

Social Isolation Within Music Teaching: A Review of Literature

Purpose of the Study

- ❑ There has been minimal research focused on music teachers split between multiple locations, known as itinerant music teachers.
- ❑ Rather than looking strictly at itinerant music teachers, this review of literature focused on the emotional, physical, geographical, and social aspects of isolation that impacts teachers within both single and multiple school placements.
- ❑ Summarizing the literature allowed for parallels to be drawn between itinerant music teaching workloads and itinerant teachers, music teachers, and professionals in other disciplines.



What is Social Isolation?

- ❑ When social interactions are deficient, minimal, or unpleasant (whether voluntary or involuntary), they can cause feelings of loneliness (Gierveld, Tilburg, & Dykstra, 2006; Lubkin, 1998).
- ❑ Researchers who have studied social isolation stated that the emotions of sadness and loneliness are a reaction to harm within our social worlds (Arewasikpron, Davis, & Zatura, 2013).
- ❑ Social isolation occurs when interactions in social settings are insufficient. However, the effects of isolation might be minimized through emotional, tangible direct assistance, or through a network of people (Lubkin, 1998; Murphey, 2009).
- ❑ While isolation might be a consequence of sadness, an increase in social networks might result in improved resilience for individuals and groups.

Findings

Social Isolation and Education

- ❑ Effective professional development throughout a career is important because pre-service education training cannot adequately prepare teachers for all aspects of a teaching position (Davidson & Dwyer, 2014).
- ❑ The transition from student to educator can sometimes result in identity gaps. Effective mentorships for pre-service teachers can help develop how personal and professional identities relate to one another and can make this transition from student to educator more effortless (Alsop, 2006; Benson, 2008).
- ❑ In a study, links were discovered between social isolation and loneliness, but peer collaboration improved an understanding of experienced isolation and job satisfaction (Dussault, Deaudelin, Royer, & Louiselle, 1999). And when social networks were utilized, feelings of isolation could be prevented through the exchanging of ideas and professional relationships (Sindberg, 2011).

Social Isolation and Music Education

- ❑ According to Benson (2008), new music teachers should be provided access to music colleagues in order to gain valuable support and guidance from more experienced teachers. This can help to bridge the gap between music student and music educator (Eyre, 2009; Sindberg, 2011).
- ❑ A small percentage of music teachers in relation to general education staff, a sensed lack of opportunity to exchange resources or pedagogical approaches, and a need for more focused professional development, can have unintended consequences related to confidence within classrooms (Davidson & Dwyer, 2014).

Social Isolation and Itinerant Music Teaching

- ❑ Itinerant music teachers occupied as much as 22.4% of teaching jobs and held jobs that were more likely to be split between school locations than teachers in any other subject area (Gardner, 2010).
- ❑ Demands such as traveling and increased expectations as a result of teaching at multiple school locations can explain why itinerant teachers might have a higher average turnover and attrition rate than teachers in other positions (Gardner, 2010).

Conclusions

- ❑ Itinerant teachers' constant need for organization could explain both feelings of isolation and an impeded ability to develop a strong teaching identity (Benson, 2001). Adjustments among school administrators, student populations, and community demands might cause itinerant teachers to feel as if they are in a constant state of flux.
- ❑ Music teachers who experienced isolation felt unappreciated, limited job satisfaction, and physically or emotionally distanced from students, colleagues, administrators, and their community.

Recommendations for Future Research

- ❑ Research on stressors, isolation, and job satisfaction in areas of psychology, education, and music might help to shed light on experienced isolation of itinerant music teachers.
- ❑ Understanding job satisfaction, burnout rates, working conditions, expectations, and the nature of itinerant positions can help shed light on how to aid itinerant music teachers struggling with social or professional isolation.

