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## Music Education in the Urban Classroom: Issues of Equity and Access

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MUSIC EDUCATION IN THE URBAN CLASSROOM: ISSUES OF EQUITY AND ACCESS

by

Lakeisha Walker

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Music Education  
at  
Lindenwood University

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MUSIC EDUCATION IN THE URBAN CLASSROOM: ISSUES OF EQUITY AND ACCESS

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the College of Arts and Humanities  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master in Music Education  
at  
Lindenwood University

By

Lakeisha Walker

Saint Charles, Missouri

July 2024

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: MUSIC EDUCATION IN THE URBAN CLASSROOM: ISSUES OF EQUITY AND ACCESS

Lakeisha Walker, Master of Music Education, 2024

Thesis Directed by: Dr. Ryan Curtis

Music education in urban classrooms plays a crucial role in shaping students' overall development and academic success. The field of music education is not immune to the challenges of equity and access that exist in urban settings. It is essential to address these issues to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to participate in music programs and reap the countless benefits that come with them.

The importance of this topic in the field of music education cannot be overstated. Research has shown that students who participate in music programs demonstrate improved academic performance, enhanced cognitive skills, and increased creativity. However, not all students have equal access to these opportunities, especially those in urban schools facing resource constraints and societal inequalities.

Despite the growing body of research on music education, there remains a significant gap in understanding how equity and access issues specifically impact urban classrooms. This research aims to fill that gap by investigating the barriers that urban students face in accessing quality music education programs.

The main research question guiding this study is: How do issues of equity and access manifest in music education within urban classroom settings? To answer this question, a qualitative research approach will be conducted, including a thorough examination of data and case studies.

Ultimately, the key message of this research is to advocate for policies and practices that promote equity and access in music education for all students, regardless of their background or the setting of their school. Addressing these issues is essential for creating a more inclusive and enriching educational experience for urban students.

## **Dedication and Acknowledgements**

In the completion of this thesis, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for the unwavering support and encouragement from my family, whose belief in me never wavered. Their patience, understanding, and constant words of encouragement lifted me through the challenges and uncertainties of this academic journey. To my professors, I extend my heartfelt appreciation for their guidance, expertise, and mentorship that have shaped my intellectual growth and scholarly pursuits. Their dedication to excellence and commitment to nurturing my academic endeavors have not gone unnoticed and are deeply valued.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my friends, whose companionship and support provided a welcomed distraction during moments of stress and doubt. Their words of encouragement and shared laughter brought lightness to the often-solitary path of research and writing. Additionally, I am thankful for the support of all other supporters who have contributed in ways both seen and unseen, each playing a significant role in the realization of this academic milestone. This thesis would not have been possible without the collective support of my family, professors, friends, and other supporters, for whom I am truly grateful.

Dedicated to my late brother, Shawn R. Walker. I love you!

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## Introduction

Music education in urban classrooms faces several challenges, but the most pressing issue is the lack of equitable and accessible programs (Aguilar, 2020). Merely having a music program in place does not guarantee its quality or accessibility. Many mistakenly believe that diversity in music programs, where students from various backgrounds sing and play instruments together, signifies equity. However, true equity means providing all students, regardless of their unique backgrounds, with the support they need to succeed (Blakenstein, 2016). Unfortunately, the problems surrounding fair and accessible music programs for urban students often go unnoticed and unaddressed due to this misconception. In order for all students to learn and thrive, it is crucial to provide them with a fair and accessible education and ensure they can access the schools, institutions, and programs that offer these services. According to the Summary of National Arts Education Status Report (2019), music education, a subject mandated by federal law for a well-rounded education, should be delivered with equity and made accessible to all students (Morrison et al., 2022). To achieve this, we must allocate adequate funds, invest in, and prioritize music classrooms in urban areas, creating an environment of encouragement and acceptance for students. It is the responsibility of educators to reach and support all students equitably, providing them with a well-rounded education that includes a high-quality music program. Such a program should be comprehensive, taught by highly qualified music educators, and built on a curriculum that promotes awareness, respect, and responsiveness to the diverse cultures within the student body and community (Doyle, 2014).

In most public schools in the United States, music education plays a significant role in providing a comprehensive education for children. However, there is often a disconnect between music research and school policies (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). While stakeholders may agree



that student needs should be the primary focus of education, many schools do not have policies that genuinely support this statement. Are traditional music programs truly relevant and viable for the majority of students, especially those in urban settings? Are there alternative music curriculums and teaching methods that can bridge the gap in equity and access? To understand the complexities of developing a musically equitable school system, we must recognize the historical importance of music in education (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). Unfortunately, the American educational system has a long history of creating unequal and inaccessible educational opportunities. Economic factors have influenced the provision of music education, with the needs of working-class households often being neglected in favor of the social and cultural values of middle-class families (Aguilar, 2020). As a result, children from working-class backgrounds have less exposure, and fewer opportunities, to engage in music programs compared to their middle-class counterparts (Aguilar, 2020). Middle-class children are more likely to participate in instrument learning programs and performances and have more autonomy in their musical experiences, whether for leisure or future careers.

Urban schools and students have often been stigmatized with negative stereotypes, and music education is no exception. Urban students are often seen as deficient, defiant, unmotivated, and uninterested, while their families are portrayed as broken and unsupportive of their educational pursuits (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). These negative stereotypes continue to influence the lack of support, attention, and funding for music programs in urban areas. It is unfair to blame students and teachers for their shortcomings; instead, we must examine the surrounding system that contributes to these outcomes. We need to shift our perspective and view urban students as different rather than lesser, focusing on their strengths rather than weaknesses (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). Only then, can we understand their true potential and provide them with the

education they deserve. If we truly believe that all students matter, we must consider their multiple needs when designing learning experiences and educational frameworks. There are numerous factors influencing music education, and we must identify the variables that are essential to the learning process and that conceptually connect urban music education with equity and access. Additionally, we must remove the barriers that hinder equity and access for students in urban areas.

This thesis aims to explore the challenges faced in providing equal opportunities for music education in urban areas. By examining the barriers that hinder equitable access to music education, we can work towards creating inclusive and accessible music programs for all students.

## Literature Review

### Understanding Equity in Urban Music Education

It is widely recognized that the commonly familiar solutions fail to address the root issues of inequity (Cobb & Krownapple, 2019). There is an all-too-frequent focus on superficial remedies, catchy buzzwords, and trends (Cobb & Krownapple, 2019). Schools and districts across the country have depended on strategies that merely perpetuate the dysfunctional cycle of equity initiatives. Breaking free from this cycle call for solutions that transcend these conventional and ineffective approaches (Cobb & Krownapple, 2019). The persistence of such an unjust system inflicts considerable harm, including increased dropout rates and educational disparities. Moreover, educational strategies for students in impoverished conditions often emphasize perceived deficiencies. Bates (2018) highlights the stigmatizing belief that these students and their families are indifferent to education, prone to poor decision-making, and lacking a strong work ethic. Additionally, there is a prevailing attitude that urban students and their schools are inferior, rather than simply being different from their counterparts in other settings (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). This viewpoint supports unequal educational environments whereby students from wealthier backgrounds have access to creative and engaging learning experiences, whereas students from less affluent families face a more constrained and rigid educational approach. Rejecting these negative stereotypes is crucial (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015).

The definition of urban areas by the U.S. Bureau of Census, based mainly on population size and density, does little to capture the full complexities of urban life and education. Urban schools, characterized by their metropolitan location and the socio-cultural dynamics of their students and communities, present both challenges and opportunities. The term urban is filled with stereotypes that do not necessarily reflect the reality of these schools, students, or educators

(Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). Despite these challenges, many educators find value in identifying with the term urban, using it to connect with others in similar contexts and to seek out relevant resources. Nevertheless, the definition of urban remains contested, summarizing a myriad of social, cultural, and economic factors.

Students participating in urban music programs deserve a rich and comprehensive music education that reflects a deep engagement with and appreciation for music. The unique strengths of each student are invaluable resources that are best recognized through dedicated efforts by educators to understand their students' backgrounds, abilities, prior experiences, musical knowledge, cultural heritages, and interests. Student populations in many urban schools are becoming increasingly culturally diverse, and this trend is expected to continue indefinitely in all areas of the United States (Doyle, 2014). Ultimately, recognizing the distinctiveness of every school and adopting a context-specific approach to teaching are vital, as is moving beyond the narrow and often stereotypical confines of the urban label.

### **Defining Equity**

Fairness in education is often described not merely as equality, where each individual receives identical treatment and resources, but as equity, which emphasizes the provision of specific supports tailored to what each person needs to achieve success. Equality entails a uniform approach to services, whereas equity is concerned with meeting individual needs for success (Smith, 2017). Equity, as a foundational principle in education, goes beyond merely opening the doors to equal educational opportunities. Equity is about ensuring high-quality education for all students, irrespective of their circumstances or location, through a socially fair and inclusive education system (Blakenstein, 2016). It is about eliminating the predictability of success or failure based on social or cultural factors, such as race, ethnicity, linguistic

background, economic class, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical and cognitive ability, or other socio-political identity markers. This includes respecting each student's cultural identity and personal voice, understanding their unique experiences, realities, challenges, obstacles, needs, interests, goals, aspirations, and ambitions. Addressing the diverse needs and characteristics among students is the essence of educational equity (Kafele, 2021). Moreover, it is important to acknowledge each student's distinct way of staying motivated and inspired, as well as their unique learning styles and thought processes (Kafele, 2021). The role of teachers in fostering equity is vital. A truly equitable classroom environment requires teachers to adopt an equity mindset. Equity is more than an action; it becomes an integral part of the educator's identity and reflects their humanity towards the students they serve (Kafele, 2021).

### **Equity and Access in Music Education**

In today's diverse society, addressing the challenges of access and equity within urban music classrooms is essential. Equal access to music education is crucial, as it plays a significant role in shaping well-rounded learners. By striving for fair access to music education, urban schools can cultivate an inclusive environment that supports the musical development of every student. The Arts Education Data Project (AEDP) examined the state of music and arts education in public schools in 2019, post the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Findings show that while 92% of students have access to music education, over 3.6 million students lack this opportunity, and more than 2 million students have no access to any arts education (**Table 1**). Disparities exist, especially in urban and rural areas, affecting Black, Hispanic, and Native American students in schools with high numbers of economically disadvantaged students. The report, in collaboration with State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education and Quadrant Arts Education Research, analyzed data from 30,633 schools

across 17 states. It revealed that music education is available to 92% of students, with 49% participating, and 8% lacking access. Similarly, 96% have access to arts education, but only 67% participate, leaving 4% without access (**Table 2**). The AEDP report provides crucial data for advocates, policymakers, and educators to enhance student access to music and arts education.

A key goal of music education is to foster an appreciation for various musical styles and genres among learners, promoting a comprehensive approach to music teaching (Butler et al., 2007). Enhancing access to music education and incorporating culturally relevant musical curricula are essential for urban music education reform (Doyle, 2014). Music education should be valued equally alongside traditional academic subjects, utilizing students' cultural backgrounds and musical interests to foster success (Calloway, 2009). To foster a truly equitable classroom, the teacher must become an embodiment of equity – embodying what it means to be equitable in every action and decision within the classroom (Kafele, 2021). This mindset is crucial not only in how we perceive our students but in shaping how they perceive themselves and the world around them. An equity mindset in teaching goes beyond traditional methods, advocating for a student-centered, culturally responsive approach that value each student's voice and identity. An equity mindset involves recognizing and valuing the diverse experiences and backgrounds of all students, ensuring that teaching methods are adaptive, inclusive, and responsive to individuals' needs. Such a mindset is not just beneficial but necessary for creating a nurturing, effective, and equitable learning environment (Kafele, 2021). Equity training is paramount for educators, reflecting a commitment to meet the unique needs of each student and to embrace their individuality and cultural identity (Kafele, 2021).

The future of access and equity in urban music classrooms necessitates a collaborative and intentional effort from all stakeholders. Educational equity is fundamental in recognizing

and supporting each child's unique interests and talents by offering a wide array of learning opportunities, activities, and materials (Aguilar, 2020). This approach ensures that every child experiences a sense of love, care, and belonging within their community.

### **Barriers to Access in Urban Music Education**

In urban music education, there are significant challenges that affect the participation of students of color in music performance groups. Challenges include limited access, frequent changes in teaching staff and a curriculum that does not resonate with their daily experiences (Calloway, 2009). Urban schools, in particular, also face obstacles due to a high number of at-risk students, prevalent issues, and intense negative scrutiny (Kindall-Smith, 2004). The struggles faced by music education programs in urban schools can be linked to neglect, socio-economic disparities, and the departure of white and middle-class families from urban public schools (Calloway, 2009). These challenges result in a lack of resources, support, and qualified educators, significantly impacting the ability to offer a comprehensive and culturally relevant music education to urban students, especially those from less affluent backgrounds. Urban educators encounter a variety of challenges, including discipline problems, lack of parental support, diverse cultural backgrounds, students' limited exposure to music, and unstable living conditions (Baker, 2012). Factors like race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status play a crucial role in determining students' educational needs, contributing to the opportunity gap faced by many students due to widespread inequalities (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). To provide a comprehensive music education, educators must be aware of various factors in students' lives and backgrounds that may influence their educational requirements (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). In urban settings, accessing quality music education poses several obstacles that can hinder students' musical development. Despite the numerous benefits of music education, urban

students often encounter multiple barriers in engaging with music programs. By examining these obstacles, we can gain a better understanding of how to address and overcome them to ensure equal access to music education for all students.

### **Socioeconomic Factors**

The concept of socioeconomic status encompasses a multifaceted blend of elements regarding an individual's background, specifically highlighting both tangible resources, such as education, income, and wealth, and intangible aspects, like social standing or rank within a societal hierarchy (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). This dual aspect gives rise to discernable inequities, notably observable through the heightened poverty rates in urban environments compared to suburban locales—a trend that has markedly intensified since the 1960s and 1970s (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). Recent research indicates students of low socioeconomic status (SES) who participate in the arts have better social and academic outcomes than those who do not participate in arts instruction. Because many students in urban areas are from low SES, music instruction could be particularly beneficial (Doyle, 2014). Unfortunately, many American schools, especially those that serve students of low SES, have been forced to eliminate or scale back their arts programs because of school budget shortfalls caused in part by contemporary economic issues, distribution of highly qualified teachers, and the increased societal focus on high-stakes testing in mathematics and reading (Doyle, 2014). The interconnection between family income and educational attainment further underscores the critical considerations necessary for urban educators. Misinterpretations fostered by the culture of poverty narrative, as addressed by Paul Gorski (2008), include several myths, notably that individuals facing economic challenges lack motivation or a strong work ethic—a notion refuted by data from the Economic Policy Institute indicating that lower-income working adults often work longer hours



than their wealthier counterparts (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). Additionally, the assumption that impoverished parents disengage from their children's educational journey due to a devaluation of education is debunked, revealing that attitudes toward education do not significantly differ by income level (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). Challenges, such as multiple job commitments and restricted access to childcare and transportation, significantly hinder low-income parents' involvement (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015).

The ramifications of socioeconomic status extend into the realm of music education, where funding cuts disproportionately affect students, causing out-of-pocket expenditures for instruments, materials, and associated performance costs not covered by educational institutions (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). When schools cut arts programs, urban students may be affected more severely than their suburban counterparts because they lose the benefits from both the artistic and social aspects of music participation that can help alleviate some of the stresses inherent when living with poverty (Doyle, 2014). Such financial burdens potentially inhibit access and participation of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds due to not only direct costs but also secondary factors, such as time constraints for single or working parents, and health issues affecting participation opportunities (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). Although practical and financial concerns are very real and can be quite pressing, systematic district-level changes could help remove obstacles to music participation for students with low SES, and thus ensure more equitable access to instruction in the arts. To increase student participation and decrease financial barriers, systematic efforts should be undertaken to ensure free access to public school music programs for those whom cost would be a deterrent.

Despite the idealized view of education as the great equalizer, systemic biases inherent in American education perpetuate socioeconomic disparities through the sorting of students based

on parental income, education, and occupational status (Bates, 2018). This reality contributes to a significant opportunity gap underpinned by structural and societal inequalities, challenging the good merit narrative and underscoring the influence of systemic and institutional factors over individual effort alone (Bates, 2018). Understanding and addressing the opportunity gap makes necessary the acknowledgment of comprehensive disparities affecting educational and economic opportunities across demographic lines—including, but not limited to, health, housing, nutrition, safety, and enriching experiences (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015).

Research has indicated that minority students, those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and those with lower academic performance are often notably absent in secondary school music programs throughout the United States, particularly in larger musical ensembles (Costa-Giomi & Chappell, 2007; Kinney, 2010). A study conducted by Bradley (2007) in a large suburban school district in the Midwest, demonstrated a significant disparity. While elementary music classes mirrored the school's demographics due to being mandatory, only 15% of high school students chose to participate in music programs (Bradley, 2007). This relationship can be seen in **Table 3**. Among these students, 64% were Caucasian, despite the school's overall Caucasian population being around 51% (**Table 3**).

In a comprehensive study of music education in the United States, Elpus and Abril (2011) discovered that in 2004, 21% of high school seniors were engaged in school music ensembles (**Table 4**). Their research showed a similar trend to Bradley's findings, with 65.7% of music students being Caucasian, 15.2% Black/African American, 10.2% Hispanic/Latino, 4.3% multiracial, 3.8% Asian, and 0.9% Native American/Pacific Islander (**Table 4**). They also noted that 90.4% of music students spoke English as their native language (**Table 4**).

Students of color and those of low SES are strikingly underrepresented in elective music classes; many students in urban areas may not even have access to high-quality music programs because of social, economic, and political issues in their local areas (Bradley, 2007). Research conducted by Elpus and Abril (2011) identified a strong relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and music participation. They observed that only 17% of music students were from the lowest SES quartile and that students involved in music were 1.71 times more likely to belong to the highest SES quartile than the lowest (Elpus & Abril, 2011). The relationship can be seen in **Table 5**. Their research also highlighted that 79.4% of music participants came from households with two parents or guardians and that children of parents with advanced degrees were disproportionately represented, both characteristics commonly associated with higher SES (**Table 5**). Moreover, students with high academic performance were notably more prevalent among music participants. The societal discourse surrounding socioeconomic status, poverty, and educational equity exposes the nuanced realities contradicting prevailing stereotypes and myths.

### **Racial Factors**

Redefining racism is pivotal for the transformation of educational institutions and the foundation of a just society. Racism is understood as a system of oppression formed by the belief in the superiority of one race over another due to presumed biological differences (Aguilar, 2020). This belief system is solely manifested through the ideology of white supremacy, aiming to economically and socially privilege whiteness above all. A crucial aspect of racism, particularly in the context of the United States, is its definition as prejudice coupled with power, where institutional power predominantly resides with white people. This reality elucidates why reverse racism does not exist; while individuals of color may exhibit prejudice towards white

individuals, such discrimination lacks the backing of systemic privilege and institutionalization (Aguilar, 2009). Race and ethnicity are social constructions, fabricated by humans to categorize based on perceived commonalities (Aguilar, 2009). Despite race being an inaccurate representation of identity, societal perceptions deeply influenced by white supremacy play a significant role. Racism involves using such constructs to elevate certain groups into dominance while oppressing others, affecting structures including schools, the legal system, and social programs. The narrative further reveals how the U.S. educational system, inherently not designed to serve all students equitably, perpetuates racial disparities. From the foundational exclusion of education as a constitutional right to the sorting of individuals based on race, gender, and class, systemic inequities are pronounced. This history presents complex challenges when addressing racial disparities evident in access to educational opportunities, criminalization of behaviors, and achievement gaps among students of color.

Addressing race within educational reform is imperative. It is important to understand race and emphasize the absence of biological evidence supporting racial differences (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). It is crucial for educators to recognize and affirm the racial and ethnic identities of their students, not to claim color-blindness, which inadvertently dismisses the critical aspects of a child's identity (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). Educators are encouraged to embrace diversity, acknowledging race as a crucial consideration in fostering a community where every student feels a sense of belonging and identity affirmation.

Grasping the multifaceted issues of race, identity, and self-esteem, and their impact on music teaching and learning, is fundamental for music educators aiming to address the needs of a diverse student population effectively. Teachers have an opportunity to explore and integrate the rich musical traditions of their students' diverse ethnic backgrounds. Recognizing music as an

elemental aspect of nearly all cultures, teachers can leverage the ethnic diversity within their classrooms as a valuable educational resource. Confronting racism requires a deep understanding of its definition, recognizing the systemic privileges it upholds groups while oppressing others. Educators play a critical role in transforming the educational landscape by acknowledging and addressing racial and ethnic differences, fostering an inclusive environment where diversity is celebrated, and leadership is cultivated from all community segments.

### **Funding and Resource Allocation**

Insufficient funding and resources, along with a focus on core subjects over music education, contribute significantly to the reduction of music programs (Calloway, 2009). Music education often suffers from being presented in an inconsistent order, occasionally as part of a larger arts program that includes various non-core subjects, indicating a lack of a structured music curriculum. Urban students, in particular, face obstacles in reaching the same level of music proficiency as their counterparts from more affluent backgrounds, due to a lack of quality instruments, private tutoring, and family support (Calloway, 2009).

Furthermore, the disparities in music education within urban schools can also be attributed to financial limitations and socio-economic factors, along with an emphasis on school performance in traditional subjects (Calloway, 2009). There is a discrepancy between the goals and strategies proposed by music and art teachers and the current situation of music education in numerous urban areas (Calloway, 2009). This discrepancy raises concerns over why urban school music programs frequently lack the resources found in wealthier areas. The economic decline dating back to the 1960s, caused in part by the migration of the white population from

urban areas, significantly restricted financial contributions to school programs, including music education (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015).

The distribution and spending of funds in schools are governed by specific rules, including funds received based on student attendance, bond issues, and grants (Clinton, 2015). Music teachers often lack training in budget processes, making fundraising crucial due to budget cuts (Clinton, 2015). To secure funding for music education in public schools, teachers play a vital role in advocating for programs despite funding challenges (Clinton, 2015). The Arts Education Data Project (AEDP) report highlights the importance of advocating for music and arts education, emphasizing the need for educators to engage with the Arts Education Data Project and seek funding opportunities like Title I and Title IV Part A to support and enhance these programs. The dissemination of the report is encouraged among educators, administrators, and policymakers to promote awareness and action towards improving access to arts education for all students.

Music programs face financial constraints, influencing student participation and academic benefits. Investments in music education offer cognitive and academic advantages but require significant costs for teacher salaries, instruments, maintenance, facilities, and resources (Teachers College, 2024).

Fundraising, instrument donations, and grants are essential avenues to supplement music education budgets (Teachers College, 2024). Teachers and parents can collaborate on fundraising efforts, while organizations provide donated instruments to expand access (Teachers College, 2024). Applying for grants tailored to music education can also provide additional financial support for music programs (Teachers College, 2024). Addressing these funding challenges and

employing effective resource allocation methods allows educators to deliver comprehensive music programs that inspire and empower students. Investing in music education in urban areas not only enriches the lives of individual students but also enhances the cultural vitality of their communities (Clinton, 2015).

### **Limited Resources and Infrastructure**

In our school systems, some music education programs lack the necessary attention to effectively educate all students, with urban schools facing particularly pronounced challenges. The neglect of music education in urban settings underlines the need for improvement across all urban school districts (Kindall-Smith 2004). Challenges specific to urban music education mainly arise from limited resources and inadequate infrastructure. Financial constraints often lead schools to sideline music education, resulting in its absence in some areas. Financial limitations restrict updates to equipment, access to musical instruments, and hiring qualified music educators. The scarcity of specialized facilities for music instruction further hinders students' comprehensive engagement with music, limiting them from realizing their musical potential. These obstacles contribute to a lack of access to high-quality musical education for many talented individuals, a concern prevalent in urban settings. Addressing the challenges faced by urban music education requires a multifaceted approach. In instances where music education is present, it may only consist of a weekly session focusing on activities like singing, clapping, and rhythmic games for young students (Calloway, 2009).

The success of music programs heavily relies on the support of school administrators. Administrators play a crucial role in prioritizing arts programs, including music, amidst policy mandates and educational reforms. Their influence extends to fund allocation, class scheduling,

and creating a supportive environment for the arts (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). Securing funding for basic educational needs, while highlighting the importance of music education to administrators and stakeholders, is a significant burden (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). Despite significant hurdles, urban music education challenges are not insurmountable. Recognizing these obstacles and advocating for systemic change can pave the way for all students.

### **Teacher Prep and Support**

A study conducted by Fiese and DeCarbo (1995) revealed that a small percentage of urban music educators felt adequately prepared by their university training to teach in urban schools. Frierson-Campbell (2006) reported a high number of urban music teachers who believed they lacked proper preparation during their undergraduate studies. Bell (1995) emphasized the insufficient educational and emotional readiness of young teachers entering urban classrooms. To address these concerns, it is crucial for teacher trainers to possess qualifications in technology application and multicultural curriculum development (Baker, 2012).

Participants in the study by Fiese and DeCarbo (1995) expressed feeling unprepared to teach music in urban settings due to their training focusing on the ideal student, rather than the realities of urban classrooms. They highlighted the need for additional training to navigate the complex emotions of students from diverse backgrounds facing challenges like unstable home environments, teenage pregnancies, and homelessness.

Baker (2012) suggested that the high attrition rates in urban schools might stem from inadequate teacher preparation at the university level. He emphasized the necessity for universities to revamp teacher-training programs to cater to urban populations. Baker proposed



integrating courses that offer insights into diversity and poverty, along with practical experiences in urban classrooms.

Moreover, Baker (2012) recommended involving music education professors in designing courses that prepare preservice teachers for the diverse urban classroom environment. This could include observations, field experiences, and interviews with urban music educators, and guest lectures from experienced teachers (Baker, 2012). Identifying and encouraging students displaying essential qualities for urban music education could help address the challenges of teacher turnover in urban districts (Baker, 2012).

Kindall-Smith (2004) emphasized the importance of ongoing professional development for music educators, focusing not only on technological advancements and teaching methods but also on child development and psychology. Improving urban music education requires tailored training programs, support for both existing and preservice teachers, and culturally relevant musical experiences for urban students (Kindall-Smith, 2004). Research insights from experienced urban music educators and a broader inclusion of music educators, like band and orchestra directors, can further enhance program development (Kindall-Smith, 2004).

### **Teacher Quality and Training**

Multicultural music is generally not included in the secondary or undergraduate curricula; therefore, preservice teachers are not taught to value non-Western music as integral to their students' holistic musical experience (Wuttke, 2011). Traditional secondary school and college programs tend to focus almost exclusively on Western musical elements. Teachers are generally trained in college to teach in the Western classical tradition and create music programs similar to those they have experienced. Many teachers seem to view multicultural education as a nicety or

an additional enriching element but not necessarily something that should be a core part of their music curriculum (Legette, 2003). However, it has been suggested that classical music may not be the most culturally relevant vehicle to incite musical interest and participation for all populations (Miralis, 2006; Bosacki, 2006). When teachers favor utilizing a Eurocentric approach that focuses on Western art, their students, who will end up being America's future teachers, are often not gaining a multicultural background to help them relate to their future students (Legette, 2003). Teachers may not be confident in their ability to understand and appropriately teach alternative musical material, especially if they are not members of the represented culture (Legette, 2003). Creating a new curriculum for an unfamiliar music may seem a daunting task for teachers who have never been exposed to varied music in an educational setting (Doyle, 2014). Some teachers indicated that they were unsure how administrators, community members, and colleagues would react, especially if the teacher had already established a successful classically based program (Abril, 2009). Other teachers mentioned that they were unsure regarding how to select materials or musically prepare themselves to teach unfamiliar styles of music because of lack of experience with the material (Doyle, 2014). To improve future teacher comfort with non-Western musical styles and traditions, effort should be made to create positive and meaningful experiences with multicultural music during students' collegiate preparation (Doyle, 2014). There is a need of better preparation for teachers to integrate different styles of music into their curricula, advocacy efforts should be made at state and district levels to encourage the hiring of sufficient and appropriate numbers of urban music teachers to accommodate the types of varied curricula that will likely draw greater student participation (Doyle, 2014).

Developing a deep understanding of each student's background, including his or her family, culture, strengths, weaknesses, and interests, is pivotal for fostering success. Recognizing and valuing each child's culture as part of the teaching process enhances learning and enriches the educational environment. Acknowledging that learning is context-specific, great teachers align their goals and methods with the experiences and needs of their students. The effort to understand students' backgrounds, knowledge, and requirements allows educators to tailor their curriculum and pedagogical approaches effectively. When traditional, large-ensemble-based music programs are available, many urban students may opt out of participation because of a lack of interest in music that they do not perceive as relevant to their interests and/or culture (Albert, 2006). Examinations of music participation in urban areas have indicated that teachers who integrate multicultural musical styles, offer nontraditional ensembles, or teach courses that relate directly to local student interests are able to significantly increase elective participation in music, thus giving more students the opportunity to experience musical success.

Successful teachers are renowned for forging personal connections with their students, transcending mere educational roles to humanize their interactions and establish meaningful relationships. Educators with exceptional qualities stand out for their unique characteristics. They engage in interactions without judgment, approach challenges with thoughtfulness and professionalism, and show high emotional intelligence. These educators excel as active listeners and are aware of, and work on, their personal biases. They empower students to achieve success and prioritize their own well-being. They foster a sense of community, inspire a love for learning, avoid traditional power structures, and stress the significance of students' success and welfare for societal advancement.

### **Inclusive Curriculum and Instruction**

The music education curricula in many of our school systems--and the systems themselves--are like rusting locomotives shunted off to a sidetrack (Kindall-Sith, 2004). Although the curricula and school systems are not exactly forgotten, they are not given the attention they need to accomplish the goal of educating every child in our society (Kindall-Smith, 2004). Historically, music education has privileged classical music, often overlooking the musical preferences of families from different socio-economic backgrounds. This tradition dates back to the 1830s, when European music was established as the standard in music education. However, the Tanglewood Symposium of 1867 marked a shift by valuing all types of music and incorporating popular music into education (Mark, 2008). Such changes reflect the need to adapt music education to contemporary students' cultural and musical preferences.

In shaping our curriculum, it is imperative to go beyond our personal preferences and consider the needs and wants of the students under our care. It is possible to cherish and teach music we understand as we learn to understand and teach music that other people cherish (Kindall-Smith, 2004). Music education should strengthen students' creativity and sense of identity, emphasizing the importance of integrating music education into the curriculum in a way that is relevant to students' cultural and societal contexts (Calloway, 2009). The aim is to create learning environments that offer students a more comprehensive exposure to various music styles, genres, and roles prevalent in our society, aligning with national content standards. To achieve this, we must revamp existing programs in schools to be more diverse and adaptable. Multiculturalism as a methodology of reflective thinking means expanding our cultural lens by developing our perceptions. This process includes seizing opportunities to bridge ethnic and racial differences with courage, caring, fairness, and resourcefulness. Success breeds success (Kindall-Smith, 2004). Embracing multiculturalism in education involves broadening our

perspectives and embracing diversity. By valuing and teaching music from various cultural backgrounds, educators can create inclusive learning environments that celebrate different traditions and promote unity (Kindall-Smith, 2004). Offering a wide array of elective courses that cater to the diverse interests of our students can enrich their educational experiences (Mark, 2008).

Culturally relevant pedagogy calls upon educators to create a learning environment where students can freely express themselves, inquire, and engage in respectful conversations about issues that matter to them (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). It is important to emphasize the significance of educators understanding and leveraging the personal and cultural experiences that teachers and students bring into the learning environment to enhance educational outcomes. One way to achieve this is by incorporating popular music into our lessons. This approach not only makes the classroom more engaging but also allows us to explore the impact of popular culture on students' lives (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). Hip-hop music serves as an excellent case for discussion. It has been recognized for its role in promoting social initiatives such as voter registration drives, highlighting its positive influence (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). However, it has also been critiqued for often portraying violence and sexism (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). By discussing these aspects, we encourage meaningful dialogue and help students critically analyze their favorite music genres. It is crucial to approach teaching by acknowledging each student's background, experiences, and strengths (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). A contextually specific teaching method respects and nurtures the diverse identities of all students, making the classroom more inclusive and effective. Choosing music that resonates with students is vital. If the music we select is too distant from their experiences, students might struggle to see its relevance, which can decrease their motivation and understanding of the material (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). By

considering students' preferences and backgrounds when selecting music, we boost their engagement and learning experiences. Students come from diverse cultures and backgrounds, differing in race, gender, religion, and more. These differences influence their ability to connect their identity with the school music curriculum. When we align our music curriculum with the music students value, we enhance their connection and self-concept (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). Culturally responsive teaching empowers students by utilizing cultural references not just as teaching tools but as valuable elements of the curriculum itself. This approach increases students' motivation and enriches their learning experiences. Incorporating additional performance ensembles, such as percussion groups and rock bands, can attract students who might not be interested in traditional music classes. This inclusion celebrates the cultural backgrounds of our students and encourages a more diverse participation in music education (Mixon et al, 2005).

Careful curricular planning and thoughtful program advocacy can help create increasingly positive, high quality, culturally relevant and equitable musical opportunities for urban students (Doyle, 2014).

### **Cultural and Linguistic Diversity**

Culture is a multifaceted concept that individuals acquire through their participation in family and societal contexts over time (Gollnick & Chin, 2006). It consists of various elements such as values, behaviors, languages, nonverbal cues, perspectives, and worldviews (Banks, 2006). Cultural practices are specific to particular groups and may change as individuals, groups, and environments evolve. Within cultures, subgroups can form based on factors like ethnicity, language, class, religion, and geography, each with unique characteristics and values. It is common for members of dominant cultures to view their own culture as superior, often

influenced by historical Western European impacts in the United States (Taylor & Whittaker, 2009).

Culturally diverse students refer to individuals who are distinguished by their ethnicity, social class, and/or language from the mainstream culture (Perez, 1998). This includes students from racial/ethnic minorities, those who speak languages other than English, and students from low-income backgrounds. It is important to note that all students exhibit cultural diversity, regardless of their background. Emphasizing ethnicity, social class, and race is crucial due to the historical marginalization experienced by these groups, which affects educational approaches.

Language plays a crucial role in shaping cultural and personal identities, integrating individuals into cultural groups (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006). It encompasses verbal and nonverbal forms, both oral and written, inseparable from culture. Linguistically diverse students often face the challenge of learning a new language and culture, different from their home environment. Cultural relevance in teaching is essential to help students utilize their strengths for academic success.

The hidden curriculum in classrooms, reflecting white or European American middle-class values, can present challenges for culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students. Educators must acknowledge and respect students' diverse cultural norms to create a supportive learning environment (Taylor & Whittaker, 2009). Embracing cultural diversity, understanding students' backgrounds, and implementing culturally relevant teaching practices are essential for promoting inclusive and effective education for all students.

When working with culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students, it is crucial to acknowledge personal cultural biases and embrace cultural differences. Building on students' strengths rather than attributing difficulties to their upbringing or environment is essential. To support CLD students effectively, educators should incorporate a variety of instructional practices and develop lessons tailored to meet diverse student needs. By implementing these strategies, educators can create inclusive learning environments that cater to the unique backgrounds and abilities of CLD students (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

### **Community Partnerships and Collaborations**

Community engagement in music education involves collaboration between schools and larger communities for the exchange of knowledge and resources. This collaboration is based on the principles of reciprocity, mutual respect, shared authority, and co-creation of goals and outcomes (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2008). Partnerships with the community are essential in shaping students' experiences and opportunities in urban music education (Doyle, 2014).

Establishing community partnerships requires strategic vision, preparation, and courage to go beyond traditional in-school placements. It involves investing time in relationship building, careful observation, engagement, and active listening to create strong connections with community partners (Payne, 2016). To initiate musical partnerships with schools, networking with local community leaders is key. Developing relationships with school districts aligns missions and encourages collaboration among music teachers. Seeking guidance from experts, implementing effective strategies, and involving parents are vital for improving music programs and supporting fine arts growth within school districts (Payne, 2016).



Establishing clear objectives early on guides the partnership in the right direction. Creating a structured framework ensures that meaningful experiences are designed for all stakeholders involved (Payne, 2016). School-community music education partnerships positively influence community identity, agency, and vitality. They bring recognition and support to school music programs, influencing community identity and shifting perceptions about the value of music and music education (Prest, 2011).

### **Policy Changes and Advocacy Effort**

It is crucial to establish effective means of communicating a consistent message to decision makers and the public. Building robust partnerships with individuals who appreciate the importance of music education and are ready to collaborate in promoting dynamic music initiatives is essential. Furthermore, efforts in advocacy should be focused on elucidating and rejoicing in the enriched learning prospects that we are dedicated to offering (Mark, 2008). The essential elements for successfully implementing equity initiatives lie beyond what is readily visible (Cobb & Krownapple, 2019). To achieve personal and systemic transformation, it is crucial to confront both our school culture, understanding the reasons why we have remained within the confines of familiar territories and ourselves (Cobb & Krownapple, 2019). A clear vision of our objectives is paramount for the successful implementation of equity initiatives (Cobb and Krownapple, 2019). We must critically analyze and deconstruct the systems that have shaped our perceptions, questioning the foundational mental models we have operated from (Aguilar, 2020). Educational reform attempts have varied, with some striving to challenge the status quo successfully, while others inadvertently perpetuate existing systems. This necessitates a reevaluation of our approaches to education and their purposes (Aguilar, 2020). As we work towards an education system that liberates and equips our students with equitable opportunities,

continuous learning on our part is indispensable (Aguilar, 2020). Recent reforms in education have mainly focused on traditional coursework and standardized assessments, affecting the availability of arts programs in urban schools (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). The reliance on high-stakes testing, merit-based pay for teachers and other reform strategies like charter schools and digital education demonstrates the diverse solutions being explored. While these reforms aim to address significant issues, such as poverty and educational equality, the ways in which they are implemented and their labels often raise questions among educators (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). It is incumbent upon us as educational professionals to adapt these policies to best meet our students' needs while safeguarding their interests, despite the challenges in offering practical strategies for each initiative due to their distinct nature (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). The quest for equity in education, initiated in the United States in 1983 with "A Nation at Risk," has seen limited progress despite significant efforts (Blakenstein et al, 2016). A comprehensive overhaul of standards, pedagogy, and assessment systems is needed to enact genuine system-wide improvement (Blakenstein et al, 2016). Accountability for improvement must extend to every school, supported by a leadership strategy that skillfully blends directive and facilitative methods (Blakenstein et al, 2016). Effective change involves both shaping new ideals and fostering a sense of ownership and engagement among all stakeholders within the education system (Blakenstein et al, 2016). Eight critical factors for developing cultures committed to systemic improvement: embracing a moral imperative for all students to learn, focusing on a few specific goals, nurturing a culture of development and capacity building, enhancing leadership at all levels, engaging the wider educational community, leveraging data for improvement rather than judgment, and fostering innovation through transparency (Blakenstein et al, 2016). These

elements, when effectively aligned, enable districts to meet external accountability standards and, more importantly, succeed in their mission to provide equitable education outcomes.

### **Long-term Sustainability and Evaluation**

Music educators share the same rights and obligations as everyone to promote the benevolent values that are rooted in the world's cultural beliefs, influenced by the history of humanity (Power et al., 2016). This underscores the need for music education to be a pathway for positive social values and historical appreciation. In a world where conformity is often the norm, music and performing arts provide a sanctuary for students to express their individuality. The educational system may strive for uniformity, but music education offers a unique space for students to be themselves. Whether it is through participating in a band, choir, orchestra, or theater, students find an environment where they are encouraged to thrive, irrespective of their athletic abilities or academic achievements. Music classrooms are safe spaces where students can be themselves without fear of ridicule. They are encouraged to be creative and are surrounded by peers who share their endeavors. It is important to make music education accessible to all by addressing barriers such as the expenses associated with participation (Bates, 2018). This is crucial in ensuring that students from all backgrounds, including those living in poverty, can benefit from music programs. Music education plays a pivotal role in urban settings, often compensating for the lack of structure, discipline, and leadership in students' lives. Through the performing arts, students learn valuable life skills, such as punctuality, high expectations, discipline, and work ethic. Moreover, the music room becomes a place of freedom and a second home for many students, fostering a sense of belonging and community through a shared love for music. Music education must be viewed through a lens that sees beyond performance to include a deeper exploration of its social implications and connections to cultural issues (Power et al.,

2016). This expansion is necessary to provide a more equitable education that reflects the diverse musical life and social realities of our culture. Music education is in need of research that includes an agenda focused on equity, access, and music learning (Butler et al, 2007). As the student population and teaching force become more diverse, it is imperative to consider how race, ethnicity, gender, and culture influence music learning. The goal is to organize existing research, facilitate meaningful conversations, and direct future thinking towards creating a more inclusive and equitable music education landscape. The ultimate aim is to foster empathetically aware music teachers and policymakers who are aware of the challenges of poverty and social class. By adopting practices that cater to all students, music education can continue to be a powerful medium for personal expression, cultural awareness, and social inclusion.

## **Research Methodology**

In this study's methodology, I focused on the issues of access and equity in urban music education. This topic was crucial, as it addressed the disparities and challenges faced by students in urban areas when it came to accessing high-quality music education opportunities. By concentrating on this area, I sought to shed light on the barriers that hindered students from marginalized communities from fully engaging and benefiting from music education.

To conduct this research, I utilized qualitative methods. I examined existing case studies, journals, articles, and conducted a comprehensive literature review to gather in-depth insights into the issues of access and equity in urban music education. The reason for choosing a qualitative research method lay in its ability to provide rich, detailed, and nuanced data that could offer a deeper understanding of complex social issues. Through qualitative research, I aimed to capture the voices and experiences of students, educators, and stakeholders involved in urban music education. By applying this method, I hoped to uncover the underlying factors contributing to the inequities in access to music education and explore potential solutions to address these issues effectively.

Once the data, case studies, journals, and articles had been thoroughly reviewed, I interpreted the results obtained from the qualitative research, identifying patterns, themes, and insights that emerged from the data. I was able to draw meaningful conclusions, make connections between different findings, and offer recommendations for promoting greater access and equity in urban music education. I aimed to contribute valuable insights to the field of music education and advocate for more inclusive and equitable practices that ensured all students, regardless of their background or location, had equal opportunities to engage in and benefit from music education.

## Discussion

My research sheds light on the critical issues of access and equity in urban music education, providing valuable insights into the disparities present in secondary school music programs. By examining participation rates, demographics, and socioeconomic factors, the study reveals significant gaps that exist in the representation of minority students, those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and students with lower academic performance levels. One key finding of the research is the stark contrast between elementary and high school music participation rates, indicating a sharp decline in student engagement as they progress through their education. Additionally, this study highlights the overrepresentation of Caucasian students in high school music programs compared to the school's overall demographic composition.

Moreover, this research underscores the strong correlation between socioeconomic status (SES) and music participation, emphasizing how students from higher SES quartiles are more likely to engage in music programs. The data also points out the lack of diversity in music ensembles, with Caucasian students comprising a significant majority. By analyzing data from a wide range of schools across different states, the study advocates for increased funding and support to enhance music and arts education opportunities for all students. My research serves as a valuable resource for educators, policymakers, and advocates, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges surrounding access and equity in urban music education. By raising awareness and promoting action, the findings aim to drive positive change and ensure that every student has equal opportunities to engage in music and arts education programs.

In urban music education, improving access and equity is essential for enhancing the implementation of educational theories and creating a positive classroom experience. By

ensuring all students have equal opportunities to participate in music programs, educators can foster collaboration, respect, and appreciation for diversity among students. Providing support to students facing barriers helps them reach their full potential and engage meaningfully in musical activities, promoting a sense of belonging and encouraging self-challenge with necessary guidance.

Advocating for increased funding and awareness of arts education aligns practices with critical pedagogy, empowering students to analyze societal norms and inequalities. This approach creates a platform for students to explore cultural diversity through musical expression. By tackling access and equity issues, educators enrich students' learning experiences, applying key educational theories to the music classroom. Through inclusive practices, targeted support, and advocacy, educators help students develop musical talents while growing as socially aware and empathetic individuals, ultimately improving the urban music classroom experience.

By ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, have equal opportunities to participate in music programs, educators can create an inclusive learning environment that fosters collaboration and social interaction among students. When students from diverse backgrounds come together to make music, they not only develop their musical skills but also learn to appreciate and respect each other's differences. Access and equity in urban music education are critical considerations that hold significant implications for policy decisions. The findings regarding participation trends and disparities in music programs shed light on key areas that policymakers should address to promote inclusivity and equal opportunities in urban music education.

Recognizing the disparities in music program participation among minority students, those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and students with lower academic performance is essential. Policymakers should consider targeted initiatives to increase representation from underrepresented groups in urban music programs to foster diversity and inclusivity. The strong link between socioeconomic status (SES) and music participation underscores the need for policies that level the playing field. Efforts should be made to provide financial support and resources for students from lower SES backgrounds to ensure they have equal access to music education opportunities.

The Arts Education Data Project highlights the importance of advocating for music and arts education funding. Policymakers should prioritize funding opportunities, such as Title I and Title IV Part A, to support and enhance music programs in urban schools, particularly those serving economically disadvantaged communities. The disparities in access to music and arts education in urban areas, especially for Black, Hispanic, and Native American students, need to be addressed through targeted interventions. Policies should focus on bridging the gap to ensure that all students, regardless of their background, have equal access to quality music education programs. Educators, administrators, and policymakers are encouraged to disseminate reports like the AEDP findings to raise awareness and drive action. By promoting awareness of the existing disparities and advocating for change, policymakers can work towards improving access to arts education for all students in urban settings. These findings underscore the importance of informed policy decisions to address access and equity issues in urban music education. By leveraging data-driven insights and advocating for inclusive policies, policymakers can work towards creating a more equitable and accessible music education landscape for all students.



## Limitations

This study on access and equity in urban music education, while informative, has certain limitations that affect the generalizability and depth of the findings. These limitations are important to consider when interpreting the results. Some data presented in the study date back to 2004, which may not reflect the current state of urban music education in the United States. Changes in educational practices, funding, and student demographics over time could influence the relevance of the findings to present-day scenarios. This study predominantly focused on participation in school music programs, overlooking extracurricular music activities, community resources, or private lessons that also play a significant role in shaping students' musical experiences. A more comprehensive examination that includes these aspects could provide a broader perspective on access and equity in music education.

This research relied on qualitative data analysis to draw conclusions about music participation and demographics. Qualitative insights, such as student perspectives, teacher experiences, or community engagement, were not extensively explored. Incorporating qualitative research methods could offer a richer understanding of the factors influencing access and equity in urban music education. Considering these limitations, future research endeavors should aim to address these gaps to provide a more nuanced and inclusive analysis of access and equity issues in urban music education across diverse populations and contexts. To further expand on the findings and address any limitations encountered in the study on access and equity in urban music education, a follow-up study could explore the following areas:

In-depth Interviews with students, parents, teachers, and school administrators to gain qualitative insights into the factors influencing music program participation. This could provide a

deeper understanding of perceptions, motivations, and barriers faced by different demographic groups. A longitudinal study that follows a cohort of students over a longer period to track changes in music program participation, academic performance, and socioeconomic status. This could help determine the long-term impact of music education on students from diverse backgrounds. Intervention programs that implement and evaluate targeted interventions aimed at increasing participation among underrepresented groups. This could involve offering music scholarships, providing additional resources, or developing outreach programs to engage students who may face barriers to participation. A comparative analysis that compares the state of music education in urban settings with suburban and rural areas to identify unique challenges and best practices. Understanding regional disparities can inform tailored approaches to improve access and equity across different contexts. The use of intersectional analysis to explore how factors such as race, socioeconomic status, academic performance, and family structure intersect to influence music program participation. This intersectional approach can reveal complex relationships and help design more inclusive policies. Lastly, policy evaluations that assess the effectiveness of existing education policies, such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), in promoting equitable access to music and arts education. This evaluation can guide advocacy efforts for policy improvements and resource allocation. By delving deeper into these areas through a follow-up study, researchers can contribute valuable insights to the ongoing conversation on access and equity in urban music education and inform evidence-based strategies to enhance opportunities for all students.

In light of recent developments and challenges in urban music education, it is important to consider potential areas for future exploration. Here are some aspects that could be addressed in upcoming research and initiatives:

Digital Platforms: With the rise of technology, exploring the integration of digital platforms and tools in urban music education could be beneficial. Online music lessons, virtual ensembles, and interactive music-making apps can enhance accessibility and engagement for students from diverse backgrounds. Diverse Populations: Future work could focus on increasing representation and participation of marginalized communities in urban music programs. Efforts to provide inclusive music education opportunities for Black, Hispanic, Native American, and other underrepresented groups can help bridge existing gaps in access and equity. Innovative Processes: Exploring innovative teaching methods and curriculum designs tailored to urban settings is paramount. Adaptive approaches that incorporate culturally relevant music, community collaborations, and project-based learning can create meaningful learning experiences for students in urban areas. Cross-disciplinary Collaborations: Encouraging collaborations between music educators, community organizations, policymakers, and other stakeholders can lead to holistic approaches in urban music education. Connecting music programs with social services, mental health support, and career development resources can enrich students' overall educational experience. Addressing these new platforms, populations, and processes, future work in urban music education can strive towards fostering greater inclusivity, diversity, and quality in music learning for all students.

## Conclusion

Music education in urban classrooms faces challenges primarily related to equitable and accessible programs. The lack of quality and accessibility in music programs remains a pressing issue. Many believe that diversity in music programs signifies equity, but true equity involves supporting all students regardless of their backgrounds. The problems surrounding fair and accessible music programs for urban students often go unnoticed due to misconceptions. To ensure all students learn and thrive, a fair and accessible education is crucial. Adequate funding, investment, and prioritization of music classrooms are necessary to create an encouraging environment for students. Educators must reach and support all students equitably, providing a high-quality music program built on a curriculum promoting awareness and respect for diverse cultures.

Equity in music education goes beyond equal opportunities to tailored support for individual success, addressing socio-cultural dynamics. Conventional approaches to equity initiatives often fail to address root inequities, requiring transformative strategies. Race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status influence access to music programs, necessitating a shift in educational systems and perceptions. Music education should be inclusive, valuing various musical genres and styles to foster a comprehensive approach to teaching. Equity in music education involves ensuring high-quality education for all students, irrespective of socio-political markers. Teachers play a vital role in fostering equity through culturally responsive teaching and student-centered approaches.

Socioeconomic factors affect music participation, with disparities in access and resources affecting students in urban areas. Racial factors contribute to unequal representation in music

programs, highlighting the need to address systemic biases. Limited resources and infrastructure hinder comprehensive music education in urban schools, emphasizing the importance of strategic planning and advocacy efforts. Insufficient funding and a focus on core subjects over music education contribute to the reduction of music programs, especially in urban areas. Financial constraints lead to a lack of quality instruments, hindering students' musical development in urban settings. Advocacy for music education funding and resource allocation is crucial to ensure equitable access and participation for all students.

Teacher preparation for urban classrooms is inadequate, emphasizing the need for training in diverse and multicultural education. Ongoing professional development and tailored training programs are essential to support urban music educators and address teacher turnover. Culturally relevant pedagogy and community collaborations are vital for creating inclusive and effective music education programs in urban schools. Music education curricula should reflect cultural diversity and student interests, fostering inclusive learning environments. Culturally relevant teaching practices and diverse music selections enhance student engagement and promote unity in the classroom. Multicultural music integration and community partnerships enrich music education experiences for urban students.

Collaboration with communities enhances students' music experiences and opportunities in urban schools through shared resources and knowledge. Strategic partnerships with local leaders and school districts support music programs and foster community identity and support. Clear objectives and structured frameworks guide successful community partnerships, positively affecting music education and community vitality.

Music education provides a unique space for students to express themselves and develop life skills, fostering a sense of belonging and community. Research focused on equity, access, and music learning is crucial for creating an inclusive and equitable music education landscape. The goal is to cultivate empathetically aware music teachers and policymakers who address challenges of poverty and social class for a more inclusive and socially aware music education system.

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## Illustrations

**Table 1**

*Arts Education Data Project (AEDP) Findings*

Aspect of Education	Access Percentage	Number of Students Without Access
Music Education	92%	>3.6 million
Arts Education	Disparities in access, particularly in urban and rural areas, impacting Black, Hispanic, and Native American students	N/A

*Note.* This table highlights significant trends in access to arts education across the United States. According to the findings, music education is notably accessible, with 92% of students having access to these programs, which translates to over 3.6 million students who still lack this opportunity. However, disparities persist in arts education overall, particularly affecting students in urban and rural areas, where access is notably limited. These disparities disproportionately impact Black, Hispanic, and Native American students, underscoring the need for targeted efforts to ensure equitable access to arts education for all students.

**Table 2***Arts Education Data Project (AEDP) Findings*

	<b>Music Education</b>	<b>Arts Education</b>
Access (%)	92	96
Participation (%)	49	67
Lack of Access (%)	8	4

*Note.* This table provides crucial insights into the state of arts education across various disciplines. According to the latest findings, music education has a high access level of 92%, while overall arts education boasts an even greater access percentage at 96%. Participation rates reveal that 49% of students engage in music education, compared to 67% in broader arts education. Notably, the data also highlights a lack of access to these programs, with 8% of students lacking access to music education and only 4% facing similar barriers in arts education. These findings underscore the importance of expanding access and participation in arts programs to foster a more inclusive and enriched educational environment.

**Table 3***Demographics in a Large Suburban School District*

<b>Demographic</b>	<b>Elementary Music (%)</b>	<b>High School Music (%)</b>	<b>Overall School Population (%)</b>
Caucasian	51	64	51
Other	49	36	49

*Note.* This table shows that the overall school population consists of 51% Caucasian students and 49% students from other backgrounds. When looking specifically music programs, 64% of high school music participants are Caucasian, while only 51% of elementary music students identify as Caucasian. Conversely, 36% of high school music participants and 49% of elementary music students come from other demographic backgrounds. This data highlights the diverse representation within the music programs and underscores the importance of considering demographic factors in educational planning and resource allocation.

**Table 4***Comprehensive Study by Elpus and Abril (2011)*

<b>Demographics of Music Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Caucasian	65.7%
Black/African American	15.2%
Hispanic/Latino	10.2%
Multiracial	4.3%
Asian	3.8%
Native American/Pacific Islander	0.9%
English as Native Language	90.4%

*Note:* This table explains a study on the demographics of music students, highlighting diversity in the field. The data shows that 65.7% of music students identified as Caucasian, 15.2% as Black/African American, and 10.2% as Hispanic/Latino. Additionally, 4.3% identified as Multiracial, 3.8% as Asian, and 0.9% as Native American or Pacific Islander. Furthermore, 90.4% reported English as their native language, indicating a predominantly English-speaking environment in music education. This overview is essential for understanding representation and diversity in music programs.

**Table 5***Relationship Between Socioeconomic Status (SES) and Music Participation*

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Information</b>
SES and Music Participation	Only 17% of music students are from the lowest SES quartile.
Students in Music	1.71 times more likely to belong to the highest SES quartile than the lowest.
Parental Characteristics	79.4% of participants have two parents or guardians, with parents holding advanced degrees.

*Note.* This table shows the relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and music participation. This table reveals significant disparities in access and engagement in musical activities. Research indicates that only 17% of music students come from the lowest SES quartile, highlighting a lack of representation among economically disadvantaged groups. Moreover, students involved in music are 1.71 times more likely to belong to the highest SES quartile compared to their peers from the lowest quartile. This trend correlates with parental characteristics, as a substantial 79.4% of music participants live with two parents or guardians, and many have parents who hold advanced degrees. These factors suggest that higher SES not only influences access to music education but also reflects broader social advantages that facilitate participation in the arts.