP began to think more about hiring staff members from the community and about hiring older CMP students for their first jobs as a way to provide income and work experience to students in the program. In the 2021 to 2022 school year, for example, CMP looked for more ways to engage parents. At the 2021 summer camp, CMP hired two parents as part-time family liaisons; CMP is now looking for ways that the family liaison role can be expanded to full-time staff. They continued looking within the families of their students for community liaisons and program coordinators in the fall of 2021 for the 2021 to 2022 school year. Hiring students was also a new initiative in the 2020 to 2021 school year, in which six students were Youth Leaders who met with younger students for one-on-one and small group musical mentoring. These Youth Leaders apply for their positions. Youth Leaders now co-teach, give guest performances, and help set up for performances. CMP plans to continue offering this opportunity to students who are both interested in music as a career and in leadership experience.

Lisa pointed out that CMP has been able to grow so much and respond to student and community needs and desires because they have consistent and even growing support from private funders and from the Concord public school district, which contributes a significant portion of CMP funding. This continued support has allowed CMP to grow in size and also to bring in new, student-picked guest artists.

In addition to these programming changes, during the 2020-2021 school year, SEL was at the forefront of music education planning. The Concord School District, along with many districts across the state, focused on mental health and wellbeing. Funders began focusing on

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130 Sarah, interview by author, August 10, 2021, virtual.
131 Sarah, interview by author, February 26, 2022, virtual.
132 Lisa, visit to Concord Music Project, November 13, 2021.
133 Lisa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, by phone.
SEL, too, along with advocacy groups like Arts Ed NJ.\textsuperscript{134} When CMP was teaching virtually, SEL was integrated in a more conscientious way. CMP knew how isolated the students were: Concord Public Schools were closed for the end of the 2019 to 2020 school year and for the entire 2020 to 2021 school year. At first, Concord students were only doing homework packets, and had little or no virtual interactions with their teachers. With this in mind, CMP would take mindfulness breaks that were filled with stretches, breathing activities, and general emotional check-ins. Youth Leaders would prepare a slide or two of general SEL activities such as journaling, sharing ideas, and connecting with feelings (not explicitly connected to music learning), and they would talk with younger students about how they were doing. Lisa shared that such SEL activities haven’t carried over to the in-person classrooms as much as she would like them to. Some teachers have, of their own volition, built SEL into their classes after returning to the in-person classroom setting. Lisa, for example, still takes a five-minute mindfulness break when students are getting tired, giving them a chance to take some deep breaths and stretch. Teaching artists do have more awareness of SEL at the very least.\textsuperscript{135}

To further encourage SEL and other inclusive practices in their classrooms, CMP offers professional development sessions. For example, CMP has built culturally relevant pedagogy, trauma-informed teaching, and anti-racism professional development sessions into their budget, and a handful of teachers take advantage of them, either attending synchronously or watching a recording of the session later. CMP is also participating in an international training program for teaching artists that involves some one-on-one coaching with video analysis, led by Lisa and coaches from other organizations. This program is designed for El Sistema inspired programs that teach within the social impact lens. Lisa attested that all of the teachers care deeply about the

\textsuperscript{134} Sarah, interview by author, August 10, 2021, virtual.
\textsuperscript{135} Lisa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, by phone.
mission of the program, though, of course, as teaching artists and professional musicians, they have limited time.\textsuperscript{136}

Lisa sees culturally relevant pedagogy in particular as key to CMP instruction. For CMP, this looks like intentionally programming composers of color and training their teaching artists in anti-racism and anti-bias classroom practices. Along with the optional professional development sessions and formal teaching evaluations, in the 2021 to 2022 school year, Lisa has also begun dropping into classrooms to observe and offer hands-on coaching. Teachers can also reach out to Lisa at any time so that questions or concerns can be addressed immediately. In one drop-in-style classroom observation, for example, Lisa noticed that a teacher was acting with bias against a student: the teacher accused the student of being aggressive without recognizing the possible trauma or need for further support. Lisa acknowledged that the teacher did not realize that they were acting with bias, and took the opportunity to speak with the teacher about their racialized assumptions at play in the situation.\textsuperscript{137}

4.2.3 Teaching at Concord Music Project

In CMP classrooms, there is clear trust and affection between teachers and students. Students study in ensembles and in small groups of the same or similar instruments. Ensembles include orchestras, bands, choirs, and drumming. I attended CMP in November, 2021, once students were physically back in the school. As I observed the upper-level orchestra of mostly middle and high school students, the instructor, a Black man, was conducting. He was very friendly with his students, exhibiting a strong rapport with them. He used personal anecdotes to explain various aspects of musicality and chats with them in a social way to maintain their engagement. The orchestra sounded accomplished and the students stayed focused. At one point,

\textsuperscript{136} Lisa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, by phone.
\textsuperscript{137} Lisa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, by phone.
they pushed their conductor to hold them to even higher standards, matching the tempo on the score rather than slowing the tempo for ease of playing.

The next group I observed was the lower-level orchestra, primarily attended by elementary school and middle school students. Students were certainly not as comfortable with their instruments, but the conductor, a Hispanic woman, still held her students to high standards. In this lesson, she was not spending time socializing with her students. She clearly knew what they were capable of playing, and despite their struggles towards the beginning of the lesson, she quickly unified them in the section of the piece they were working on by building the group section by section. She proved to them that they are capable of the higher level of playing that she expected of them.

I observed the band next, which was attended by a group of mostly middle and high school students. The conductor was a White teacher from the public school who also works for CMP. As the class proceeded, students were pulled out for private lessons. They worked through “African Folk Trilogy,” and students seemed attentive and generally enthusiastic about learning from the conductor. Even during the break, the conductor chatted with students about music they have been playing and listening to and their lives generally. Despite their clear respect for their conductor, or perhaps because of their comfort talking with her, students complained, “We do ‘African Folk Trilogy’ every year,” to which the conductor replied, “Isn’t it great?” and was met with a typical, blasé middle-school “nou…”

All CMP students also take choir and drumming. The choir conductor, a Black man, recently returned to teaching choir at CMP, though he originally joined CMP in 2016. He asked students to introduce themselves and share one fun fact about themselves. The conductor then invited the students to ask him questions. He guided students in warm-up singing exercises, had
them alternately sit and stand, and eventually began teaching them a song, which the students quickly picked up. This conductor is from Concord and holds a master’s degree in education from Teachers College of Columbia University; he also teaches voice lessons at Teachers College. He sees a false divide between places like Concord and Teachers College.\textsuperscript{138}

The drum circle leader was a Hispanic man. Students sat in a circle playing different types of drums. The leader was a calm presence in the classroom, sharing the history of the rhythms he taught them, then slowly demonstrating them for his students to copy. The day I observed, students were learning about the rhythm of plena, the Puerto Rican genre. Students were focused and picked up on the rhythm quickly, clearly comfortable with their drums.

CMP also offers instrument lessons for all of the instruments represented in their groups. For example, one teaching artist, an Asian-American man, had a group of four elementary school beginner brass players. Observing his class, I noted that this teacher was very encouraging, asking questions from the beginning to get students to talk about playing. He made games for students to use their creativity, even when working on more technical aspects of playing, like embouchure. Students clearly enjoyed these games, and asked specifically to play one where they each make up a rhythm that the others have to recreate. He allowed his lesson to be student-driven in this way, guiding their learning within their interests. One student said that she was tired; the teacher paused his lesson and said to this student, “Hey, you still got the sleepies? I understand,” and asked her to do her best. At this point in the afternoon, after the school day and after ensembles, students’ focus and energy levels were all over the place. The teacher remained calm, patient, and understanding throughout.

This brass teacher studied band instruction and later trombone performance. He initially

\textsuperscript{138} CMP Choir Conductor, visit to Concord Music Project, November 13, 2021.
taught in Newark and Elizabeth, then in more affluent areas, then burned out, became disillusioned, and no longer enjoyed teaching after experiencing high job turnover. Some positions he left by choice, while others he was asked to leave due to a difference in vision about what band class means. This teacher observed that schools cared less about supporting strong music performance programs and more about paperwork, documentation, and publicizing their music programs.\textsuperscript{139} With the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, he did not get another full-time job partly due to music educator job precarity and scarcity and partly out of his own desire to find a new career. He went back to complete a master’s degree in education and has eventual plans to study at the doctoral level. He is interested in instructional coaching as a career. He has been substituting as a paraprofessional, and through that work has grown more interested in student behavior.\textsuperscript{140}

This brass teacher prefers a fun classroom in which he can draw in life lessons, maintaining high expectations while keeping these expectations accessible to his students. He does so by offering students multiple ways of thinking about a particular concept. They are mostly third, fourth, and fifth graders, so he tries to keep lessons fun and engaging with high expectations, and he tries to keep lessons related to real life. For example, at one point, his students were not practicing as they were expected to for CMP. The teacher sat them down and talked to them about practicing in terms they could understand: he told them to practice as if it's homework for his class. He told them, “If you show up to class without homework, what happens? How does your teacher feel? How do you feel? How does everyone feel if you haven't done your homework two or three times in a row?” Then, he expanded it to learning musical instruments: “How about with trombone?” He understands that students can relate to that. Once

\textsuperscript{139} CMP Brass Teaching Artist, interview by author, August 18, 2022, by phone.  
\textsuperscript{140} CMP Brass Teaching Artist, interview by author, December 4, 2021, by phone.
they have this entry point to the concept of practicing an instrument, the need to practice kicks in a very effective way.\footnote{CMP Brass Teaching Artist, interview by author, December 4, 2021, by phone.}

The brass teacher teaches his students that performance is a language they use to connect to their audience. For example, he regularly talks with older students about the difference between actively and passively doing things. He tries to get them to perform particular moments fully by asking questions like, “Are you passively performing at fortissimo or are you controlling your destiny with your performance?” and, “How do you want to present this information to the audience?” With music, he wants his students to understand that they hopefully have a participating audience of people who are actively engaging in whatever is happening on stage. He says, “in the inner-city, you have to teach parents how to do that.”

\textit{CMP is awesome. The expectation is purely about excellence. The journey doesn't matter. It could take years and years or weeks and weeks, whatever the journey is, to meet the goal, but at Concord Music Project, the choice they're making is, no matter how long it takes, we're expecting excellence.}\footnote{CMP Brass Teaching Artist, interview by author, December 4, 2021, by phone.}

The teacher clarified that CMP cares about all kinds of excellence: “Performance excellence, emotional excellence, excellence in care. Excellence for the child. Not necessarily just excellence for the music.”\footnote{CMP Brass Teaching Artist, interview by author, August 18, 2022, by phone.} He sees his job as “manag[ing] high expectations through a journey” of music learning. He tries to make room for a lot of different journeys. All students are coming from different places at different ages. His understanding is that CMP doesn't care about the who, the when, the where; they just want the what and why to be at a high level. He sees this as a positive in that they are not focused on hard milestones or how long it takes.\footnote{CMP Brass Teaching Artist, interview by author, December 4, 2021, by phone.}

\subsection*{4.2.4 Music Education in Concord’s Future}
Going forward, CMP’s five-year strategic plan is to create a city-wide program to which anyone can apply without connection to schools, but with access points throughout the city. The pandemic furthered this vision in that every separate school and school’s sub-level program became one cohesive virtual program. This helped with the transition to a city-wide structure. Then, transitioning again to fully in-person lessons in the fall of 2021, students and families no longer had the same expectations for school and for extracurricular activities that they did before the pandemic. CMP attempted to take advantage of this by focusing on a Saturday program and by setting the new expectation that parents may need to drive their children somewhere after school (CMP would no longer hire buses). With the newly instated virtual private lessons, CMP is also transitioning from the exclusive focus on ensembles to balancing ensemble study and individual student interests and needs. This shift results in students experiencing slightly fewer hours per week with instructors, but with the addition of individual attention, CMP is able to have more impact on each student’s music learning.145

Every year is so up in the air, especially because CMP relies on community partners to provide space and works with the public school district to figure out all of the logistics, and especially with the attempt to have one central site for their offerings. To stabilize their future, CMP is working on consolidating their current students into one central site. CMP has positive relationships with the schools with which they have partnered in the past, but all of their prior schools have music teachers now. CMP does not want to risk putting the public funding for those schools’ programs in jeopardy. At the same time, they are also expanding into a new charter school, where they will offer music lessons for all first and second graders on keyboard, as well thirty-five third through eighth grade students after school. This new school has never had a

145 Sarah, interview by author, August 10, 2021, virtual.
music teacher before, and CMP’s presence is one way to encourage the school to hire their own music teacher.\(^{146}\)

Reflecting further on this process, Sarah recognized that it is hard to know why the district moves the way it does, and impossible to know exactly how deeply CMP influenced the hiring of music teachers in the schools where they had previously been located. It could be changes in leadership, funding, local advocacy, etc. that ultimately are the deciding factors in establishing music programs. At this point, though, the public school district is pushing for more music teachers. Emerging from the state takeover and acclimating to new leadership and funding structures, the district has hired music teachers, cut some of those teachers, and then hired some back. With pandemic relief bills, a lot of state funding is flowing into Concord Public Schools right now, and schools want to make up for learning loss in the main subjects, but Sarah also sees that they actually want music to be part of their students’ education. She sees this as an ecosystem where public schools, nonprofits, and community groups are all trying to fill whatever needs and gaps exist.\(^{147}\) Thankfully, some of the over $60 million ESSER funds that have been assigned to the Concord Public School District\(^ {148}\) will be allocated to CMP and to growing music programs (National Education Association n.d.).\(^{149}\)

Sarah has always maintained that the ideal outcome is that districts will fund a robust music education for all of the students. CMP is not and cannot feasibly be the point of entry to music education for every one of the 30,000 students who are in Concord Public Schools. CMP is a place where some students can be educated, and from where advocacy efforts can arise for more extensive publicly funded programs. Especially without a district arts supervisor, and

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\(^{146}\) Sarah, interview by author, August 10, 2021, virtual.

\(^{147}\) Sarah, interview by author, August 10, 2021, virtual.

\(^{148}\) This does not include ESSER funds that are allocated to charter schools in Concord.

\(^{149}\) Melissa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, virtual.
without sufficient funding, coordinating arts education efforts holistically across the city has been uneven and faulty. Until the statewide funding model is fixed, there will always be tough decisions about what to fund and what not to fund that ultimately comes down to balancing the ideal vision for Concord schools with the immediate needs. Sarah sees plenty of in-fighting for funding within the district, but, she says, “the reality is that they’re fighting over scraps.”

There is newfound hope, though: Concord Public Schools was finally able to hire a Supervisor of Arts Education, Melissa, in the 2021 to 2022 school year. Melissa is an advocate for CMP: “I love and adore them, what they do, how they do it, how they get continuity and consistency with students staying long term in their program.” Her main focus, though, is on the public-school programs and, especially, their teachers. Melissa is a former public-school teacher in Concord who, among other positions, used to work as the arts director at the city’s arts high school, and who already had an unofficial relationship with CMP when CMP held their Saturday program at the performing arts high school one year.

As Supervisor of Arts Education for Concord Public Schools, and in her roles prior to this one, Melissa sees that CMP fulfills a need in the district for instruction on musical instruments. Since the district cut all of the arts and music teacher positions in 2009 while still under the state takeover, Concord has struggled to offer any instrument lessons. Even the music teachers who have been hired (and fired, and hired again) since 2009 have had difficulties securing equipment and space, so they teach mostly general music only once a week for forty minutes, if that. When the state standardized testing starts, music education is put on pause for the entire month. Within this reality that is only slowly improving, CMP as an afterschool and weekend program has filled

150 Sarah, interview by author, August 10, 2021, virtual.
151 Sarah, interview by author, February 26, 2022, virtual.
152 Melissa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, virtual.
153 Sarah, interview by author, February 26, 2022, virtual.
a hole. Expanding to the new site has allowed CMP to serve more students, which Melissa fully supports.\textsuperscript{154}

Like Sarah, Melissa believes that CMP is, as it stands, a stopgap measure. Her ultimate goal is to make access to instruction on musical instruments equitable within the district at large. Because the district is so large, and because of the history of inadequate school funding, and because of the three decades of state control (including a total removal of all arts and music instructors twice), and because of the yearly disruptions of standardized testing in low-income schools, and because of the ongoing upheaval of the pandemic, instating a full and equitable music program requires extensive preparation and slow expansion. Melissa has been spending a lot of time this year assessing all of the needs in the district and making sense of the constant changes. As she leads this process, Melissa hopes that Concord Public Schools will see the benefits of CMP to the community and expand CMP’s role in the district.\textsuperscript{155}

Across the district, there is a focus on four key areas: SEL; trauma-informed care; cultural relevance, and equity. Melissa interprets equity in particular as intertwined with sustainability, as sustained programming is essential to equitable (rather than cursory) education offerings. The new emphasis on SEL and trauma-informed teaching in the arts has been a response to the pandemic. Melissa sees how students have been in “existing mode,” not “learning mode.” To shift students back into learning-mode, Melissa works to support teachers’ incorporation of SEL into their classrooms. Like Sarah and Lisa at CMP, Melissa is offering Concord music teachers professional development to make the SEL and other culturally relevant music content materials accessible to educators. Concord teachers, though, are also stretched thin

\textsuperscript{154} Melissa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, virtual.
\textsuperscript{155} Melissa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, virtual.
and typically do not have the time for added work.\textsuperscript{156}

In light of all of this, CMP fits into the district by filling a current need. As Melissa noted, “something is better than nothing.” Concord is currently able to offer some music education in an uneven way, which is better than nothing. The addition of CMP’s offerings is made even better for the students by the stability that Sarah has managed to maintain despite frequent personnel and funding gaps and changes. Concord is using some of the new ESSER funding to continue to expand funding for CMP. Melissa hopes that, even when the ESSER funding runs out, the Concord school district will reserve an equal amount of funds in their budget for CMP and for the public music education program. The district is focusing now on making sure that the transition off of ESSER funding and back to the longstanding local and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) funding occurs seamlessly, permanently improving the education offered in Concord Public Schools.\textsuperscript{157}

\textbf{4.2.5 Understanding Concord Music Project}

Concord Music Project emerged from and responded to student needs within a neoliberal moment that removed music education from public schools in a state that had mandated music education for all students. CMP’s administrators and teachers have successfully managed to create and sustain a music education program in an environment of high instability and few resources. They have worked hard to serve the Concord community. While CMP began offering music education in the traditional El Sistema format of Western European orchestra classes during the school day, they have since used their stability and strong institutional relationships to respond and adapt to community needs. With the overlap of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, the Black Lives Matter movement call for anti-racist practices, and the sudden influx of ESSER

\textsuperscript{156} Melissa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, virtual.
\textsuperscript{157} Melissa, interview by author, March 4, 2022, virtual.
funding, CMP found itself in a position to respond to community needs more directly than ever before and is rising to the occasion.

While they continue to teach Western European scales and techniques, a skill that will serve students who seek to continue their musical studies, they are diversifying their programming. They are working with and paying local and nationally renowned composers of color, and they are involving students in the creative process. They are hiring program staff directly from the students’ communities as well as providing paid employment in leadership roles for the students themselves. Through private lessons, teaching artists are able to support students’ individual interests, as with the brothers learning norteño music and all of the students who are interested in diverse genres. While some students do still exclusively associate their orchestral instruments with elite, Western European music, the growing diversity of musical styles may lead more students to becoming comfortable with and interested in exploring other musical traditions even within the formal school setting.

Content-wise, there are significant steps towards the original iteration of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings [1994] 2009). Students’ cultures and interests are increasingly being incorporated into the curriculum, but they are primarily used as a bridge to ultimately teach dominant cultural frameworks. Additionally, while the ensembles still perform centuries-old pieces by male, European composers, they also perform modern pieces by diverse composers, and some students are even able to take part in the creative composing process. Likewise, the pedagogical practices of the CMP teachers are becoming increasingly student-centered. While ensembles are still conductor-led, there are new opportunities for students to help each other learn, especially through mentorship by older students. Though not yet culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris 2012; see Good-Perkins 2021 on culturally sustaining music
pedagogy), the updated “remix” of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings 2014), CMP is using its position of relative financial and institutional stability to make steady and meaningful progress in that direction.

As Concord School District grows its own music program, CMP is gradually leaving schools, so that it does not give the school board an excuse not to fund the programs publicly. For music education in Concord to be sustained and equitable, as Melissa described, it needs to be run with oversight from the district and with consistent public funding. Now that CMP no longer teaches in schools during the school day, its students are still being served in the afterschool program (and even more students are able to enroll since CMP is no longer affiliated with specific schools), while newly hired music teachers are able to build their own programs without competition. CMP’s refusal to compete with public school teachers for funding, space, and students, together with their eagerness to respond to external changes, positions them to exist as an education nonprofit that works against the marketization of schools.158

Finally, the professional development being done among the administrators and teaching artists, especially under Lisa’s leadership and coaching, furthers their practice of culturally relevant pedagogy and is a testament of CMP’s commitment to anti-racist work.159 CMP does not purport to be perfect, nor do they claim that simply hiring teaching artists of color or involving community members will solve all problems with racism, especially when many of these problems are subconscious and structural. In addition to changing curriculum and teaching methods, culturally sustaining pedagogy among music educators requires deep reflective work to ensure that teachers’ actions are not unconsciously succumbing to White supremacist musical

158 For analyses of nonprofits that prioritize the mobilization of communities and serving community needs, see also: Bierria (2007); Wilson Gilmore (2007); Farnia (2008); Silverman and Patterson (2011); and Haber (2019).
159 See the work of Elena Aguilar for one coaching framework that works to change the mentality of teachers by challenging their assumptions and practices in order to make their classrooms more equitable (2020).
and cultural norms (Good-Perkins 2021). With Lisa’s coaching, CMP is beginning this reflective work. As a leader whom the teaching artists trust and respect, Lisa’s coaching, based on classroom observations, is more impactful than optional webinars (though those can also be effective entry points for teachers to culturally relevant pedagogical practices). Lisa is not shying away from difficult conversations with the teaching artists. She is asking teachers to question their assumptions and learn to recognize how their potentially unconscious behavior might be reinscribing racialized and classed narratives among their students. Through their work together, Lisa is potentially able to help teachers not only change behavior on the surface level, but change their understandings of how education systems work and how racialized and classed assumptions function within these systems.

The choir conductor’s comment about the false divide between places like Concord and Teachers College is insightful. In one sense, it speaks to the aims of culturally sustaining pedagogy, which understands that centering students and their rich cultural traditions will provide them with the tools they need for success throughout their academic careers. In the other direction, the pedagogy taught at teacher training programs like those offered by Teachers College affects students everywhere. At the same time, real, structural divides persist between students in Concord, especially students of color and students from immigrant families, and hegemonic/hegemonizing institutions, including schools. Gatekeeping mechanisms do exist in education, especially in higher education. Providing minoritized students from low-income areas with some of the cultural knowledge that is expected in these exclusive spaces does help provide these students with access to those spaces. As CMP continues to shift towards increasingly centering students’ cultures and epistemologies in music classrooms, CMP will be able to even more strongly support students’ access to further academic study, fulfilling employment
opportunities, and political influence.

4.3 Conclusion

Lester K. Spence offers a way forward from the neoliberal marketization of education and commodification of student learning: local community organizing as horizontally as possible; executed through ethical and consciously political actions; towards an identified, sustainable, positive alternative to neoliberalism; using Black institutions as platforms; within the understanding that Black people can create purposeful change in the world (2015, 130-144). Expanding past this Black-White dichotomy, considering community-based, community-represented, and community-led institutions as platforms and understanding that diverse groups can create purposeful change in the world better reflects the complex racial and cultural makeup of many of the cities in New Jersey.

Private music education program administrators navigate complex policies and funding structures as they attempt to fill the gaps in public education left by those same policies and funding structures. As they find ways to obtain and maintain stability, these programs become better positioned to respond to calls for more community-responsive content and pedagogical methods. Federal education policy does make it difficult if not impossible for groups that do not form non-profit or other corporations to interface with public schools. Given this current reality, music education nonprofits that work to prioritize community needs over funders’ expectations and that either work towards obsolescence or are willing to change their services based on the needs of the community do appear to influence public education structures in a positive way. We see this with CMP: though the exact effects of CMP’s presence and choices cannot be known on Concord School District’s financial and programmatic decision-making, CMP is consciously working to center the community it serves and is changing its structure both to serve more
students and to support and make space for the growth of publicly funded school music programs.
Conclusion: Looking to the Future of Music Education

In this dissertation, I considered a number of overarching questions: What is the role of music in schools? What does music education look like in public schools when there is no public budget for it? Are education actors asking the question, “What is our pedagogical objective?” or are they single-mindedly scrambling to satisfy the music education mandate and keep it afloat? The latter often seems to predominate, and it does not leave much room for a critical reassessment of the current systems. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced a critical reassessment of these systems. Music education in particular shapes students’ bodies and voices. It has the potential for cultural inclusion and creativity (Hess 2018; Good-Perkins 2021), but it also has the potential for cultural exclusion and confining control (Gillborn and Youdell 2000; Youdell 2006). Far too frequently, music education in United States public schools restricts what forms of culture are acceptable and what ways of knowing are valid in classrooms. The critical reassessment of music education programs furthers debates on the role of schools in United States society as molders of future citizens.

Music education policy and administration have far to go before they will serve all students in decolonial, culturally sustaining ways. As changes towards this vision are slowly being made, parents, students, and educators are also contending with the hegemonizing demands and forces of institutions that interface with public schools, such as colleges and universities, teacher training programs, curriculum support resources, local, state, and federal governing bodies, and the future workplaces of students. A culturally sustaining approach to education values a diversity of ways of knowing and learning, and it understands that young people who learn in culturally sustaining settings will be equipped to succeed in current systems as they build new ones.
As Michael W. Apple states, in addition to critically challenging conservative ideology and, in my research, privileged Whiteness, we must also work towards “the building of large-scale counterhegemonic movements that connect educational struggles to those in other sites and also assist both in creating new struggles and defending existing ones within educational institutions themselves” (Apple 2001, 98). Understanding how the current structures function is only one component of creating an effective “decentered unity” of diverse cultural perspectives that will not fully align on their stances towards education, but that will align on the importance of centering their counter-hegemonic practices and building different systems (Apple 2001, 96, emphasis in original). There will not be one single, agreed-upon solution, but through thick democratic processes, movement away from the current White supremacist systems, hidden though they are, will be more likely to happen. At this pivotal moment, the decisions that are being made as we move out of the pandemic will determine whether we will be able to sustain this critical reassessment.

The theoretical framework for this dissertation, detailed in Chapter 1, has built on analyses of neoliberalism and the marketization of social services, and of education in particular. Understanding the “colorblind” policies of neoliberalism requires peeling back layers of policy that formed iteratively, generation after generation, to hide their racialized hierarchizing mechanisms. The plethora of approaches that private interests take, paired with the increasing pressures on individual students, families, and schools, make navigating the marketization of education especially difficult and risk-laden. Though the content of standards-based, standardized tests restricts teachers’ classroom choices, teachers are finding ways to build critical pedagogies into their curricula. The lineage of critical pedagogy that builds on culturally relevant pedagogy and the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings ([1994] 2009) in particular is gaining
momentum in private and public music classrooms.

In Chapter 2, I set out to understand the public policies in place that guide music education in order to understand the structures that support and restrict music education programs. Many scholars, like Michael W. Apple (1993; 2001; 2003; 2004a; 2004b) and Deborah Youdell (2006), have theorized the messaging and effects of standards-based education, high-stakes testing, and chronically underfunded school budgets. By detailing the federal and state education policies that shape music education, I found layers upon layers of policies crafted implicitly and explicitly to maintain the status of schools as shapers of capitalist citizens. This not only means citizens who are trained to consume within a free market, but also citizens who are categorized and then shaped within those categories to play specific labor roles in maintaining capitalism.

Identifying and naming these layers of oppression is one small step towards, hopefully, seeing some changes to how students in the United States and in other neoliberal countries are educated. Without a thorough understanding of the outside constraints on public education, attempts to change it will be limited to components of teaching that are controlled within the classroom. As Ladson-Billings and other critical pedagogy theorists have established, teachers often do have a great deal of control over whether and what their students learn ([1994] 2009). Though this is a goal to work towards, leaving student learning up to teachers alone, in the current climate, can be dangerous. The vast majority of teachers are White members of the middle class, are trained in highly hegemonizing teacher education programs, and, especially in low-income communities that rely heavily on federal support, are restrained by the demands of standards-based, standardized, high-stakes testing. Addressing pedagogies and practices within classrooms must go hand in hand with addressing the systems that shape education from the
outside.

My policy analysis in this dissertation is not traditional ethnomusicological research; yet, ethnographers risk perpetuating inequitable structures without a clear (or as clear as possible) understanding of these very tangible, very real structures that shape in-school interactions, as well as the motivations behind these structures. By first mapping the design of public education at high levels, I worked towards making my analysis of the discourse and actions of private interests in public school music programs more accurate, so that I could read the actions of various agents within the limitations imposed on them while also keeping in mind the possibilities and looking for forms of resistance. By adopting an ethnomusicological analytical lens to examine the discourse around national music acculturation practices in the United States, I hoped to develop a critical understanding of how music learning is shaped at levels beyond the local and what that means for young learners in the United States as they become political and musical actors.

The focus of my research is on the people and policies outside of classrooms who shape how students learn. As such, my policy research is limited to just that: the attempts to shape education from outside of the classroom. It is also limited by the constraints and phenomena particular to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of limitations on interpersonal interactions and the scramble to adjust to the emergency situation, especially in private and public social service sectors, I chose to limit my policy research in particular to the public-facing documents and discourses. While conversations that happen in private may use different socio-political and economic rhetoric, I found during the few conversations I was able to have that interviewing political actors gave me access to the same rhetoric that they use in their public statements. Access to insider political logics at the federal and state levels would require forming
connections and building trust over years.

With this in mind, further research on the subject might entail sustained political activism and engagement with federal and state policy-makers as well as with groups like Arts ARE Education, Americans for the Arts, and the Arts In Education National Program at the national level, and groups like Arts Ed NJ and the New Jersey Arts Education Partnership at the state level. Additionally, some ethnomusicological research has been conducted inside classrooms (namely that of Patricia Shehan-Campbell), but more is needed from a structural perspective if the goal is to support change in a culturally sustaining way. How do specific changes to policy affect music classroom practices? How has community organizing engaged with and influenced music education policy outside of or in tandem with the advocacy work of corporations, foundations, and nonprofits?

By examining the narratives of music education funders and advocacy groups in Chapter 3, I have sought to understand how private wealth has attempted to shape the music education experiences of young people in low-income areas of New Jersey. Analyzing the national and state advocacy around music education public policy showed an emphasis on securing funding within the current framework of standards-based high-stakes testing. Advocacy for music education funding in the private sector exhibited more engagement with critical pedagogies. The private sector also represented a wide range of stances regarding issues, and some organizations did focus on diversity and equity issues in education more so than on sustaining funding for current structures.

Understanding this funding and advocacy rhetoric, especially in light of the federal and state policies being engaged by advocates, sheds light on the mindset of music education administrators and advocates. With such tunnel vision around securing funding within the
current funding systems, less attention is being given to questioning whether these music education systems are really worth funding and whether more efforts should be placed on redesigning what happens in music classrooms. Understanding a wider view of how various groups are allocating their resources may help influence a different distribution of time and attention so that funding is secured, but not at the expense of failing to address other systemic issues.

My focus in Chapter 3 on advocates and funders has primarily been on the public-facing discourse of the groups I investigated. Still, more personal communications with individual actors would have helped me better understand intentions within – and restraints around – this work. While I began my research with the intention of conducting interviews and attending meetings within these organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted this work. Foundations were suddenly scrambling to restructure their grants in ways that better supported grantees within the constraints of the pandemic, and I struggled with making personal contact with people in these stretched-thin organizations. I also felt that adding to the general burnout and anxiety of workers during the pandemic with the additional, unpaid work of my dissertation interviews would not have been the ethically responsible course of action.

Further, long-term research on music education funders and advocates is necessary to understand the trajectory of public education. These are the groups that affect policy at the federal, state, and local level; while there are (sometimes many) problematic elements of their existence and approaches, their influence is undeniable. Moreover, the diversity of their aims and approaches to effecting change is extremely wide. Gaining deeper insight into their individual theories of change and their practices at the program level will allow local programs and individuals to learn from each other and to engage with private groups more effectively.
In my analysis of music education nonprofits in Chapter 4, I spotlighted three programs that have served under-resourced, urban, minoritized areas of New Jersey. I hoped to gain insights into the approaches and effects of nonprofits that serve public school students whose schools are not able to offer the “complete and thorough education” that New Jersey promises. Despite considerable overlap in funders, aims, and inspiration (all three are El Sistema-based programs), these programs all function very differently: one no longer exists; one continues to teach very limited, hegemonic content (exclusively elite, Western European music) and experiences high administrator turnover; and one has established a considerably stable relationship with the public school district and uses that administrative stability to introduce more creativity as well as content and pedagogical diversity into their classrooms.

This research works to spread insights by laying bare some of the choices that nonprofit administrators have made and their consequences, both intended and unintended, both beneficial to their publicly funded counterparts and harmful. Rather than positioning nonprofits as competitors, sharing experiences and knowledge can build community among practitioners that helps to ensure that the needs of the students are being prioritized. Furthermore, open communication and sharing among programs helps to ensure that services are not overlapping while gaps remain (Bierria 2007).

Even more poignantly than in research on foundations and advocacy groups during the COVID-19 pandemic, ethnography in music education programs became logistically difficult and ethically questionable. Adding the stress of additional observations on teachers who already undergo observations regularly as part of their job, especially while they were navigating online teaching with students in often precarious living situations, did not seem appropriate. Furthermore, my aim from the beginning was not to enter classrooms, but to investigate the
political rhetoric that shapes enculturation practices in classrooms.

As education programs in New Jersey regain stability going forward, future ethnomusicological research on the marketization of public music education may seek to gain deeper understandings of teachers’ applications of these layers of policy guidance in their lessons and of students’ experiences in their music classrooms. Further research may also center grassroots music education programs, either in the form of nonprofits, mutual aid groups, or other structures (Apple 1993, 40-41; Bierra 2007; Silverman and Patterson 2011). My research on advocates, funders, and, especially, nonprofits has demonstrated that some private entities are at the forefront of critical pedagogical practices.

This dissertation has focused on understanding Whiteness in education spaces, but there are many community-based practitioners I did not consider here who are pushing the boundaries of what education can be from longstanding traditions of counter-hegemonic practices. There are also many theories of critical pedagogies I did not consider here, as they did not appear in my fieldwork. Black education groups, for example, have been sharing solutions to our faulty education systems for generations. We can look to Black histories and the education historians mapping those pedagogical traditions, such as literacy, language, and culture scholar Gholdy Muhammad and her research on historically responsive literacy (2020). What would a fully, publicly funded, community-run music education program look like in a public school? What would public schools that have a place for community-run music education programs look like? Given the history and persistent hegemonic structures and outcomes of public schools, are community-run music programs antithetical to public education as it currently exists?

What has happened with the COVID-19 pandemic has proven that the privatization of education is by and large failing minoritized students in under-resourced school districts. Initially
organized under the good intention of providing low-income, urban and rural schools with the resources they need to teach a well-rounded education, stronger forces of structural racism have maintained the hierarchizing power of federal education policy. Under the stress of the pandemic, this system has crumbled. We need consistent and creative education, driven by local communities and funded communally as a nation. Yes, students need basic skills in reading, writing, and math to get by in this world. But to thrive, to lead, to be able to enact the changes they envision, our young people need so much more. Students need the opportunity to develop creative problem-solving and higher order reasoning skills. Beyond that, students need the opportunity to build these skills within pedagogical frameworks that make such skills culturally legible. In the midst of this period of change, it is encouraging to see that some program administrators are taking advantage of the upheaval to resist continuing to uphold the current oppressive systems and to move towards more equitable, sustainable, culturally relevant music education opportunities for all students.

Behind all of the policies, advocacy efforts, and programs, the question remains as to whether most public schools, in their current hegemonic forms, are appropriate places for music education, when students are rigorously learning about music and becoming enculturated into those practices at home, in cultural centers and houses of worship, and with their friends. Perhaps stronger resistance to dominant ideologies can emerge, if, by incorporating longstanding anti-hegemonic cultural pedagogies into classrooms, students learn to contribute to a new, less oppressive governing logic than the current neoliberal capitalist logic on which such programs depend for funding and space within education’s marketization.

As music programs progress, administrators can ask, what value is school music adding to students’ lives? As music educators, administrators, and policy makers design learning
experiences, more reflection and more openness with students and with communities about their rationales would also contribute to the deconstruction of White supremacist governing logics. If an elite, Western European music education is offered, are educators open with their students about why this might be beneficial in terms of cultural capital and navigating culturally dominant spaces? Are students still given opportunities to engage with the music creatively, on their terms, in ways that are legible to them? Or, is this elite music being taught from a White savior perspective, communicating that it is a gift for students to be able to appreciate and perform this music, that this music is universally understandable, and that students’ academic pursuits across all areas will be more successful if they learn it (all disproven or unfounded claims)? As long as elite, Western European ways of knowing and embodying music serve as a gatekeeper to higher education, all students should have access to it as a route to accessing economic and political power, but when taught in a way that reinforces the notion that elite, Western European music is superior to other traditions, harm is perpetuated. Teaching European traditions with a creative approach alongside many other traditions and through a critical pedagogy gives students the tools to navigate and potentially deconstruct dominant systems (Hess 2018; Good-Perkins 2021).

State-sponsored and state-approved enculturation practices in local public schools are potentially open to local, democratic leadership, but only if the infrastructure is in place to maintain focus on content and pedagogy without constant concerns about funding. Education scholar George J. Sefa Dei reminds us that:

There is an appreciation of that fact that while schools are sites of indoctrination and reproduction of structural inequities, they are also sites of empowerment, resistance, and transformation. Through anti-racism education, disadvantaged communities become aware of where and what are the fault lines of their children’s schooling and education. They begin to resist the “dumbing down” of students and parents and even become skeptical of who is served by teacher bashing, which dances around institutional responsibilities. (Dei 2014)

Demonstrating this hope for “empowerment, resistance, and transformation,” Apple identifies
“an ethical and political duty of educators” to struggle each day against all of these hegemonizing, colonizing forces for the sake of each student (1993, 150). The purpose and practices of education will always be debated. Policies on school management, curriculum design, and funding shape those debates and who and what has power in them, while classroom practices, alongside community and family experiences, teach young people how to engage with the systems they navigate, including education systems. Steering those conversations towards deconstructing and replacing the hegemonizing, hierarchizing forces that have shaped public education since its inception will require iterative and always-contested attempts to center anti-hegemonic pedagogies and epistemologies both in policy and in classrooms. It is through these contestations and the thick democratic processes that will by necessity surround them that public schools may become a place where education centers diverse pedagogies and knowledge.
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