

Abstract

Professional development is a requirement for most music educators and is often tied to teacher evaluations (Barrett, 2006; Battersby & Verdi, 2015). It can also serve as a remedy for feelings of isolation, provide a space for informal conversations about teaching, and provide opportunities for music educators to continue to develop their skills (Conway, 2003, 2005, 2008; Gruenhagen, 2008; Sindberg, 2011; Sindberg & Lipscomb, 2005). Many researchers have examined the professional development needs of music educators through a variety of studies which considered preferences in style of professional development, locations for professional development, distance willing to travel for professional development, cost, and topic of interest (Bauer, 1997; Bernard, 2009; Bowles, 2003; Ferrara, 2009; Hesterman, 2011; Tarnowski & Murphy, 2003). Other researchers considered the professional development needs of music educators, both novice and experienced, through an examination of the literature, interviews, or MEA conference session offerings (Bauer, 2007; Conway, 2003, 2008; Hammel, 2007; Palki, Albert, Hill, & Shaw, 2016; Price & Orman, 1999; VanWeelden & Meehan, 2016).

Despite the body of research on professional development, no studies to date have examined the professional development needs of music educators in regard to teaching music to students with disabilities. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate needs and preferences for professional development situated in teaching music to students with special needs. Specific questions guiding this study include:

- 1) What preferences do music educators have regarding professional development centered on teaching music to students with disabilities?
- 2) What would motivate music educators to consider attending professional development focused on teaching music to students with disabilities?

As Bowles' (2003) study is one of the most cited studies examining professional development preferences of music educators, I used this survey instrument as a model for my own. Bowles' (2003) respondents completed a demographics section and indicated their preferences for professional development in regard to topics of interest, graduate credit offerings, preference of workshop leaders, length of workshops, location, and cost. Respondents to my survey instrument completed three sections; the first a demographic section and the second which examined music educator preferences regarding professional development. Those preferences included location, type, cost, motivation, local district offerings, effectiveness and implementation of professional development, financial support to attend professional development, and topics of interest. The third section asked participants questions which examined motivation, preference, and topic interests in regard to professional development centered on teaching music to students with disabilities.

Discussion on Findings

Overall, the respondents to this survey are interested in attending professional development situated in teaching music to students with disabilities but have certain preferences that would motivate them to participate. Methodologies were among the top five preferred topics for professional development, which is similar to previous studies also examining preferred topics of interest (Bernard, 2009; Bowles 2003; Hesterman, 2011; Tarnowski & Murphy, 2003). Motivators to attend professional development also are similar between the respondents of this survey study and the literature. Participants in the surveys of Bernard (2009) and Bowles (2003) stated that increasing their knowledge was a motivation for attending professional development, as did respondents in this study. However, when asked specifically about their motivation for attending professional development situated in teaching music to students with disabilities

through an open-ended response, motivators were found to be different. Through content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; White & Marsh, 2006) I found that *Logistics of Professional Development*, such as cost, location, and time, were the most frequent among responses. While some respondents did mention a desire to know more about the disabilities of their students and how to better teach music to students with disabilities in general the frequency of these respondents was less than that of logistics of professional development. This may be due to music educators' lack of time within their schedules or lack of funding for professional development outside of what is provided by their district (Bernard, 2009; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Sindberg, 2011, 2016).

Preferences for location of professional development do not seem to differ from most of the research literature. Respondents stated that they preferred 1-day intensive workshops, such as chapter workshops (AOSA, FAME, GIML, OAKE), which is consistent with some of the research literature (Ferrara, 2009; Hesterman, 2011). The responses in this survey do differ from those in the Bowles' (2009) study, which pointed toward preferring a university course over a local chapter workshop. Although the research literature states that conference sessions situated in teaching music to students with disabilities are lacking (VanWeelden & Meehan, 2016), respondents to this survey preferred 1-hour conferences sessions. Hammel (2007) addressed the issue of short-term professional developments, such as conference sessions, stating that; "research suggests that educators may find more value in professional development experiences that are longer. . .and contain support structures for implementation of classroom strategies" (p. 27). While the research may suggest that music educators may find more value in long-term professional developments, respondents to this survey preferred more short-term professional

development. Again, this may be due to issues of lack of time and/or funding for professional developments outside of the music educators school district.

Respondents stated that, when they were able to choose the professional development they attended, rather than attending a district-provided professional development, they found the professional development to be more useful. Those responses align with the research literature, which states that professional development is more effective if it is on a topic of interest to the teacher (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Richardson, 2003). Many respondents also stated they desired professional development, situated in teaching music to students with disabilities, to be content-specific (*Knowledge and Strategies Specific to Music Instruction*). This finding supports Bauer's and Hammel's (2007) recommendation that professional development be content-specific. While respondents were looking for content-specific professional development, many were unsure of what that might look like as responses demonstrated a lack of understanding of the differences between differentiating, accommodations versus modifications, and if there were separate strategies or pedagogies specific to teaching students with disabilities.

One frequent code, regarding types of professional development provided for music educators was *Informal and Formal Collaborative Music Meetings*. Respondents stated that they participated in informal professional developments, such as professional learning communities or collaborative music meetings. This finding supports Conway's (2007) suggestion that those developing or participating in professional development may wish to consider prolonged professional engagement that was more informal in nature, such as a professional learning community or *community of practice* (Wenger, 1998).

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Appendixes

Appendix A 1

Question	Mean	Standard Dev.	Frequency
Years of Experience	1.84	0.87	
0 to 10			39.19%
11 to 20			45.95%
21 to 30			6.76%
30+			8.11%
Level Taught	n/a	n/a	
Elem Gen/Choral			51.77%
Elem Band			9.73%
Elem Strings			2.65%
MS GM			7.52%
MS Choral			6.64%
MS Band			7.08%
MS Strings			1.77%
HS GM (Theory/App)			3.10%
HS Choral			4.42%
HS Band			4.42%
HS Strings			0.88%
Gender	n/a	n/a	
Female			85%
Male			14%
Both			1%
Ethnicity	n/a	n/a	
White/Caucasian			93%
Black			1%
Mixed			1%
Hispanic			2%
Asian			1%
Latino			1%
Filipino			1%
Level of Education	1.93	0.74	
Bachelors			24%
Masters			65.33%
Doctorate			4%
Other			66.67%

Appendix A2

Question	Mean	Standard Dev.	Frequency
Location of PD			
Local workshops	2.2	1.3	39.13%
state conference	2.59	1.4	26.26%
national conference	3.54	1.58	13.04%
online	4.39	1.48	3.62%
college/university	4.15	1.33	3.62%
district	4.12	1.82	13.77%
Distance to PD	3.33	1.15	
0-50 miles			31.88%
50-100 miles			26.09%
100-150 miles			5.07%
150-200 miles			6.52%
200+ miles			30.43%
Structure of PD			
1 Day	1.66	0.87	54.22%
1 Hour	2.81	1.35	20.48%
Semester course	3.87	1.16	0%
Online	3.37	1.23	10.84%
PLC	3.47	1.35	10.84%
Other	5.82	0.93	3.61%
Cost of PD	3.33	1.15	
\$10-20			3.62%
\$20-30			24.64%
\$30-40			26.09%
\$40-50			26.09%
\$50-60			19.57%
Method Topic of PD			
Kodaly	6.31	4.16	6.02%%
Orff	6.1	4.48	10.84%%
MLT	8.2	4.53	7.23%%
Dalcroze	8.95	4.32	2.41%
Feierabend	6.2	5.37	31.33%
Movement	5.19	3.03	6.02%
Multicultural/World	8.84	3.32	0.00%
Assessment	8.66	4.6	6%
Core Arts Standards	12.29	3.7	0%
Grant Writing	12.96	3.66	1%

Instrumental Tech	11.67	4.39	3.61%
Choral Tech	11.9	3.93	0.00%
Creativity/Improv	9.12	4.22	1.20%
Technology	10.52	4.89	4.82%
CR/Advocacy	13.84	4.06	0%
Brain Research	9.45	5.92	7.23%
Teach/Class			
Management	9.16	6.36	8.43%
Culturally R.T.	12.01	5.69	3.61%
Other	18.6	2.46	0%

Appendix A3

Question	Mean	Standard Dev.	Frequency
Usefulness of Provided PD	3.05	1.21	
Extremely Useful			12.50%
Very Useful			19.17%
Moderately Useful			33.33%
Slightly Useful			20.83%
Not at all Useful			14.17%
Usefulness of PD Sought	1.65	0.82	
Extremely Useful			51.67%
Very Useful			36.67%
Moderately Useful			7.50%
Slightly Useful			3.33%
Not at all Useful			0.83%

Question	Mean	Standard Dev.	Frequency
Likely to Attend SPED PD	1.6	0.83	
Extremely Likely			59.04%
Somewhat Likely			26.51%
Neither likely/Unlikely			9.64%
Somewhat Unlikely			4.82%
Motivation to attend PD			
Licensure Requirement	2.17	0.61	11.88%

Degree Requirement	2.67	0.49	0.79%
Increase Knowledge	1.16	0.44	87.13%

***Motivation to attend SPED PD – Open Ended Response**

While an increase in knowledge was frequent among the codes in the content analysis, the most frequent code was “location, cost, and time”.

Question	Mean	St. Deviation	Frequency
Method Topic of SPED PD			
Kodaly	6.64	4.65	6.82%
Orff	6.1	4.40	11.36%
MLT	9.05	4.98	7.95%
Dalcroze	10.11	4.38	1.14%
Feierabend	5.31	5.43	39.77%
Movement	6.48	3.84	2.27%
Multicultural/World	6.99	3.60	2.27%
Assessment	8.91	3.93	0%
Core Arts Standards	12.9	4.01	0%
Grant Writing	14.14	3.10	0%
Instrumental Tech	12.26	5.55	7.95%
Choral Tech	9.78	5.29	3.41%
Creativity/Improv	7.61	4.0	1.14%
Technology	10.9	4.69	3.41%
CR/Advocacy	13.36	3.75	0%
Brain Research	10.69	4.85	3.41%
Teach/Class			
Management	10.01	4.74	0%
Culturally R.T.	10.59	5.58	7.95%
Other	18.17	3.24	1.14%