ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:	ELEMENTARY MUSIC TEACHER EXPERIENCES & EXPRESSIONS OF AGENCY IN AN ASYNCHRONOUS, ONLINE TEACHER STUDY GROUP ON TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES IN MUSIC EDUCATION
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The purpose of this study was to examine elementary general music teachers' views on trauma-informed music approaches while engaged in a professional development (PD) experience. Further, I explored elementary music teachers' sense of agency in applying trauma-informed approaches in their teaching praxis. To examine music teachers' perspectives about trauma-informed education, I investigated teachers' behaviors, stated beliefs, and written responses in an online study group focused on trauma-informed approaches in music education. Research questions addressed participants' engagement in the online study group, the alignment of their responses with trauma-informed principles (SAMHSA, 2014) and dimensions of teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015), and their recommendations for future trauma-informed PD efforts.

Using an instrumental case study design (Stake, 2003), I facilitated an eight-week asynchronous, online PD study group for five elementary music teachers. Teachers' experiences throughout the PD course (November 2024-February 2025) served as the broader phenomenon of interest. Participants engaged with module materials (e.g., articles, videos, podcasts, book chapters, blogs), guided reflection journals, and group discussions. As a point of triangulation, I employed repeated measures of a teacher agency scale (Leijen et al., 2024) which I adapted for the present study. Using my positionality as an experienced PD facilitator, elementary general music teacher, and survivor of trauma & abuse, I reflexively analyzed and interpreted the data using my research questions and theoretical framework as a guide.

Findings indicated that music teacher participants desired more concrete, actionable strategies for implementing trauma-informed approaches, specifically in the context of music teaching & learning. Teachers also demonstrated their awareness of trauma-informed approaches as connected to culture, diversity, inclusion, and equity. While teachers frequently commented on student behaviors when referencing trauma-informed practices, participants simultaneously problematized reactionary trauma-informed approaches and the notion of trauma being "brought into" schools. Instead, participants named their critical, active role in demonstrating emotional regulation. Further, teachers positioned the music classroom as a "natural" place to facilitate connection and support. Despite participants' commitment to asset-based pedagogies, participant responses revealed how teachers may be perpetuating and sustaining deficit approaches in their attempts to enact trauma-informed approaches.

ELEMENTARY MUSIC TEACHER EXPERIENCES & EXPRESSIONS OF AGENCY IN AN ASYNCHRONOUS, ONLINE TEACHER STUDY GROUP ON TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES IN MUSIC EDUCATION

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to all who have been impacted by

trauma in its many forms:

to those who *celebrate* and those who *mourn,*

who *doubt* and who *trust*,

who *weep*, *rejoice*, *sing, listen, audiate,* and

hold…space;

to those who *forget* and those who *remember*,

who *embrace* and who *recoil,*

who *refuse*

and who *accept*;

to those who *proclaim* and those who *witness*

who *reveal* and who *conceal,*

all of whom

persist;

to all that is… …*beyond*

and all that is [*within*];

to all that is…

…ineffable.

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I offer my heartfelt thanks to the members of my committee for their continuous support and guidance: to Dr. Tara Brown, for your adept feedback, grounded perspective, and extraordinary expertise; to Dr. Ken Elpus, for teaching me to always be critical but not cynical (and teaching me thə right way to schwa); to Dr. Robin Giebelhausen, for sharing your love of puppets, books, tea, and Hatchling, and for consistently encouraging me to be a scholar who strives for excellence without ever abandoning my authentic self; to Dr. Mike Hewitt, for your wisdom and affinity for instrumental backing tracks (suite!); and last, but certainly not least, to Dr. Siv Lie, for your resolute patience, transparent kindness, and relentless encouragement.

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I offer all my sappy, nostalgic energy to all of my teachers—past and present—for caring for, about, and with me. You helped me figure out how to thrive—both inside and outside of school—as my full self. Special thanks are due to Dr. Cindy Taggart, who sparked my love of general music and all things audiation. I am unspeakably grateful for your unconditional support

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Finally, I extend my deepest appreciation to my *framily*: the friends who are my family, several of whom have already been named in this section. Your support means the world and has made this possible. Thank you for seeing me, knowing me, pushing me, and encouraging me. I am here because of your love.

You belong among the wildflowers
You belong in a boat out at sea
Sail away, kill off the hours
You belong somewhere you feel free

Run away, go find a lover
Go away, somewhere all bright and new
I have seen no other
Who compares with you

You belong among the wildflowers
You belong in a boat out at sea
You belong with your love on your arm
You belong somewhere you feel free

Run away, go find a lover
Run away, let your heart be your guide
You deserve the deepest of cover
You belong in that home by and by

You belong among the wildflowers
You belong somewhere close to me
Far away from your trouble and worries
You belong somewhere you feel free
You belong somewhere you feel free

"Wildflowers"
Written by Tom Petty
Performed by The Wailin' Jennys

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Chapter 1: Introduction*

*Content Note: The following vignette and subsequent manuscript includes references to potentially triggering topics, such as trauma, abuse, self-harm, and school shootings.

It's no secret that students and staff in U.S. public schools regularly endure professional development to prepare for egregious acts of trauma-inducing violence. Like countless others who have been required to talk students through potential and/or realized emergency situations, I endured many active shooter drills and trainings throughout my time as a public-school music teacher. With and without students, active shooter drills (often referred to as "hard lockdowns" in my district) involved practicing barricading doors, closing blinds, hiding in corners, and, at the discretion of the teacher, using the nearest door or window exit to lead students outside and flee to the nearest neighborhood. This was all part of the new, district-wide initiative: ALICE training. The ALICE approach (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) was intended to equip teachers and school personnel with options should a violent intruder enter our schools and/or classrooms. At least that's what the district administrators and local law enforcement told us. But, unlike staff meeting conversations about strategies to barricade doors and hide in our dark classrooms while managing 25+ students, ALICE trainings involved the local police department firing blank rounds from their firearms as they actively tried to break through classroom barricades. Thankfully, students were not directly involved in these terrifying ALICE drills. It was just the teachers. "Just" the teachers.

In my first ALICE training, teachers from across the district gathered at a high school for teacher professional development on a scheduled day-off for students. While this training had nothing to do with learning curriculum, it had everything to do with American education. This was evident from the moment we pulled our cars into the parking lot, where large signs read

"POLICE DEPARTMENT TRAINING: STAFF ONLY." Gusts of frigid, Midwest winter air whipped through the massive parking lot as I exited my car and walked briskly toward the building. I entered the building alongside my colleagues, shuffling bits of snow and parking lot salt from our boots as we made our way to the auditorium. Toting our backpacks and laptop bags, a few of us slid into a row of greyish-blue chairs in the corner of the auditorium. The air felt thick with exhaustion and anticipation as the auditorium full of educators watched a sharply dressed, upper-level administrator fumble with a wireless microphone.

After a few introductions, the multi-hour training began with watching videos from the Columbine school tragedy. I sat alongside my colleagues as we watched the uncensored footage captured by a camera in the school library as horror and chaos erupted on April 20th, 1999. April 1999, I thought. I was in the third grade. As I navigated mental whiplash between my own past and present, the entire room listened to the local police sergeant as he analyzed the video, pointing out the number of lives that would have been saved if only the students had been taught to run outside as instead of hiding in their classrooms or behind bookshelves. My hands felt numb as my face flushed with heat. My heart sank as the pit in my stomach grew in disbelief: how had we arrived at this moment? What was coming next?

After watching videos and talking through the ALICE approach to violent school intruders, we were each assigned to a classroom on the second floor of the high school building for the next portion of the training: role playing. The teachers ahead of me chatted nervously as we reluctantly climbed the stairs, lingering together in small pods of familiar faces. In the hallways, district administrators directed us to various classrooms as a few police officers looked on, wearing ski masks and head-to-toe black accented by neon green vests, their rifles in hand. I suppose the vests were intended to designate the masked men as "safe."

My teacher colleagues and I were assigned to rooms with others from across the district, many of whom we had just met. I sighed with relief when I realized I had been paired with two colleagues from my own school, one of whom was one of my teacher besties. A familiar voice emerged over the school's PA system, announcing that we would have a few minutes to meet the people in our room before we would begin the drill, which would involve barricading our classroom door and listening for the masked/vested intruders as they attempted to break through our barricades. "Remember, the firearm rounds that you will hear are blank," the police officer reminded. Even though I had grown up in a rural hunting town and learned to shoot our family BB gun at empty cans, laundry detergent bottles, and paper targets pinned to straw bales in the backyard, I couldn't even imagine what these blank rounds were about to sound like echoing through the school hallway. I wondered how my colleagues, who may have been even less familiar with guns, were feeling.

At the signal, we began barricading our classrooms. We hurriedly gathered materials from around the unfamiliar room, using chairs and desks to create an intruder-proof structure. The shots began. Whether they were near or far, I had no idea. We were supposed to gauge how much time we had to hide, fight, or flee based on how close the gunshots were. What an impossibility. If we had been told how many shots we were to expect during the drill, I had already forgotten the number. Realizing the door handle was locked open by design, the panicked voices of colleagues whom I had just met called out for materials to block the doorway. My breath quickened as my stomach sank. I saw the neon-vested intruder appear in the doorway before I stumbled backwards toward the corner of the classroom. I instinctively turned to look for my teacher bestie but did not see her. After a few panicked moments of visually scanning the classroom, I noticed a familiar red jacket beneath one of the desks.

I crouched down next to her. Curled up in the fetal position, she shook and cried as she repeated the names of her two young children between gasps and sobs. I sat on the floor, my hand on her upper back, my stomach in knots, repeating the words "you're safe"—words that I only knew because of my own therapist—as calmly as I could while shots, crashes, and exclamations continued around us. Everything sounded muffled as my energy turned inward. I had grown close with her family. I knew her kids. I couldn't imagine what she was feeling.

I didn't know what to do. After the "all clear" signal, whatever that was, I went to go find one of the district leaders in the hallway. When I found her, she followed me back to the classroom where my friend was. We had to "get [my friend/colleague] out before Round 2." The administrator asked me what my friend's name was. I told her. The administrator repeated the name several times followed by, "It's time to go." My friend didn't respond. The administrator was speechless. She didn't know what to do, either. I got back on the floor and gently helped my friend to her feet. "Maybe we can go sit by the office?" I suggested. "Yeah…I guess you can sit out of the training," the administrator responded. Bewildered by the administrator's response, I guided my friend downstairs to the main office, where she sat in a chair and caught her breath. Someone found her a bottle of water while I called her spouse. Through nervous laughter, I described what had just happened to her husband on the phone.

We sat for a while. When she felt ready, I guided my friend out of the building, our elbows linked. We carefully loaded ourselves into my car and I drove us to her house. We had each driven to the training separately, but her spouse and I decided that we would deal with the other car, which was still parked in the vacated school parking lot, later. As we drove, the two of us processed the day with words when we found them, and a whole lot of silence.

Just a few years later, I waited in an elementary school library with the very same teacher colleague during an after-school staff meeting while police officers ran through the halls of the building: someone from the community was attempting to take their own life on the roof of the school. My friend and I exchanged knowing glances as we waited with our colleagues in the library. Not even our COVID facemasks could hide the fear, concern, and sorrow in our eyes. What would ALICE want us to do this time?

Trauma surrounds school communities in complex, nuanced, and pervasive ways. Whether experienced directly or in a secondary capacity, individuals and groups can be subsumed by the enduring impacts of trauma. In my time as a PK-5 music teacher, conversations about trauma were often limited to discussions about individual students, "bad" behavior, classroom management, and one-off professional development sessions. Often, professional development experiences provided through my school district either focused on a surface level understanding of students who "had trauma" or involved trainings that were traumatic in and of themselves. In either/both cases, trauma was almost always framed as something that was brought to school by individuals; I do not recall having conversations about trauma being caused by or exacerbated because of school.

Altogether, my school experiences led me to understand that, while I was not responsible for acting as a therapist for the students in my care, I was responsible for facilitating aspects within my control to create an educational environment that did not traumatize, retraumatize, or harm students. No teacher (hopefully) goes into the field of education with the intent to cause harm to students. However, though I generally experienced school as a safe place, I also knew this wasn't the case for everyone. I had witnessed well-intentioned adult colleagues perpetuate harmful stereotypes; I had listened to students talk about how much they loathed teachers who

seem to not care about causing harm; I had been a part of "classroom management" interactions that ended up escalating teachers and students alike. I had also silently worked through my own emotional dysregulation and triggers at school, both as a student and as a teacher. Trauma had become a core element of my school experiences; trauma-informed approaches, while seemingly elusive in definition, became a core component of my thoughts, conversations, and reflective practices. Whether encountered inside or outside of school contexts, trauma-inducing experiences have prompted me to identify and engage with approaches that consider the impacts of trauma in music teaching and learning, including the expressions, descriptions, and reflections shared by music educators.

In educational discourse, terms related to *trauma-informed* approaches and practices have become buzzwords (Goldin, Duane, & Khasnabis, 2021; Imad, 2021; Venet, 2023). Prior to describing the aims and conclusions of this research, it is important to establish a general understanding of trauma in the educational landscape. In particular, trauma-related discourses have been critiqued for lacking specificity (e.g., Pickering & Keightley, 2009); yet, they powerfully shape educational policies, practices, and decision-making processes (e.g., Horsman, 2004). Such realities—combined with the ubiquitous, multifaceted nature of trauma in society—have appropriately necessitated trauma-informed approaches within educational communities and organizations, including schools. Although trauma is an unfortunate commonality, trauma-informed approaches are not always determined by the potential breadth of trauma experiences. For example, Horsman (2004) intentionally moved her focus away from exploring statistics about trauma in favor of examining effective teaching in the presence of trauma, seeking to focus on local intricacies rather than widespread trends. Whether justified by trauma's breadth and/or depth in society, trauma-informed approaches are simultaneously (mis)used in educational

jargon and imperative for educational settings seeking to avoid harm in the form of (re)traumatization. PK-12 music education is, hopefully, one such setting.

Professional development, another phrase used abundantly in education, has been considered as a vehicle for reimagining teaching praxis. *Educational praxis* is often cited using Freire's (1970) definition (Penney & Warelow, 1999), which centers praxis as a process of ongoing reflection and action (Freire, 1970). Since content-specificity is considered as a component of effective professional development (Shaw, 2021) and can be formative in praxis development (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008), professional learning for music educators must situate practices and approaches squarely within the context of music teaching and learning. As such, when broaching topics such as trauma-informed approaches in education, music teachers must be provided with music-education-specific opportunities which prioritize reflecting and acting upon trauma-informed content knowledge. Therefore, thoughtfully-curated, context-based sites of professional development may facilitate ideal spaces for music educators to engage with trauma-informed approaches related to teaching praxis.

Among several factors that can impact educational praxis, *teacher agency* is one element that enable or constrain the development of critical praxis in professional learning environments (Francisco et al., 2021). In their work specific to teacher agency, Priestley at al. (2015) conceptualized agency as self-directed actions within concrete contexts. Teacher agency is a term often conflated with individual teacher capacity (Priestley et al., 2015) and can impact processes of reflection and action (Salo et al., 2024) that comprise educational praxis (Freire, 1970). Like professional development, such reflection- and action-oriented processes are context-based (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Priestley et al., 2015) and "central to broadening the boundaries of music education" (Tucker, 2020, p. 34). Given the widespread and pervasive

nature of trauma, teachers can demonstrate varying degrees of agency pertaining to trauma-informed approaches. Teacher agency can markedly contribute to a cyclic process involving reflection and action, which are necessary components of both educational praxis (Freire, 1970) and trauma-informed approaches (SAMHSA, 2014).

Combined, in-depth understandings of trauma-informed approaches, professional development, and teacher agency can be woven together as a rich tapestry of implications for and possibilities within music education praxis. As such, the purpose of this chapter is to orient the reader to the interweaving narratives pertaining to the present study, which centers music educators' experiences in a professional development setting designed to support teacher agency around trauma-informed approaches. First, I explore selected narratives and definitions related to trauma, care, and trauma-informed approaches. Then, I unpack definitions related to agency and teacher agency, and their connection to trauma-informed approaches in music education. Finally, I articulate my theoretical framework, research questions, and a brief description of the study design.

Trauma, Trauma-Informed Approaches, and Care in Music Education

> *"Yet care—all too often discounted or diminished in discussions of music education—is critical to understand if we are serious about striving toward human flourishing."*
> *(Hendricks, 2023, p. xvii)*

In recent years, increasing awareness about the education of the whole child has precipitated a systematized approach to practices outside of curricular content. Topics related to mental health and well-being have become more prevalent in music education, as well as education and society writ large (Hendricks, 2023). Initiatives based in social-emotional learning (SEL), well-being, and emotional regulation have been implemented at state, district, and

individual school levels. SEL curricula—intended to build school-based support for "soft" skills, including interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, and decision making—are often implemented as reactions to undesired student behaviors and/or academic achievement, including the colloquial use of the term "achievement gap" (Colgren & Sappington, 2015). However—when implemented without reflective and critical lenses that encourage teachers to lead with curiosity rather than compliance—programs related to SEL, mindfulness, mental health, restorative practices, and/or trauma-informed approaches can reinscribe emotional and psychological harm among the very students that schools aim to support (Hibbard, 2021).

Schools can mirror societal contexts, including aspects related to oppression and inequity (Bradley & Hess, 2021). As such, content frequently positioned as outside the "traditional" school curricula (e.g., SEL, mental health, trauma-informed care, equity, etc.) must be thoughtfully and thoroughly conceptualized, planned, implemented, evaluated, and re-evaluated in schools. By understanding definitions and misconceptions related to trauma, trauma-informed approaches, and care, school personnel can support flourishing among their fellow school stakeholders, including their students and colleagues.

Trauma

Trauma, often defined as an emotional response to a harmful, threatening, and/or overwhelming event (American Psychological Association, 2014), leaves more people impacted than unimpacted. Traumatic experiences "literally rewire the brain's ability to focus, understand, and integrate knowledge and information, largely due to the largely subconscious and conflictingly obsessive focus on hyper-vigilance and survival" (Huisman et al., 2022, p. 88). When a person's nervous system is activated by a real or perceived threat, the fight, flight, fawn, or freeze survival response (e.g., Vanderpool, 2021) is activated, often leaving the individual

unable to access certain parts of the brain. Rather than a memory of something that happened in the past, trauma represents the present pain and fear living within individuals and communities. Given the widespread, ubiquitous nature of trauma in larger society, school-based adults must be prepared to interact with colleagues, students, families, and/or community members who may be enduring the long-lasting impacts of trauma. Along with other professions that regularly interact with multiple stakeholders, educators must, at minimum, be informed about the multifaceted and extensive nature of trauma, including its impacts on individual brains and bodies.

Whether formally or informally, stakeholders in education have demonstrated increased awareness in the areas of trauma and the impacts of trauma in schools and among students. According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), "approximately 25% of American children will experience at least one traumatic event by the age of 16" (NCTSN, n.d.). Meanwhile, Schepers et al. (2022) cited that over 35 million children presently endure the emotional and/or psychological effects of trauma (p. 63) while others (e.g., Felitti et al., 1998) have relied on statistics from retroactive self-report data about adverse childhood experiences. Such statistics are founded in empirical research surrounding traumatic events in childhood and adolescence (e.g., Costello et al., 2002). When organizations like SAMHSA and NCTSN use the 25% statistic, it is likely an amalgamation of empirical research, much of which includes self-report data from adults reflecting on their childhood experiences. As a result, instances of traumatic events in childhood may be underreported in empirical research studies and more public-facing reports alike.

Broadly speaking, trauma-informed awareness has been supported by the notion of widespread, "universal" trends. Whether referenced in surveys or other contexts, harmful events themselves are often defined as "trauma." However, the impacts of and responses to those events

are what constitute contemporary definitions of trauma (e.g., see Appendix A for a list of trauma types and their definitions as described by NCTSN). Whether trauma is rooted in experiences like extreme violence, food insecurity, fear at school, natural disasters, or abuse and neglect, a wide range of traumatic events can fundamentally impact students and their daily functioning inside (and outside of) school. Within and beyond schools, trauma can be considered as an inevitable part of social life (Van der Kolk, 2014). Yet, whether evitable or inevitable, trauma's mere presence makes it a worthwhile area of study in (music) education.

Care in Music Education

Conversations about trauma might benefit from specific perspectives on care and caring. In music education, *care* can be used a noun (e.g., "charge, supervision, *especially*: responsibility for or attention to health, well-being, and safety" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)) and as a verb (e.g., "to feel interest or concern; to give care; to have an inclination" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)). Care in music teaching and learning can include positive interactions, relationships, and experiences through shared music making. However, care can also be misunderstood, particularly when it is conflated with "just being kind," interpreted through deficit perspectives, and/or misconstrued as a unidirectional process from teacher to student (Hendricks, 2023). Therefore, music educators are responsible for problematizing the ways in which they may be fostering environments of care for and with their students; such an approach requires teachers to employ critical lenses regarding the musics they present, represent, create, and recreate (Hendricks, 2023).

Practices informed by care in music education are substantively different from façades of kindness and shallow niceties. Despite the kindhearted nature reified by existing perspectives on care (e.g., Hendricks, 2023), music educators must understand that caring is not synonymous with eroding boundaries (Richerme, 2016; Carello & Butler, 2015), lowering expectations

(Hendricks, 2023; Rojas & Liou, 2017), minimizing lived experiences (e.g., traumatic experiences, see Carello & Butler, 2015), or performatively implementing practices (Dadvand & Cuervo, 2018) purporting to be "student-centered" (Hendricks, 2023). Rather, care-informed practices aim to uphold the dignity and humanity of each student, teacher, and member of the school community while centering healing and repairing rupture (Hibbard, 2024). Such a relational approach requires teachers to be emotionally, physically, and psychologically present (Hibbard, 2021) and adopt a non-judgmental orientation (Brown, 2016; Fetterman, 2010).

Music education may be an opportune place to incorporate pedagogies related to care (e.g., Noddings, 2015, 2019) and trauma-informed approaches. Given the compulsory, non-elective nature of K-5 music programs in most US states (Arts Education Partnership, 2024), elementary general music educators are uniquely positioned to interact with whole cohorts of students over multiple years. Elementary general music contrasts with the nature of most secondary school music programs, which typically follow an elective model for large ensembles (e.g., band, orchestra, choir). An elementary music educator, then, is one of few adults in a school building who interacts with entire student cohorts while teaching music, a content area historically purported as a "healing force" (e.g., Bonny, 1986, p. 3; Hajar, 2002; Van Putten, 1992). When interweaving narratives related to schooling structures and socially accepted non-musical effects of musical engagement, elementary general music teachers are uniquely positioned to witness the long-lasting impacts of trauma and trauma-informed approaches in schools (McEvoy & Salvador, 2020). Trauma, a more frequent part of the human experience than previously imagined, is worth examining in music education.

Trauma-Informed Approaches

If trauma—and, more broadly, dysregulation—are part of the human condition, then care

and healing in the form of trauma-informed approaches are necessary components of schools and schooling. Students who attend PK-12 public schools spend most of their waking hours in the care of school-based adults (Schepers et al., 2022) who are, ideally, trusted caregivers. In a U.S. context, these school-based adults (e.g., grade-level teachers, content-area teachers, teacher assistants, paraprofessionals, custodial staff, administrators, bus drivers, intervention specialists, etc.) are responsible for caring for students in a variety of predefined capacities throughout the school day. Whether their roles are defined by a building, a classroom, an area of specialty, contract duties, and/or contact hours, educational professionals are integral to students' caregiving networks, particularly in elementary schools where young children may be more reliant upon adult guidance. Since most U.S. states consider the arts to be core academic subject areas (Arts Education Partnership, 2024) and elementary arts instruction is legally mandated in 42 states (Arts Education Partnership, 2024), elementary general music educators comprise one important facet of the ecosystem devoted to *caring about, for, and with* (Hendricks, 2021a) students. Although many states have adopted legislation that requires and/or encourages trauma-informed professional development for school-based adults, there is no one, widely adopted definition of trauma-informed care (Venet, 2023).

Pursuing trauma-informed approaches in education does not equate to taking on the role of a therapist or other trained mental health professional. Drawing on the work of researchers (e.g., Fallott, 2011), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAHMSA) defined criteria for trauma-informed approaches. Organizations can position an approach to be trauma-informed according to four assumptions (*realize* the impact of trauma & possible avenues for healing; *recognize* signs/symptoms of trauma; *respond* by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies and practices; and actively *resist re-traumatization*) and six key principles

(safety; trustworthiness & transparency; peer support; collaboration & mutuality; empowerment, voice, & choice; cultural, historical, & gender issues) (SAMHSA, 2014). The SAMHSA tenets are widely used in education literature as a foundation for trauma-informed approaches in schools, including in the music education literature (e.g., Bauman-Field, 2024; Bradley & Hess, 2021; Hess, 2021; Price, 2023; Salvador & Culp, 2022; Ryals, 2022; Sauerland, 2021). In Chapter 2, I provide a more comprehensive history of trauma-informed approaches.

Agency, Teacher Agency, and Trauma-Informed Professional Development

> *"…agency doesn't come from nowhere but builds upon past achievements, understandings and patterns of action." (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 24; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998)*

In this section, I provide brief definitions for agency and teacher agency, followed by an explanation about how agency connects to the present discussion about trauma-informed professional development in music education.

Agency

A historically well-theorized area of study (Priestley et al., 2015), *human agency* has been "characterized as an emergent phenomenon, something that occurs or is achieved within continually shifting contexts over time and with orientations towards past, future and present" (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 25). Emirbayer & Mische (1998) established the notion that agency is not spontaneous but builds on a series of past achievements, which equip individuals to navigate present decisions with intention. Physical and social resources shape agency, which can be understood as an action rather than a possession. Further,

> [w]hile agency is inherent in human action, agency and action are conceptually distinct and should not be conflated with each other (see also Emirbayer and Mische 1998). The

> main distinctive factor is that agency involves *intentionality*, the capacity to formulate possibilities for action, active consideration of such possibilities and the exercise of choice. But it also includes the causative properties of contextual factors – social and material structures and cultural forms that influence human behaviors – which is why, as mentioned, a full understanding of agency music consider how individual capacity interplays with contextual factors. (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 23)

Emirbayer & Mische's (1998) conceptions of agency countered other existing theories by incorporating past, present, and future dimensions in their definition.

Teacher Agency

Building on work by Emirbayer & Mische (1998) and others (e.g., Biesta & Tedder, 2006), Priestley et al. (2015) noted the lack of theorizing about agency specific to teaching contexts: "*teacher agency* – that is, agency theorized specifically in respect of the activities of teachers in schools – has not received the attention it deserves" (p. 26). Situating agency specifically in school-based contexts, Priestley et al. (2015) defined teacher agency as: always informed by past experiences, including professional and personal histories; shaped by cultural values and beliefs, which "encompass both inner and outer dialogue" (p. 30), physical materials, and social structures; and long-term and short-term goals, values, and aspirations. Finally, "agency is always enacted in a concrete situation; it is both constrained and supported by discursive, material and relational resources available to [teachers]" (Priestley at al., 2015, p. 30).

Connecting Agency to Trauma-Informed Professional Development

While SAMHSA (2014) refers to *agency* in the sense of describing organizational groups, human agency as it applies to individuals and their sociocultural contexts is a critical component of trauma-informed care because trauma often involves a loss of one's agency (e.g.,

Ataria, 2015). In educational contexts, agency is important because school-based caregivers hold positions of power and, therefore, need to reflect & act upon trauma-informed approaches that holistically and systematically support students' needs and abilities. Given its unique intersections with trauma and education, teacher agency is an area that requires further empirical attention (Priestley et al., 2015). Further—as professional development experience can formatively shape, for better or for worse, music educators' experiences—teacher agency within sites of teacher professional development ought to be thoughtfully considered and empirically investigated. For the purpose of this study, my working definition of trauma-informed teacher agency involves intentional enactment of trauma-informed praxis in daily interactions with students. Such interactions stem from cycles of reflection and action, which are inherently connected to teachers' past experiences, future aspirations, and present contexts.

Theoretical Framework

> *"The transformation of professional practices presumes professional autonomy and agency." (Kennedy, 2014, p. 693)*

To establish a theoretical framework, I combined existing models of praxis development (Freire, 1970), teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015), and trauma-informed approaches (SAMHSA, 2014). The rationale for connecting these frameworks relies on the notion that adequately supporting students' needs and abilities may require transformations in educational praxis (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1995). Teacher agency can both precede (Kennedy, 2014) and enable and/or constrain (Francisco et al., 2021) praxis development. Since developing critical praxis is one aim of professional development (PD) (Francisco et al., 2021), sites of music education PD may be ideal contexts through which scholars may consider the role(s) of teacher

agency and trauma-informed content knowledge in the development of trauma-informed music education praxis.

Praxis Development

To guide my methodological design and analysis, I centered Freire's (1970) definition of *educational praxis*, or "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 52). Within this definition, I visualized educational praxis as an ongoing, iterative process shaped by reflection and action (see Figure 1.1), both of which are crucial components of education. Much like Bruner's (1960) spiral curriculum model, processes of reflecting and acting can be repeatedly revisited over time (see Figure 1.2). Reflection and action, then, can be positioned as processes imperative to transformation in educational praxis.

Figure 1.1

My visual representation of Freire's (1970) definition of educational praxis.

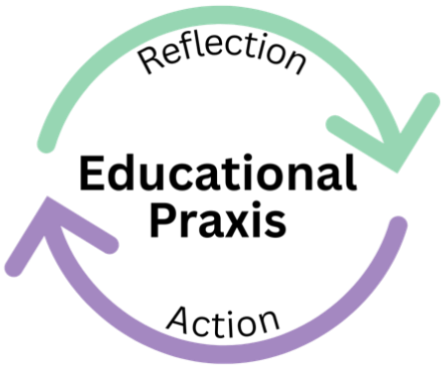
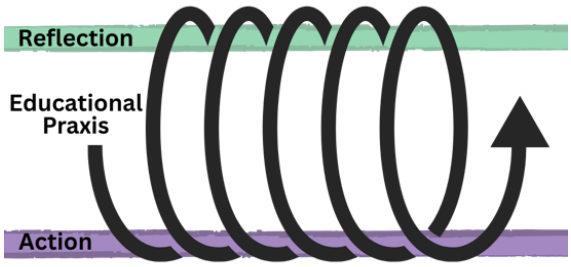


Figure 1.2

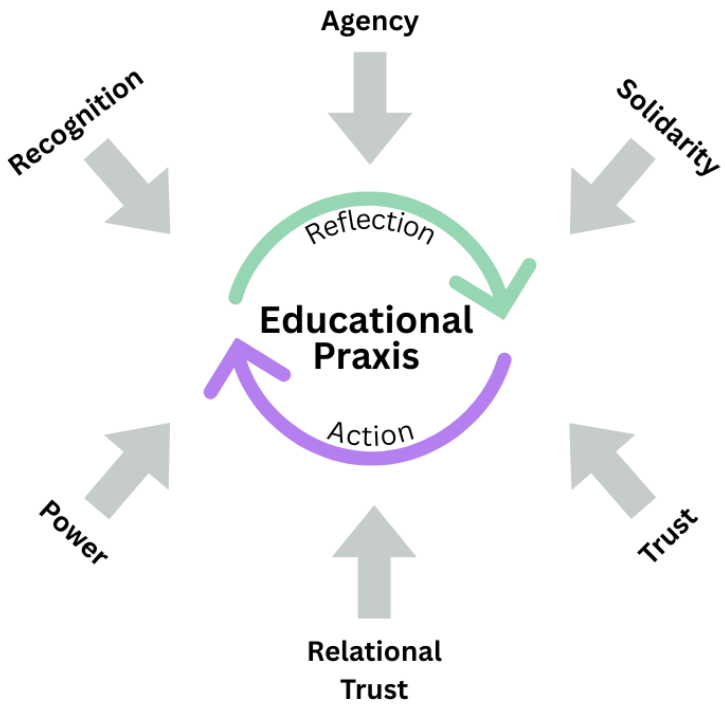
An alternate representation of Freire's (1970) definition of educational praxis, inspired by Bruner's (1960) spiral curriculum model.



Francisco et al. (2021) asserted that "the most essential purpose of professional learning is for the development of critical praxis" (p. 938), which I situate as a type of educational praxis. Critical praxis involves examining one's own belief system and/or institutional patterns of behavior with a critical lens to identify incongruences and reimagine praxis. Francisco et al. (2021) identified agency, power, and relational trust as foundational pillars that can either enable or constrain critical praxis in professional learning environments. Similarly, professional learning environments devoted to developing educational praxis incorporate foundational components of recognition, trust, power, solidarity, and agency (Sal et al., 2024). In Figure 1.3, the potential for praxis to be enabled and/or constrained is represented by the gray arrows. The arrows represent dynamic, context-dependent relationships on educational praxis, which are connected to foundational pillars (e.g., Francisco et al., 2021, Sal et al., 2024) that can shape educational praxis. The pillars in the figure are exemplars that were identified by Francisco et al. (2021) and Sal et al. (2024), one of which is agency.

Figure 1.3

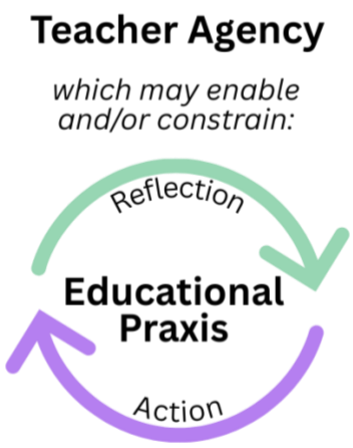
Selected pillars/components that may enable and/or constrain educational praxis.



As one of many factors that can enable and/or constrain praxis development, agency can be conceptualized as self-directed actions within concrete contexts (e.g., Priestley et al., 2015). "Agency, in other words, is not something that people can *have*–as a property, capacity or competence–but is something that people *do*" (Biesta et al., 2015, p. 626). This "doing" of agency, then, can enable and/or constrain processes of reflection and action, which constitute educational praxis (see Figure 1.4). As agency is an understudied yet salient facet of the literature related to praxis development through PD, I decided to focus solely on agency as an enabler and/or constrainer of educational praxis.

Figure 1.4

Teacher agency as an enabler and/or constrainer of educational praxis.



An Ecological Model of Teacher Agency

To ground my definition of agency in an educational context, I used an ecological model of teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015) to frame my theoretical approach to data collection and analysis. Building on previous work about human agency (e.g., Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), Priestley et al. (2015) established an ecological model of teacher agency, which relied upon and resulted from interactions among three dynamic, time-oriented dimensions:

1) Past experiences (the *iterational* dimension),
2) Future, short or long-term aspirations (the *projective* dimension)
3) Present, day-by-day work environments (the *practical-evaluative* dimension).

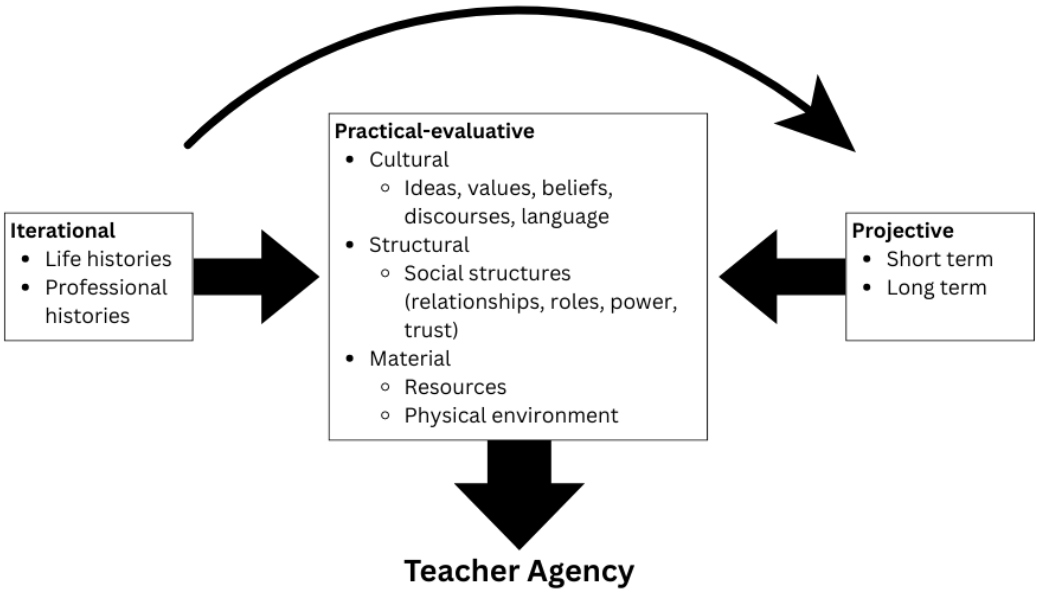
(Priestley et al., 2015 in Spruce et al., 2021, p. 67)

The authors asserted that teacher agency results from the interplay among the three temporal dimensions (i.e., iterational, projective, practical-evaluative) and is always enacted within specific, concrete situations (Priestley et al, 2015). Similarly, Priestley et al.'s (2015) framework was informed by socio-cultural approaches to agency and structure (e.g., Naraian &

Schlessinger, 2018; Varelas et al., 2015) which are rooted in Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration. Giddens' structuration theory identified the dualistic, dynamic nature of structure and agency as constructs that are fluid, constantly evolving, and dependent upon context. Rather than a fixed quality, disposition, or capacity for action, teacher agency is highly dependent upon social practices, interactions, past experiences, and is "achieved in and through concrete contexts-for-action" (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 34), also known as the practical-evaluative domain. Figure 1.5 shows a replication of the Priestley et al. (2015) ecological model of teacher agency.

Figure 1.5

Replication of Priestley et al.'s (2015) model: An Ecological Approach to Teacher Agency



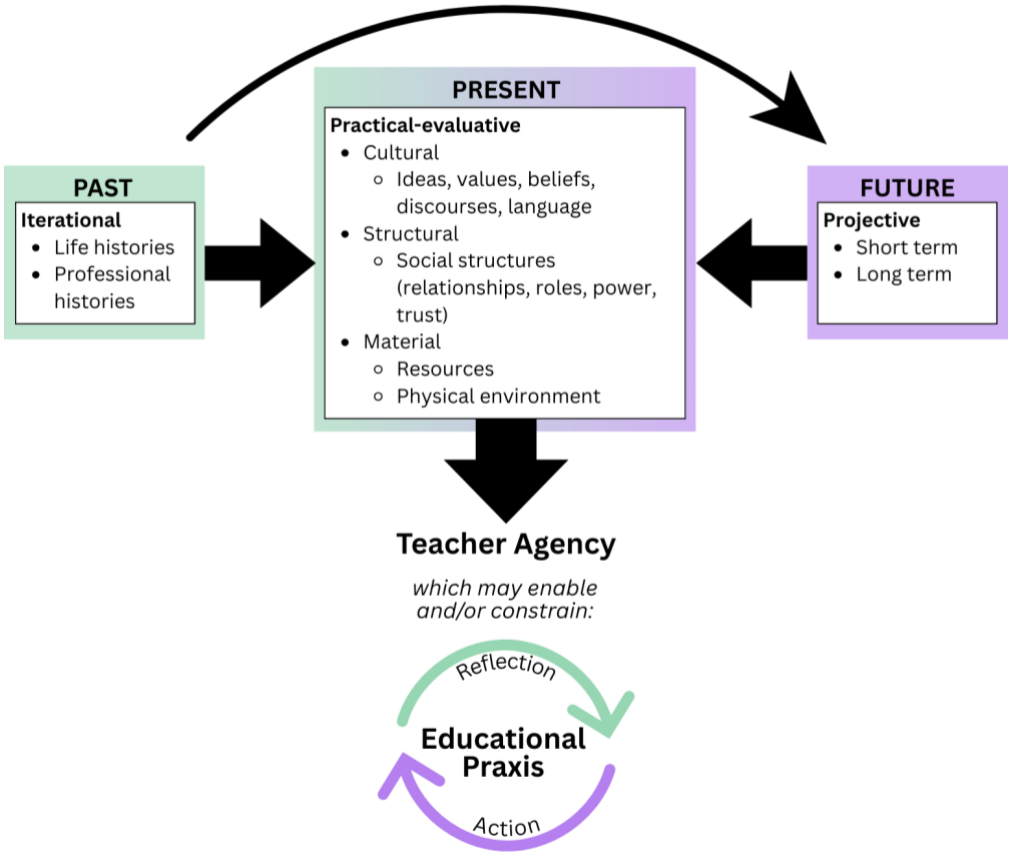
Connecting Teacher Agency & Educational Praxis

While several scholars have examined the links among teacher agency and educational praxis (e.g., Francisco et al., 2021, Sal et al., 2024), few have mobilized a model of ecological teacher agency that is explicitly connected to educational praxis. Like the ever-evolving

processes of reflection and action involved in educational praxis (Freire, 1970), agency ought not be viewed as a stagnant arrival point but rather as a dynamic point of transformative potential. Building on related empirical and theoretical work (i.e., Francisco et al., 2021; Freire, 1970; Priestley et al., 2015; Sal et al., 2024), Figure 1.6 demonstrates how I visualize an ecological approach to teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015) and one way to visually represent the potential for teacher agency to enable and/or constrain educational praxis (Freire, 1970).

Figure 1.6

My visualization of Priestley et al.'s (2015) framework, which positions teacher agency as an enabler and/or constrainer of educational praxis (Freire, 1970)



Content & Context

Since teacher agency is always enacted within concrete contexts (Priestley et al., 2015), agency may be related to specific areas of content. In the context of a professional development experience about trauma-informed approaches, participants' pedagogical content knowledge relates to the six key principles of trauma-informed practices as defined by the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014; an overview of SAMHSA assumptions, principles and practices can be found in Table 1.1; see chapter 2 for a more detailed explanation of the SAMHSA principles). In the context of a professional development course for elementary music educators on the topic of trauma-informed approaches, I structured course content based on the six SAMHSA (2014) principles:

1) Safety
2) Trustworthiness & transparency
3) Peer support
4) Empowerment, voice, & choice
5) Collaboration & mutuality
6) Cultural, historical, & gender issues.

Figure 1.7 is my visual representation of the SAMHSA (2014) principles to a trauma-informed approach as pedagogical content knowledge, which is experienced in the practical-evaluative domain (Priestley et al., 2015).

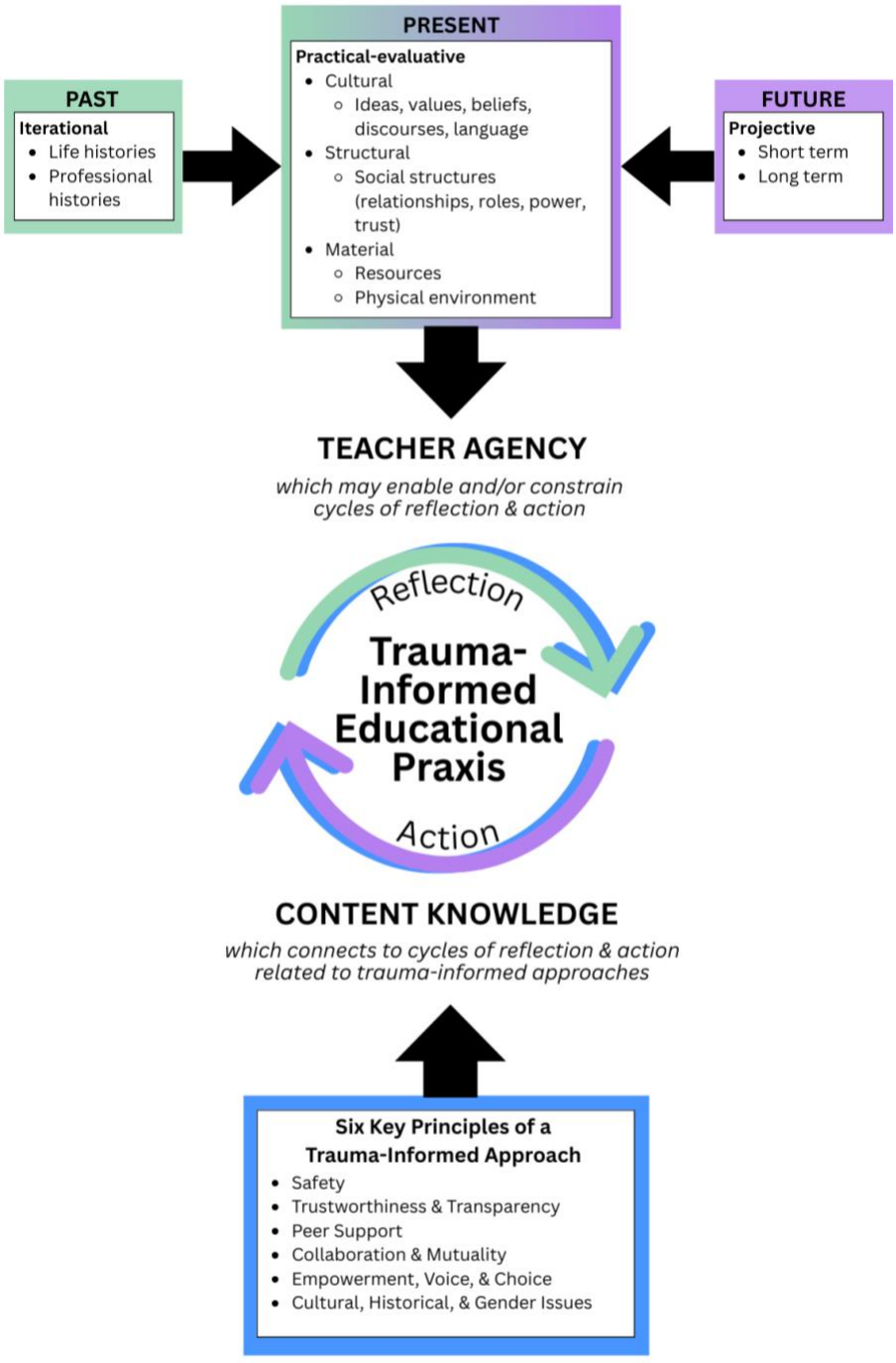
Table 1.1

Foundational components from SAMHSA's (2014) framework: Key Principles, Assumptions, and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach

SAMHSA's Trauma-Informed Approach: Key Principles & Assumptions	
Four Key Assumptions	• *Realize* the impact of trauma & possible avenues for healing • *Recognize* signs & symptoms of trauma • *Respond* by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies & practices • Actively *resist* re-traumatization
Six Key Principles	• Safety • Trustworthiness & Transparency • Peer Support • Collaboration & Mutuality • Empowerment, Voice, & Choice • Cultural, Historical, & Gender Issues
SAMHSA's Guidance for Implementing a Trauma-Informed Approach	
Implementation Domains	• Governance & Leadership • Policy • Physical Environment • Engagement & Involvement • Cross Sector Collaboration • Screening, Assessment, Treatment Services • Training & Workforce Development • Progress Monitoring & Quality Assurance • Financing • Evaluation

Figure 1.7

A model of trauma-informed educational praxis related to teacher agency, wherein content knowledge in a professional learning context is informed by trauma-informed principles (SAMHSA, 2014) and rooted in Priestley et al.'s (2015) ecological model of teacher agency.



Section Summary

Within sites of professional development dedicated to transforming educational praxis (Freire, 1970), an ecological perspective of teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015) can be a mooring point for professional learning among educators. According to the Freire Institute (n.d.),

> It is not enough for people to come together in dialogue in order to gain knowledge of their social reality. They must act together upon their environment in order critically to reflect upon their reality and so transform it through further action and critical reflection.

Such approaches to action and critical reflection can be encouraged in and through professional development, including teacher study groups designed to support teacher agency in specific content areas, which can include content knowledge/pedagogical content knowledge related to trauma-informed approaches.

Chapter 2: Related Literature

The ubiquitous nature of trauma is complex and worthy of consideration by music educators (Hess, 2021) and school community stakeholders (Ryals, 2022) at a variety of levels and contexts. Since schools and schooling practices are crucial threads of the US societal fabric, the pervasive impacts of trauma must be considered in educational research and practices. Further, because schools provide imperative systems of support for students, particularly those who are impacted by trauma (Peterson, 2019), researchers must empirically investigate teachers' knowledge, skills, perspectives, learning experiences, and sense of agency related to employing trauma-informed approaches. This may be particularly important for teachers (e.g., elementary general music teachers) who interact with entire student cohorts over several years in a content area (i.e., music) that has been acknowledged for its affective (Diaz & Silveria, 2014; Reimer, 1991), relational (Myrick, 2017), and/or healing (Bonny, 1986) capacities.

In this chapter, I examine the literature related to trauma-informed professional development efforts in music education. First, I provide an overview of the development and evaluation of trauma-informed practices in clinical settings and educational contexts. Then, I summarize literature related to trauma-informed approaches in music education. Finally, I draw from the literature related to professional learning to recommend an empirical path forward for exploring teacher experiences by participating in professional development focused on trauma-informed music education.

Trauma-Informed Practices: From Clinical Settings to Educational Contexts

Children who experience traumatic events before the age of 18 are known to have endured adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (Felitti et al., 1998). Felitti et al. (1998) conducted the first large-scale research study on ACEs, wherein the research team found that

64% of the survey respondents reported experiencing at least one ACE and 22% reported three or more ACEs. Researchers have reported similar findings (e.g., Ferraz et al., 2023) among different populations. Through these studies and similar efforts, researchers have highlighted the breadth of traumatic events experienced by school-aged children and the long-lasting effects carried into adulthood.

For music educators to develop trauma-informed skills and competencies rooted in empirical work, researchers must first understand how trauma-informed practices became established in educational contexts. This includes examining literature inside and outside of education and music education. The following sections explore a) the development of trauma-informed practices in clinical settings and educational contexts beginning with the initial ACEs study, b) approaches related to trauma-informed education, and c) efforts to assess the impact of trauma-informed initiatives in schools.

Clinical & Educational Perspectives

> *"Knowledge and skills regarding emotion regulation are essential not just for violence survivors, but for everyone." (Ford, 2011, p. 107)*

Approaches to emotional regulation are essential to help all people—including survivors of trauma—develop regulatory skills and capacities. Though these approaches largely originated in clinical settings, their importance in schools was quickly recognized by educational stakeholders and greater society. This pivot in perspective has largely been attributed to a large-scale study at a clinic in California that explored the prevalence of ACEs.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Felitti et al.'s (1998) adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) study was one of the first and most cited studies related to the history of trauma-informed care. Specifically, the research

team sought to examine health outcomes and their potential relationship to previously endured ACEs. The study was based in San Diego, CA at one of the US's largest free-standing medical evaluation centers, owned and operated by Kaiser Permanente. The research team identified 13,494 eligible participants who had completed a medical evaluation between August 1995 and March 1996. To avoid non-response during the "holiday period," the researchers did not include persons who visited the clinic in December 1995. Within one week of visiting the clinic, eligible "members were mailed the ACE Study questionnaire that included questions about childhood abuse and exposure to forms of household dysfunction while growing up" (p. 246), specifically events that occurred before the age of 18. A series of two mailings resulted in a 70.5% (9,508/13,494) response rate.

The researchers reported demographic similarities and differences among survey respondents and nonrespondents. Among the two groups, respondents and nonrespondents were similar in terms of gender, average years of education, and self-reported health perceptions. Felitti et al. (1998) indicated that respondents were "more likely to be white (89% vs. 75.3%)" (p. 247) and older than nonrespondents. Among those who responded to the ACEs questionnaire, survey items related to sexual abuse showed the highest frequency of nonresponse. Given the intense and personal nature of the subject matter, these patterns were understandable.

To define ACEs and analyze survey responses, Felitti et al. (1998) identified three categories of childhood abuse (i.e., physical abuse, psychological abuse, and contact sexual abuse) and four categories of household dysfunction (i.e., exposure to substance abuse, mental illness, violent treatment of mother/stepmother, and criminal behavior) for a total of seven ACE categories. The researchers then interpreted each individual's response on a scale from 0 to 7, where a score of 0 represented no exposure and a score of 7 represented exposure within each of

the seven categories. In the final analysis, researchers excluded participants who did not respond to certain questions, the most common of which related to childhood sexual abuse. Of the original 13,494 people who received the survey, 1,452 (59.7%) survey responses were excluded from the final analysis.

Using logistic regression, Felitti et al. (1998) sought to analyze the potential dose-response relationship between ACEs and health risk factors. The researchers "found a strong graded relationship between the breadth of exposure to abuse or household dysfunction during childhood and multiple risk factors for several of the leading causes of death in adults" (Felitti et al., 1998, p. 245). Among those surveyed, compounding ACEs positively correlated with an increased presence of health risk factors. These results have been used to justify trauma-informed efforts across human service disciplines, including healthcare and education. However, other researchers have identified methodological, analytical, and conceptual controversies surrounding the study (e.g., Lacey & Minnis, 2020). Even in light of these controversies, Felitti et al.'s (1998) ACEs research served (and continues to serve) as a primary catalyst for incorporating trauma-informed efforts in several settings (Lacey & Minnis, 2020), including clinical practices, healthcare, and education.

Trauma-Informed Care

The findings from the original ACE study, the first large-scale investigation into childhood trauma via adverse childhood experiences, has promoted awareness about trauma and its enduring impacts across ages and contexts (Bargeman et al., 2022). Eventually these efforts led to the development of the term *trauma-informed care.* Trauma-informed care was also spurred on by growing awareness about physical and neurological impacts in the brain and body: For instance, "scientific discovery regarding neuroplasticity, specifically the brain's ability to

rewire stress responses, and opportunity for post-traumatic growth also hold significant implications for service delivery, particularly with regard to trauma-informed care" (Bargeman et al., 2022, p. 78). Such perspectives from the medical field have prompted educational entities to consider and reconsider how trauma may impact student achievement and learning in schools. Despite the ubiquity of trauma and its enduring impacts across contexts, including education, there is no singular or universally agreed upon definition of trauma-informed care.

With its development largely credited to Harris and Fallot (2001), trauma-informed care aims to improve practices and services in clinical settings. However, beyond the notion of merely improving service, trauma-informed efforts seek

> to understand the ways in which violence, victimization, and other traumatic experiences may have impacted the lives of the individuals involved and to apply that understanding to the design of systems and provision of services so they accommodate trauma survivors' needs and are consonant with healing and recovery. (Carello & Butler, 2015, p. 264)

Such approaches require the understanding of individual, organizational, and contextual nuances, as well as the structures, strengths, and potential for change within them.

Through a scoping review that systematically explored over 3,000 empirical papers published over a 22-year span (2000-2022), Berring et al. (2024) concluded that trauma-informed care is multifaceted and defined differently across varied contexts, including educational contexts. Of the 157 studies included in the final review, many featured trauma-informed interventions. While only about 30% of the 157 studies dealt specifically with educational contexts, the researchers reported that the populations in those studies were more diverse than expected. Several studies mentioned key principles of trauma-informed care (as

defined by SAMHSA, and intersecting with definitions by Harris & Fallot), including safety (71%); trustworthiness & transparency (59%); peer support (43%); collaboration & mutuality (66%); empowerment, voice, and choice (67%); and cultural, historical, and gender issues (59%). However, studies varied widely in their definitions of these core principles, how they were enacted, and how many principles were included in the conceptualization of the trauma-informed interventions. This is important because "conceptualizing what is meant by TIC is an important first step to operationalizing and implementing it" (Berring et al., 2024, p. 8). For future efforts involving trauma-informed care, the research team recommended considering individual & organizational contexts, seeking multidimensional approaches, exploring "more simplistic and unanimous approaches" (p. 15), "shift[ing] from the biomedical causal models to a holistic biopsychosocial model of mental distress" (p. 15). Furthermore, the researchers emphasized that future empirical work should resist focusing on outcomes and approach TIC with curiosity, seeking to understand how it interacts with systems-level change real-world circumstances. Berring et al.'s (2024) scoping review highlighted the prevalence of trauma-informed interventions, the need for broad and specific definitions of trauma-informed care, the importance of closely examining measures which purport to evaluate trauma-informed interventions, and the necessity for "sustainable implementation of [trauma-informed care]" (p. 16). Such a review highlights the simultaneous breadth and nuance involved in conceptualizing, implementing, and evaluating approaches to TIC.

Trauma-Informed Care vs. Trauma-Specific Services

Fallot (2011) reinforced the difference between *trauma-informed care* and *trauma-specific services* in human services settings. While trauma-specific services refer to therapeutic interventions (e.g., cognitive-behavioral approaches to therapy) designed to ameliorate traumatic

impacts and facilitate recovery, trauma-informed care references the contexts related to organizations and programming that support survivors of trauma and the people who work with them (Fallot, 2011). Trauma-informed care can occur in community programs, work environments, behavioral health settings, prisons, and institutions of learning, including schools. In fact, "[a]ny setting can be trauma-informed when it takes fully into account what we know about trauma, its impact, and the diverse, individualized paths to trauma recovery" (Fallot, 2011, p. 98). Such an approach is congruent with—but does not take the place of—therapeutic interventions (e.g., cognitive behavioral therapy, somatic therapy) facilitated by certified behavioral health professionals. Instead, approaches to trauma-informed care acknowledge and prepare to support, without providing therapeutic intervention for, trauma-impacted individuals and/or groups.

In behavioral health settings, trauma-informed care was developed specifically to counter *retraumatization*. According to Fallot (2011), retraumatization can include the ways in which services are provided (or not provided) and/or the fear of violence in institutions that are supposed to support healing (i.e., "sanctuary harm"). Retraumatizing situations can include a service provider's lack of belief in a patient's trauma and/or unwillingness to engage with their reported victimization, and failing to provide opportunities for empowerment, trust, emotional safety, and/or choice for survivors of violence. Therefore, to avoid retraumatization, an organizational approach to trauma-informed care prioritizes a) safety, b) trustworthiness, c) choice, d) collaboration, and d) empowerment (Fallot, 2011; Fallot and Harris, 2008, 2009). These principles can apply to any organization, including those related schools & schooling.

As a bridge to applying these principles of in practice, Fallot & Harris (2009) identified six domains of organizational culture related to services and systems:

Services-level changes in a culture of trauma-informed care:

1) Informal service procedures and settings
2) Formal service policies
3) Trauma screening, assessment, service planning, and trauma- specific services

Systems-level changes in a culture of trauma-informed care:

1) Administrative support for developing and sustaining this culture
2) Staff training and education
3) Human resources practices (Fallot, 2011, p. 100)

To further support movement toward trauma-informed services and systems for consumers, Fallot (2011) referenced questions that can support "informal service procedures and settings" (p. 100) and relate to the core values of safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment:

- How can we ensure physical and emotional safety for consumers throughout our organization and larger system of care?
- How can we maximize trustworthiness? Make tasks clear? Maintain appropriate boundaries?
- How can we enhance consumer choice and control?
- How can we maximize collaboration and the sharing of power with consumers?
- How can we prioritize consumer empowerment and skill-building at every opportunity? (p. 101)

These tenets are reflected in the pillars of trauma-informed practices as defined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAHMSA), which explains trauma-informed

approaches as guided by: safety; trustworthiness & transparency; peer support; collaboration & mutuality; empowerment, voice, & choice; and cultural, historical, & gender issues (SAHMSA, 2014).

Regarding trauma-informed care in community settings, Fallot (2011) suggested that a work group comprised of multiple stakeholders—including "upper-level administrators, supervisors, staff, and consumers" (p. 100)—should "review the sequence of settings, activities, and people whom consumers are likely to be exposed from their time of their first call to their final visit" (pp. 100-101). Further, after these questions, domains, and core values had been explored with the consumers in mind, Fallot (2011) recommended that a similar, parallel process take place with the staff, administrators, and other organizational community members responsible for and maintaining services and systems. "[T]rauma-informed care is an increasingly central programs to assist women and children" (Fallot, 2011, p. 102) and can be applied to multiple settings, including schools. Although some may understandably resist the model of students as consumers in this model, the general idea that schools should assess and re-assess trauma-informed efforts across multiple levels remains of paramount importance. While trauma-informed community models may use language that differ from language used in pK-12 education, sites of schooling may benefit from adapting community- and/or organization-oriented approaches to trauma-informed care.

Trauma-Informed Education

Like trauma-informed care in general, trauma-informed education is a growing area of interest that lacks abundant research-based evidence assessing the effectiveness of trauma-informed efforts in school communities. Trauma-informed education is also known as trauma-informed practices and "requires administrative buy-in and support, trauma-sensitive classroom

practices, positive and restorative responses to behavior, policy and procedure changes, teacher and staff professional development, and strong cross-system collaboration among school staff and mental health professionals (Oehlberg, 2008)" (Thomas et al., 2019, p. 423). Yet, approaches to trauma-informed education remain siloed and largely unevaluated, particularly through empirical means. As a result, the recommendations grounded by and in educational research are not reflected to teachers, who are the individuals often tasked with the implementing trauma-informed efforts. Additionally, teachers themselves are often left out of processes involving trauma-informed initiatives in schools (Thomas et al., 2019). Despite an abundance of resources and varied approaches, the ways in which trauma-informed education cares for students has been underexamined.

Since organizations (like schools) cannot care directly (Noddings, 2015, 2019), caring must take place in the person-to-person interactions in classrooms and across the school community. Within these sites of person-to-person caring in classrooms, educators must "disrupt deficit notions of trauma-affected youth toward asset-based perspectives and actions" (Thomas et al., 2019, p. 446). As Thomas et al. (2019) acknowledged, the notion of trauma as a "moral weakness" or an individual deficit has been generally dismissed in clinical and health service settings. However, this may not be the case in education practices and the conceptions underlying those practices.

For example, Brown (2016) identified the need for non-judgmental (Fetterman, 2010), asset-based orientations when considering the behaviors of school-leaving youth. Through a lens of adaptive well-being (Brown, 2016), "which pertains to the ways that people respond or adjust to their environments" (p. 49), Brown examined the meaning making processes involved with the "maladaptive" behaviors of primarily Latino/a young adults. Brown asserted that these young

adults, who reflected on their involvement in illegal street activities during their K-12 schooling experience, made meaning of their prior experience in ways that a) indicated adaptive (rather than maladaptive) adjustments to their environment, and b) pursued "well-being rather than for arbitrary or self-destructive reasons" (Brown, 2016, p. 49). Rather than position individual choices as "immoral," "bad," or "dysfunctional"—stances which have largely been dismissed in clinical approaches to trauma-informed care (Thomas et al., 2019) but continue to persist in education—Brown conceptualized students' street behaviors as adaptive responses to pursue some type of well-being.

Further, punitive consequences (e.g., school expulsion) do not address the roots of student behaviors and misalign with students' underlying needs and desires. Therefore, Brown implored school personnel to realign their responses to disruptive and/or undesired behaviors by incorporating "more nuanced understandings and humanistic approaches in interacting with street-involved students" (2016, p. 68). Specifically related to trauma, Brown recommended that schools could be partners with students and families to help students "identify alternative ways to cope with trauma and emotional distress" (2016, p. 68). Though contextualized within the phenomenon of illegal street activity, a lens of adaptive well-being (Brown, 2016) highlights the need for education writ large to move toward alignment among their beliefs and practices when interacting with undesired and/or disruptive behaviors in PK-12 school settings.

Teachers may unintentionally retraumatize students through instructional practices that communicate messages of deficit. Like other approaches to education (i.e., culturally responsive (Gay, 2018) and culturally sustaining (Paris & Alim, 2017) pedagogies), trauma-informed educational practices should work to deconstruct notions of deficit. In doing so, it may be critical to empirically investigate students' perspectives and "consider ways in which district and school

practices and policies, particularly around discipline and punishment, can cause retraumatization for students and replace exclusionary, deficit approaches with those that are informed by the science of trauma and recovery" (Thomas et al., 2019, p. 445). Much like the stance Brown (2016) adopted when considering the needs, desires, and experiences of street-involved youth, an approach that rejects deficit in favor of an asset-based, non-judgmental orientation (Brown, 2016; Fetterman, 2010) may contribute to a more equity-centered trauma-informed approach (Salvador & Culp, 2022; Venet, 2023).

A Comprehensive Review

In a comprehensive review of school-based trauma-informed practices across two decades, Thomas et al. (2019) asserted that, "[w]hile multiple disciplines conduct research using different methodologies examining trauma-informed practices in schools, educators are underexamined in this work" (p. 422). While schools are important sites of trauma-informed practices and care, "the empirical work informing trauma-informed teaching and teacher education that is reflected back to education audiences is less established, 'specifically studies that examine particular moves educators make'" (Alvarez, 2017, p. 55). This, combined with the siloed nature of existing trauma-informed efforts, draws attention to the need for research and practice to center the complexities involves with specific, concrete school contexts (Thomas et al., 2019).

After describing a history of trauma-informed practices in schools, the researchers "conducted a practice analysis of the websites of national advocacy groups and state Department of Education (DOE) agencies for relevant resources, tools, and information" and discovered a "wide variation in the depth and breadth of resources and work reflected through each website" (Thomas et al., 2019, p. 425). They categorized the content of these resources into one of three

areas: “(a) Building knowledge—understanding the nature and impact of trauma; (b) Shifting perspectives and building emotionally healthy school cultures; and (c) Self-care for educators” (Thomas et al., 2019, p. 425).

Among the 33 articles included in the final review, Thomas et al. (2019) reported a variety of approaches, publishing contexts, and descriptions of participant demographics. Methodologically, studies featured quantitative (52%), qualitative (30%) and mixed (18%) methods. The research team categorized eight (24%) of the 33 studies as evaluations, most of which employed quantitative methods. However, regardless of methodology, the researchers urged future inquiries to ethically include information about demographics and contexts surrounding trauma-informed practices—particularly related to preventing harm among oppressed and/or marginalized populations—while remaining in the bounds of necessary protocols in human subjects research. Doing so, they argued, may support future researchers in identifying areas of convergence and divergence within and among contextually similar sites of trauma-informed efforts. “While no experience of trauma is monolithic, as a community of researchers, we must grapple with questions at the system level as well as the granular level of the classroom; therefore, more contextual information is critical” (p. 444). While many of the studies in the review were framed as “exploratory” or “pilot” studies, the reviewing authors reinforced the necessity for researchers to explicitly report details about participant demographics, study contexts, and methods—all within the bounds of ethical social science practices—to delimit study boundaries and potential limitations for reported claims, including those related to generalizability or transferability.

Evaluating Trauma-Informed Approaches

Assessment is a cornerstone of teaching & learning, including professional development (PD) for in-service teachers. However, evaluations beyond "happy scales" at the close of PD sessions or interventions are scarce, particularly regarding trauma-informed education. In general education, studies have purported to evaluate trauma-informed efforts. Using Maynard et al.'s (2019) comprehensive review as a starting place, I briefly address methodological decisions related to evaluating the efficacy of trauma-informed education interventions.

Empirical evidence for supporting trauma-informed approaches in schools is largely missing from the educational literature. Despite the promotion of several trauma-informed approaches in schools, effects and impacts of these approaches have yet to be rigorously evaluated (Maynard et al., 2019). Like several other approaches, Maynard et al. (2019) used the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) principles of trauma-informed approaches as a framework. The research team did not find any articles that satisfied their inclusion criteria, which included a) using a randomized or quasi-experimental design, b) pK-12 school settings, c) assessing the impacts of a trauma-informed approach, designed to resist retraumatization and facilitate healing, d) student-level outcomes connected to academic achievement, socioemotional skills, and mental health and/or trauma symptoms, and e) publication within the last 10 years (2007-2017, at the time of the study). In a scoping review of early childhood education and care settings, Sun et al. (2024) found similarly sparse results in terms of assessing trauma-informed efforts in school settings. Although more school sites met their inclusion criteria, researchers noted the short-term focus of trauma-informed efforts. Further, they urged researchers to continue questioning the presence of social desirability bias in self-report measures, which has implications for methodological decisions among studies seeking to evaluate program efficacy. Through these and similar studies, researchers have

concluded that, while trauma-informed approaches are increasingly prevalent in schools, their long-term evaluation remains scarce.

In evaluating the efficacy of trauma-informed education interventions, it is crucial to employ robust methodologies that go beyond post-intervention satisfaction surveys. Quantitative methods, such as pre- and post-intervention assessments, can provide measurable outcomes related to student engagement and well-being. Qualitative approaches, including interviews and focus groups, can offer deeper insights into the experiences of educators and students, revealing the nuanced impacts of trauma-informed practices. Mixed-methods designs can combine these perspectives, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of how trauma-informed education influences learning environments. It is essential to establish clear metrics for success that align with the core principles of trauma-informed care, ensuring that evaluations capture the effectiveness of interventions in fostering safety, trust, and empowerment among students. Regardless of methodology, a more systematic, sustained, educator-focused approach to evaluating trauma-informed practices must become a focus of the research literature.

Section Summary

The development and application of trauma-informed practices within clinical and educational settings has highlighted the influence of the foundational research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) (Felitti et al., 1998) that revealed widespread trauma among children and its lasting effects on health and learning. Trauma-informed care (Harris & Fallot, 2001) has evolved to address these challenges in schools, necessitating administrative support, teacher training, and policy changes to cultivate supportive environments for trauma-affected students. Despite the increasing focus on trauma-informed approaches, empirical evaluations of their efficacy, impact, and/or nature remain scarce (Maynard et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2024;

Thomas et al., 2019). Educators play a vital role in fostering positive classroom interactions and have the potential to reinforce and/or reject deficit-laden approaches (Brown, 2016; Salvador & Culp, 2022). Empirical literature calls for enhanced evaluation methodologies that consider contextual factors (Thomas et al., 2019), which may improve assessments of trauma-informed educational initiatives and their impacts on schools, schooling, and individual members of school communities.

Trauma-Informed Music Education

> *"As music teachers tend to work with a substantial portion of their school's student population, they will work with many students who have experienced trauma." (Ryals, 2022, p. 118)*

Despite the pervasive nature of trauma and the potential for music educators to regularly interact with trauma-impacted students, literature on trauma-informed music education has been relatively sparse. Therefore, within the field of music education, I examine selected studies related to a) trauma-informed classroom management, b) dissertation work centering trauma-informed music education, c) intersectional perspectives on trauma-informed music education.

Trauma-Informed Classroom Management in Music Education

Bauman-Field's (2024) literature review highlighted the importance of incorporating trauma-informed lenses into music teachers' approaches to classroom management, particularly commonly used approaches (e.g., "punitive punishments, confinement, and zero tolerance policies") that "may be triggering to trauma-affected students" (p. 44). Further, Bauman-Field asserted that "the authoritarian approach historically used by many music educators, particularly in the ensemble setting (Allsup & Benedict, 2008), may not be conducive to trauma-informed [classroom management]" (2024, p. 44). As an alternative, the author advocated for approaches

to classroom management that align with the tenets of trauma-informed positive education (TIPE) (Brunzell at al., 2016), which includes three domains: "(a) repairing regulatory abilities, (b) repairing disrupted attachment, and (c) increasing psychological resources" (Bauman-Field, 2024, p. 45). As an asset- or strengths-based model, "TIPE combines a focus on repairing trauma-affected students' deficiencies with elements of positive education (Seligman et al., 2009), emphasizing the development of students' well-being in addition to repairing deficits" (Bauman-Field, 2024, p. 45). After reviewing classroom management practices in the music education literature and identifying connections to elements of TIPE, Bauman-Field presents a definition of trauma-informed classroom management in music education:

> the choices a music educator makes to create and maintain an environment in which all students can, want to, and feel safe to learn. This environment is achieved by prioritizing caring teacher-student relationships and student well-being alongside musical engagements. (2024, pp. 48-49)

Bauman-Field (2024) connected notions of classroom management explicitly to relational interactions, musical engagement, and trauma-informed approaches. Although other music education scholars have provided recommendations for trauma-informed practices in music education (e.g., Bailey, 2022; McEvoy & Salvador, 2020; Ryals, 2022; Salvador & Culp, 2022), Bauman-Field (2024) presented a comprehensive synthesis of field-specific definitions related to trauma-informed classroom management.

Dissertations: Trauma-Informed Music Education

Two recent dissertations (i.e., Bailey, 2022; Ryals, 2022) sought to explore and gain further insight about trauma-informed music education. Through an instrumental case study of a trauma-informed music program at a middle school, Ryals (2022) contributed to the limited body

of literature dedicated to further understanding trauma-informed music education by exploring the experiences and perspectives of students, teachers, administrators, and other school community stakeholders. In this trauma-informed school music program, students did not have to be identified as "trauma-affected" to participate. As an information-rich (Patton, 2014) site—and a site where Ryals (2022) had already established a relationship with the music program—this case study took place at a large urban middle school in the Northeast and involved 26 participants (18 students, three administrators, and five teachers). Ryals' findings and recommendations highlighted the need for whole-school community approaches to trauma-informed education and reinforced the notion that no single solution will uniformly support students, teachers, and families. Further, due to the uniquely affective qualities of music and music education, Ryals (2022) identified that music teachers may be aware of students' traumas in ways that differ from their colleagues; therefore, "[m]usic educators have a unique opportunity to advocate for trauma survivors in their classes by advocating with their school administrators to remain current with trauma-informed education trainings and other supports needed for student care" (2022, p. 115). However, as Ryals acknowledged, these opportunities for advocacy are complexly intertwined with other factors like physical, emotional, and financial support within school districts and communities.

Using a rationale grounded in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as music therapy perspectives, Bailey (2022) suggested a philosophical orientation to trauma-informed music education built on several core values of trauma-informed care (e.g., safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment) that have been established in the literature (e.g., Fallot & Harris, 2009). Bailey (2022) sought to "explore the phenomenon of trauma-informed music education (TIME) and discover potential barriers to effective teacher

implementation in K-12 music programs" (p. 59) and employed snowball sampling methods supported by SMS to contact music educators and educational leaders via LinkedIn. Out of the initial 40 connections established, 15 eligible persons participated in interviews via email. Bailey (2022) reported findings related to participants' perceptions of trauma-informed music education, including challenges for implementation and views about best practices. Positioning trauma-informed music education as a necessity to accommodate modern learners, (p. 126), Bailey (2022) closed the document with slides that recommend the "TIME for change" and encouraged music educators to buy-in to school-based approaches to classroom management like PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports). Notably, while Bailey positions trauma-informed music education as a "new concept based on proven theories" (p. 122), the study does not illuminate the extent to which these theories have been explored empirically, nor does it acknowledge the diverse definitions among the principles upon which the TIME concept is built.

Both Ryals (2022) and Bailey (2022) acknowledged the need for multifaceted approaches and change at multiple organizational levels (e.g., individual, school, district) to support efficacious trauma-informed care in music education. These recommendations are worthy of exploration among music educators and school communities at large. However—without a clear framing in asset-based, equity-informed, intersectional approaches to trauma-informed music education—well-intentioned efforts can unintentionally reinscribe societal harm among groups and individuals.

Intersecting Perspectives

Within music education, scholars have identified opportunities for enacting intersectional lenses in trauma-informed approaches. Additionally, other approaches involving social-emotional learning, well-being, mindfulness, restorative justice practices, and similar approaches

may share connections with trauma-informed pedagogies. In this section, I explore literature that has identified connections among approaches to trauma-informed practices and/or professional development related to care in music education. Specifically, I reviewed selected literature related to wellness, social-emotional learning, restorative justice practices, universal design for learning & culturally responsive practices, and trauma-informed music education.

Wellness. McNickle (2021) used an instrumental case study design to investigate the experiences of choral music teachers as they explored approaches to wellness while teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, this study sought to describe teachers' perceptions and experiences of wellness while teaching during the pandemic, and how experiences in collaborative teacher study groups (CTSGs) impacted their teaching practices and overall views of wellness in music education. Supported by the notion that educators' modeling of wellness behaviors may positively impact students, McNickle's (2021) CTSG was comprised of five choral music educator participants and met seven times across the months of August and September. Meetings included weekly check-ins and a final interview in November, all of which were conducted virtually. Despite their virtual format, McNickle reported that the CTSG meetings "served in a capacity beyond systematic investigation, as a space of community, commiseration, and collaboration" (2021, p. 253). Findings illuminated the evolving nature of teacher wellness, which included learning strategies to support vocal health, manage stress and anxiety, and navigate depression and burnout. Additionally, participants explored the notion of integrate wellness techniques without "distracting [from] performance and competition goals" (p. 230). Aligned with increased desires to explore holistic wellness and related societal assumptions, McNickle urged future researchers to explore perceptions and experiences of

wellness among varied identities, including those related to gender, race, and systematically marginalized identities.

Social Emotional Learning. Edgar's (2013) literature review on social-emotional learning (SEL) in music education emphasized the vital role that music can play in fostering students' emotional and social development, as well as the need for SEL-focused professional development for music educators. Drawing on tenets of SEL as defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), Edgar (2013) outlined fundamental components for SEL (i.e., self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management, and relationship management) and provided examples connected to music education. With a focus on the positive emotional impacts of music education and SEL, respectively, Edgar (2013) emphasized the dearth of empirical work related to SEL in music education and recommended professional development as a critical space for developing teacher knowledge, dispositions, and skills related to SEL in music education.

Building on his previous scholarship, Edgar (2020) referenced COVID-19 as a universal trauma, arguing that music education not only enhances musical skills but also cultivates essential life skills such as empathy, teamwork, and self-regulation. Edgar outlined various strategies for integrating SEL into music curricula, highlighting the importance of creating a supportive and inclusive classroom environment. By focusing on collaborative learning and reflective practices, music educators can help students develop a deeper understanding of their emotions and those of others, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being and success both in and out of school.

Restorative Justice. Restorative Justice Practices (RJP) focus on behavior management and repairing relational rupture in communities (e.g., schools, workplaces) through dialogue and

mutual understanding rather than punitive measures. Folk (2023) used survey methods to explore the implementation of restorative justice practices among music teachers in one mid-Atlantic state. Results from this study highlighted policy implications, particularly because survey respondents indicated their desire for RJP training tailored to music teachers. Study findings also implied several multidimensional implications for school administrators, policy-makers, and community members alike, including next steps for states that adopt state-level requirements for RJP. Given the RJP focus on rupture and repair within community contexts, this approach may be well-suited to support tenets of trauma-informed pedagogies.

Universal Design for Learning & Culturally Responsive Teaching. Salvador & Culp (2022) positioned trauma-informed education (TIE) as an asset-based approach that shares commonalities with universal design for learning (UDL) and culturally responsive teaching (CRT). Situated in a practitioner-oriented journal article, the authors identified asset-based pedagogies (e.g., TIE, UDL, and CRT) as those which "focus on learner strengths, recognize diversity in learning and experience as the rule, and foster student self-efficacy and agency to help improve learning" (Salvador & Culp, 2022, p. 22). This involves practicing cultural humility (Salvador & Culp, 2022) and embracing students' identities as whole and complete human beings. Ultimately, Salvador & Culp advocated for teachers to engage in deep, reflective work in order to continue growing and transforming their practices in an imperative, ongoing process.

A relational frame. In a chapter of *Trauma and Resilience in Music Education*, Hibbard (2021) offered a disruptive view of practices the field of music education may take for granted. For instance, the SEL and mindfulness efforts in school are often based on conforming to norms—which are often rooted in expectations of whiteness and heteronormativity —and cause

harm to minoritized youth via emotional and psychological violence. When SEL and mindfulness-oriented approaches do not incorporate opportunities for diverging perspectives and examining oppressive structures, such approaches can become "white supremacy with a hug" (Simmons, 2019; Hibbard, 2021). As an alternative, Hibbard offered a relational frame centering presence—or "being yourself when teaching" (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006)—in teacher-student interactions. While centering presence and mutual well-being, music educators might consider and reconsider their responses to trauma-related behaviors, as well as their approaches to SEL-based programs and initiatives.

Section Summary

Despite nuanced differences among their definitions and priorities, the trauma-informed-adjacent approaches in this section (i.e., wellness, McNickle, 2021; SEL, Edgar, 2013, 2020; RJP, Folk, 2023; UDL & CRT, Salvador & Culp, 2022; relational frames that center presence in teaching, Hibbard, 2021, 2024) uplift the potential for reflective, and asset-based experiences in music education. In fact, these approaches may demonstrate more commonalities than differences. Such literature has heighted the need for school stakeholders to consider the potential consequences of fully "buying-in" to one of these approaches, and/or viewing these approaches as mutually exclusive. Regardless of the label, such approaches should foster agency among teachers, students, and families, as well as become part of a continuous, cyclic reflection process with a spirit of knowing better and doing better.

Professional Development & Trauma-Informed Approaches in Music Education

> *"It is reasonable to infer that all educators desire effectual professional development; however, at what point does being away from family, friends, and communities limit what*

participants are able to glean from professional development?" (Johnson et al., 2023, p. 13)

Music teacher professional development (PD) has long been upheld as space to cultivate improvement, inclusion, and innovation within music education praxes, both in the United States and internationally (Wesolowski et al., 2022). Teachers' perspectives on and feelings toward professional development have a similarly long, complex, and multifaceted history (e.g., Guskey, 2022). Within music education, Conway (2022) called the profession to move away from the term professional development in favor of more representative terms like experienced teacher learning. Such reframing highlights the narrative that professional development implies something "being done to" teachers (Spruce et al., 2019) rather than as an integrated part of their professional learning. In this section, I explore these narratives while exploring current notions of "effective" professional learning in music education. Then, I examine the use of a particular type of professional learning (i.e., collaborative teacher study groups) in music education. Finally, I propose a path forward for examining teacher experiences and expressions of agency throughout a PD experience on the topic of trauma-informed music education.

"Effective" Professional Development in Music Education

Despite the nearly universal presence of PD requirements for music teachers across the United States (West, 2021), few empirical studies have centered PD efforts in music education. Furthermore, "there is no agreed-upon definition of what constitutes 'quality' PD in education or related fields" (Wesolowski et al., 2022, p. 27). Combined with dubious notions of "effectiveness" and "quality," the lack of research investigating PD efforts in music education leaves little guidance for designing, executing, evaluating, and re-evaluating PD efforts and teachers' interpretation and implementation of those efforts.

Through the work of researchers who explored the topic of music education PD through large-scale data sets, scholars have begun to interpret the broader landscape of PD in music education literature. Gallo (2018) used an analysis of the 2011-2012 Schools and Staffing Survey to compare PD quality among music educators and teachers in other disciplines, highlighting the importance of PD in shaping teachers' ability to engage with pedagogies that may be responsive to student needs and abilities. Despite the narrative that music educators may be at a disadvantage compared to their peers in other disciplines, Gallo's work confirmed that music educators are not disproportionately under supported in the area of PD. Rather, Gallo (2018) identified elementary general music teachers as disadvantaged in terms of collaboration with other general music colleagues, which pointed to complexities involved with scheduling and logistics of teaching classes during grade-level common planning time. Yet, the data representing PD quantity did not reflect the PD or its impact on teachers' practices and, ultimately, student experiences.

Wesolowski et al. (2022) used a thematic coding process to identify ten themes of high-quality PD across the education and policy research literature. These ten themes (content, evidence/research, coherence, relevance, active learning, application, collaboration, reflection, feedback, and duration) were used as the framework for a PD assessment scale. Congruent with Gallo's (2018) findings, Wesolowski et al. found that "music educators are less likely to experience collaborative activities and engagement in their PD experiences" (2022, p. 41). However, while music teachers seemed to enjoy the PD sessions that were deemed "high-quality," findings indicated music educators were not experiencing content-specific PD that reflected sustained duration, fostered active learning, offered "adequate feedback," and promoted collaboration. These findings exemplified the need for further evaluations of PD programs,

including assessments of PD practices themselves and their potential impacts on music education.

West (2023) investigated the nature of PD by content area by using data from the 2017-2018 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS). Expanding on Gallo's (2018) work as well as a previous study of his own, West compared music teachers' PD experiences with other content areas, including other arts disciplines. In contrast to Gallo's earlier work, results from the 2017-2018 NTPS show that music educators received similar amounts of content-specific PD when compared to their arts- and non-arts peers. However, the area of agency was consistently underrepresented in for music, art, theater, and dance educators. While the six tenets of effective PD—content specificity, sustained duration, social interaction, relevance, agency, and policy support, as defined by the Society for Music Teacher Education (SMTE) Area for Strategic Planning and Action (ASPA)—served as a framework for his study, West identified the lack of statistical evaluation of these tenets as a limitation to the study. Additionally, as this iteration of the NTPS did not reflect the impacts of COVID-19, empirical research on PD in the post-pandemic U.S. remains understudied.

As demonstrated through the studies by Gallo, Wesolowski et al., and West, empirical work that represents the nature of music education PD relatively sparse. Noting specific recommendations from the literature—e.g., offering a minimum of 40 content-specific PD hours per school year (Gallo, 2018), evaluating PD programs (Wesolowski et al., 2022), and exploring PD in a post-COVID educational landscape (West, 2023)—music educators could benefit from a more unified definition of "high-quality" PD. Such a definition "can serve as a foundation for educators to explore alternative instructional strategies with the hope of creating vibrant music programs in which all students can thrive" (Gallo, 2018, p. 168). Furthermore, since PD quantity

does not indicate PD quality, quantitative investigations of high-quality and/or effective PD has provided additional support for qualitative inquiries.

A limited number of music education researchers have explored PD topics through qualitative means. Using sources recently highlighted on the Society for Music Teacher Education (SMTE) Area for Strategic Planning and Action (ASPA) website as a starting place, I investigated qualitative studies about music education PD. Apart from a mixed-methods paper on arts administrators' perceptions of music teacher PD (West & Sanderson, 2022) and the quantitative studies mentioned previously, only three qualitative studies have recently been featured as resources on the SMTE ASPA webpage. These works covered a variety of PD components, including collaboration (Stanley et al., 2018), formal and informal learning (Kastner, 2014), and implications for PD across career stages (Eros, 2011). However, recent journal articles have expressed additional points of view concerning music teacher PD.

In an investigation of professional growth through a context-specific PD for urban music educators in Ohio, Shaw (2020) acknowledged the rarity and importance of conducting case studies on music teacher experiences in context-specific PD. Since "such investigations are rare in the field of music education, additional case studies of context-specific preservice, new teacher induction, and professional development programs would contribute significantly to the literature" (Shaw, 2020, p. 460). Shaw positioned such contextually-situated PD inquiries as critical components of future research in music education and music teacher education.

While quantitative studies are necessary to understand breadth of impact, qualitative studies are necessary to understand the depth and nuanced nature of PD activities and experiences. Building on the notion of context-specific development, Spruce et al. (2021) positioned teacher experiences of agency as critical to PD processes. By moving away from

mandatory sessions that may not be relevant to teachers, foster collaboration, or even comprise the same groups of people in each session, the authors advocated for

> policies for agentic professional development: teacher learning which takes place within the context of contemporary school and musical society yet is not uncomfortably bound by it. Enough participation and engagement with the power of music teacher professional agency could finally tip the implementation of collective, top-down decisions away from the coercive and toward the chosen. (Spruce et al., 2021, pp. 71-72)

Although "giving" teachers agency may appear straightforward, fostering agentic practices requires simultaneous structure and flexibility. Noting the imperative nature of agency in effective approaches to PD, Spruce et al. implored PD stakeholders to "eliminate the idea that there are a great number of underdeveloped music teachers who need development done to them" (2021, p. 71). To shift toward more agentic PD practices, PD facilitators—including researchers, administrators, and practicing teachers—must critically consider reconsider traditionally accepted tenets of effective PD.

In the literature, PD is often conceptualized as a flexible space for empowerment, autonomy, and/or innovation. Yet, the "effective" tenets of PD can be contradictory and/or under evaluated, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Music education researchers have advocated for context-specific PD (Shaw, 2020) that fosters agency (Spruce et al., 2021) and is facilitated by presenters who reflexively engage with the participants in the room through content-specific material focused on differentiated learning for teachers and students alike. Furthermore, agentic and context-specific experiences may support spaces that reject the notion of being "professionally developed" (Spruce et al., 2021) and foster transformative learning spaces that can support professional learning among teachers (Conway, 2022).

Collaborative Teacher Study Groups in Music Education

Among other approaches to professional development/professional learning, collaborative teacher study groups (CTSGs) have recently been used in music education research to facilitate teachers' engagement with several topics related to music teaching and learning. Stanley (2011)—the first music education researcher to coin CTSGs in the music education literature—asserted that, "[w]ith or without external leadership, the most successful study groups contain collaborative elements: goals are shared and groups are organized around the aim of codifying and improving the local knowledge that is most important to their particular members" (p. 72). Using Stanley's outlook, the orientation of group goals to improve understanding in a local capacity serves as an essential outcome of successful CTSGs.

Another core component of CTSGs involves teachers collaboratively investigating their own teaching practices. Drawing on existing research about student collaboration, teacher collaboration, and musical collaboration, Stanley (2009, 2012) conducted an empirical study of a CTSG comprised of elementary general music educators. Based on earlier dissertation work, Stanley (2012) examined the experiences of three elementary general music teachers in a CTSG. Using a stance rooted in social constructivism (Patton, 2014), Stanley (2012) served as both a CTSG facilitator and discussion participant while examining "participants' beliefs and viewpoints on collaboration—their own and that of their students—as they emerged and evolved within the group meetings" (p. 56). To guide conversation during the weekly 2-hour meetings, teacher-participants took turns sharing 10-20 minute unedited video clips of their. Previously established group norms and co-created principles of collaboration served as essential elements of the CTSG meetings.

In her study, Stanley also sought to examine the potential for CTSGs to serve as a sustainable, cost-effective avenue to support the development of both pedagogical and content knowledge among music educators. However, like other forms of professional development, "[a] CTSG is not a foolproof model. A group of teachers can work together to either reinvent and improve teaching practice or simply reinforce the status quo" (Stanley, 2011, p. 73). Therefore, the creation of a CTSG does not automatically translate to meaningful, productive, and/or positive professional development experiences for participants. Through honoring the expertise of individual teachers, sites of professional learning (e.g., CTSGs) can encourage discussion and reflection that can "support teacher learning and change in practice, and subsequently improve students' musical achievement" (Stanley, 2011, p. 77). Unlike one-way, one-off professional development sessions facilitated by an "expert" facilitator, CTSGs are positioned to center the preexisting expertise among teacher-participants.

Using CTSGs as a context through which to enact professional development, music education researchers have explored a variety of topics. Such topics have included teacher wellness amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (McNickle, 2021), critical race theory (Lewis, 2022), and intersections of race and dis/ability (Knapp, 2024). Similar to CTSGs, Grimsby (2020) framed a professional learning community comprised of music educators and special education paraprofessionals as a "community of practice"; Cullen (2018) explored elementary general music teachers' reflective strategies through a case study of a "teacher collaboration group"; and Sindberg (2016) examined how a "professional learning community" of music educators grew while incorporating Comprehensive Musicianship Through Performance (CMP) throughout their practices. Several researchers in music education have used CTSGs or adjacent approaches to investigate teacher learning in terms of content and/or processes.

The Need for a Study Exploring Teacher Experiences & Agency in Trauma-Informed PD

Within music education, PD has largely been under-explored, particularly as it relates to educators' experiences. Moreover, while a primary purpose of PD is to improve teaching practices and learning experiences, few studies have examined teachers' applications of PD content and translation of PD experiences to their unique classroom contexts. Throughout the literature on music teacher PD, agentic and context-specific opportunities have been prioritized in recommendations for future research. This, combined with the prevalence of agency as a tenet of trauma-informed praxis and the similar under-evaluation of trauma-informed approaches in music education, highlights the need for a study exploring music teachers' experiences and sense of agency in a professional learning context that focuses on trauma-informed music education.

Chapter 3: Method

> *"Using a trauma-informed approach to educational development, while it may be a current buzzword, is not merely a passing fad but a necessary enduring change." (Imad, 2021, p. 15)*

In this chapter, I provide information regarding the method of the present study, including the design, procedural approaches, data collection, and analysis. First, I rearticulate the purpose and questions that guided my research. Then, I state my rationale for employing an instrumental case design followed by a description of the epistemological stances that oriented my processes for recruitment, data collection, and analysis. Finally, I include a detailed account of the procedures involved in this instrumental case study, including a detailed description of the study group materials and acknowledgement of my positionality as the researcher.

Purpose & Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore elementary general music teachers' views on trauma-informed music approaches while engaged in a professional development experience centered around trauma-informed practices. Further, I sought to examine elementary music teachers' sense of agency in applying trauma-informed approaches in their work with students. To examine music teachers' perspectives about trauma-informed education, I investigated teachers' behaviors, stated beliefs, and responses to surveys and reflective prompts in an online study group focused on trauma-informed approaches for elementary music educators. Four questions guided my inquiry:

1. What is the nature of music teacher participants' engagement with an online teacher study group focused on trauma-informed approaches?

2. How do participants' individual and group responses align with or diverge from the principles of trauma-informed approaches as outlined by SAMHSA (2014)?
3. To what extent are the three temporal dimensions of teacher agency evident in participants' written reflections and survey responses?
4. Based on their experiences in the teacher study group, how do participants describe their recommendations for future iterations of trauma-informed professional development?

Rationale for Design

I employed an instrumental case study approach (Stake, 2003) to explore teachers' experiences in an online teacher study group focused on trauma-informed approaches. The naturalistic yet highly contextual nature of case studies makes them well-suited to investigate phenomena within educational contexts (Yin, 2014), including music education. In an instrumental case study, a case is examined "in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed, but all because [it] helps the researcher to pursue the external interest" (Stake, 2003, p. 137). Such an approach acts as a lens to understand a broader phenomenon that goes beyond the specific case under study. By particularizing and complexifying the case, researchers can create opportunities for transfer among contextual elements (Flyvbjerg, 2011). In the present research, teacher experiences throughout an online professional learning experience about trauma-informed practices served as the broader phenomenon of interest. By detailing the particularities and complexities related to the study participants and their teacher study group, the findings in my study may be applicable to other programs with similar structures or contexts. Therefore, within this study, I define the case as the group of teachers participating in an online teacher study group focused on the topic of trauma-informed approaches in music education.

Assumptions & Epistemology

With my theoretical framework as a foundation, I selected elements from Patton's (2014) themes of qualitative inquiry to guide my work, reflective of a curious and non-judgmental stance. According to Patton (2014), the qualitative principles, "taken together, constitute a comprehensive and coherent strategic framework for qualitative inquiry, including fundamental assumptions and epistemological ideals" (p. 39). I adopted a process-oriented approach (Maxwell, 2013) reflective of an iterative and emergent design. Such iterative and emergent qualities are central components of qualitative research (Becker, 2009; Maxwell, 2013) and involve processes like meaning-making (Patton, 2014). Next, I describe the strategies that I employed in the study design, data collection, and analysis of this study.

Professional Development as Naturalistic Inquiry. Teachers regularly interact with sites of professional development, both inside and outside the bounds of school and/or district requirements. Opportunities for professional learning have been an essential component of teacher development for preservice and practicing teachers. Therefore, I positioned professional development in the form of an online teacher study group as a real-world situation for study participants. In my study, I sought to provide a setting (i.e., professional learning on the topic of trauma-informed music education) that provided simultaneous structure and openness to emergent ideas, including participant experiences (Patton, 2014) and suggestions.

By offering professional development frameworks grounded in curiosity and collaboration—such as open-ended reflection questions, discussion boards, and co-constructed meeting norms—within a real-world setting, I prioritized a dynamic, process-oriented approach. Further, I aimed to understand and record the daily experiences of participants while embracing the complexity of the evolving course. Because of this, the data reflected whatever emerged as

significant to comprehending participants' experiences (Patton, 2014). Such an environment aligns with prior research on teacher leadership, which has been identified as a key link between organizational structure and teacher agency (Szczesiul & Huizenga, 2015). As a study that centers trauma-informed approaches and teacher agency within the context of a teacher study group, the present inquiry is well-positioned to contribute to existing literature related to music teachers' continued development as professionals.

Empathic Neutrality & Mindfulness. Patton (2014) warned against being too involved in naturalistic inquiries involving fieldwork and offered empathic neutrality and mindfulness as alternatives to overinvolvement. Similarly, Peshkin (1984) identified limits concerning the role of the participant-observer's role in fieldwork methods, including the role of deception and related boundaries to consider while conducting research in the field. However, as Patton asserted,

> neutrality does not mean detachment. It is on this point that qualitative inquiry makes a special contribution. Qualitative inquiry depends on, uses, and enhances the researcher's direct experiences in the world and insights about those experiences. This includes learning through *empathy*. (2014, p. 51)

Such a rationale supports an approach where the researcher remains involved yet not overly influential. I demonstrated this through my posture as the study group facilitator by curating study group materials without centering my own teaching. Further, Patton described empathy as a stance toward individuals that conveys understanding, interest, and care. In contrast, neutrality involves adopting a nonjudgmental position regarding their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Patton, 2014).

To assume a neutral stance, one must adopt a non-judgmental orientation (e.g., Brown, 2016). I demonstrated my commitment to engaging in this practice by developing professional learning environments where participants were also acknowledged for their professional expertise, a model that distinctly contrasted with other possible formats for professional development (e.g., unidirectional, lecture-style professional development workshops facilitated by the researcher). Rather than focus my efforts on guiding and disseminating information during the teacher study groups, I positioned myself to observe the processes through which participants engaged with the professional development settings, concepts, and materials throughout the online teacher study group. This decision allowed me to focus my efforts on being responsive to participants (i.e., mindfulness) and their experiences while maintaining interest, presence, and attention in the field. A non-judgmental orientation facilitated a neutral stance where I sought to center participants' experiences and expressions of agency.

Dynamic Systems. Through the online teacher study group, I facilitated a collective and structural focus on trauma-informed content within a realistic setting for participants. While acknowledging the potential limits of and opportunities within online teacher study groups, I sought to examine "dynamic program processes and their holistic effects on participants so as to provide information for program improvement" (Patton, 2014, p. 54). This constructive, fluid approach toward data collection provided methodological rigor in the form of documenting human experiences throughout a real-world program. Such a posture provided ample opportunities to make recommendations for future trauma-informed professional learning efforts, an area that has been underexamined, particularly in music education.

Unique Case Orientation & Inductive Analysis. In the context of a teacher study group about trauma-informed practices, I explored complexities involving music teachers' sense of

agency and experiences during professional development. This analytic strategy contributed to richness and depth in describing participant experiences throughout the online teacher study group. Since inductive reasoning involves open-ended observations to discern patterns in the phenomena under investigation (Patton, 2014), an instrumental case study can be effective in evaluating processes and programs. This approach can be valuable when the program is personalized, as personalization requires an evaluation that recognizes and documents the varying experiences and individual differences among participants or program environments. No matter the focus of the analysis, a case study strives to provide a thorough and contextual understanding of the subject being studied (Patton, 2014), in this case teachers' experiences in the online teacher study group.

Holistic Perspective. A holistic approach to inquiry acknowledges the notion of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts (Patton, 2014). This gestalt-informed (Perls, 1973) perspective imbued the intent behind my study. I employed a process-oriented approach that aimed to holistically examine the "whole" and the "parts" in the present inquiry. Rather than find an answer about what worked best, I centered the nature of teacher experiences and expressions of agency in a professional development. By viewing teachers as agentic actors within a social context (the online teacher study group) and prioritizing an iterative approach to deductive and inductive analysis, I engaged holistic perspectives while documenting patterns across human behaviors, expressions, and experiences.

Defining the Case

Since the purpose of this study was to explore elementary music teachers' views on trauma-informed music education and their sense of agency in applying these approaches within their specific classroom contexts, I established a site of professional learning for elementary

music teachers in the form of an online teacher study group, which I position as a real-world context for teachers. Given the focus of previous research on intensive, short- and long-term face-to-face programs related to trauma-informed education (Gherardi & Stoner, 2024), I intentionally chose to explore an asynchronous, online format that may be more feasible for teachers and group facilitators alike. Therefore, I defined the teacher study group and its participants as a singular, holistic case. While prioritizing an iterative, process-oriented approach (Maxwell, 2013), I a) explored the phenomenon of participants' experiences, and b) examined participants' sense of agency in applying these approaches to their teaching contexts. Such an approach compliments prior efforts to evaluate initiatives and programs while simultaneously capturing the rich, detailed, and nuanced nature of individual experiences, perspectives, and expressions of agency.

Procedures

This instrumental case study involved several processes and procedures. In this section, I provide an in-depth explanation of procedural details related to sampling, recruitment, curating study group materials, data collection, analysis, trustworthiness, and limitations.

Approach to Sampling

Elementary general music teachers are particularly well-suited to witness the long-lasting impacts of trauma and trauma-informed practices in schools because they often teach whole student cohorts over multiple years (McEvoy & Salvador, 2020). Throughout the PK-5 years, students experience formative growth and development. Therefore, I sought elementary music teachers as participants in this study. To explore the phenomenon of music teachers' experiences and indicators of agency in the context of professional learning about trauma-informed

approaches, I used a combination of purposeful criterion sampling and convenience sampling to identify participants that would contribute to an information-rich site for inquiry (Patton, 2014).

Purposeful criterion sampling yielded a rich tapestry of pragmatic perspectives regarding trauma-informed approaches in music teaching and learning. Specifically, using contact information from a previous survey study on trauma-informed approaches, I invited 40 elementary general music teachers in Maryland and Virginia to be a part of the present study. Previous research has focused on Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia and Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland which are two large, diverse, and growing school districts that represent national trends (Frankenberg et al., 2023). The 40 teachers I contacted had previously elected to receive future information about trauma-informed music education by providing their email address in an optional, open-response item in a previous survey. Based on the sampling procedures from the earlier study, the teachers in Maryland and Virginia (including Fairfax and Montgomery counties) taught at elementary schools with at least two consecutive pK-5 grade bands.

In addition to purposeful criterion sampling, I used convenience sampling to identify potential participants within the population I sought to study. After a separate professional development workshop that I facilitated in November 2024, I spoke informally with Maryland elementary music teachers about my dissertation work. Of those who attended the workshop, five additional teachers indicated interest in learning more about my project and provided their contact information. In total, I identified 45 teachers as potential participants.

Recruitment

After obtaining IRB exempt status on November 14, 2024 (see Appendix B for IRB-related documentation), I began the formal recruitment process for this study. Using the list of 45

emails described in my sampling approach, I sent a recruitment email to 45 general music teachers. I sent the initial invitation email on November 15, 2024 and a reminder email on November 22, 2024. Enrollment for the teacher study group closed November 22, 2024. Of the 45 teachers I sent the invitation to, two had undeliverable email addresses.

In the initial recruitment email (see Appendix C), I provided a link to an interest form (see Appendix D) via Qualtrics for teachers to indicate their interest in joining the teacher study group. Of the teachers who received a study invitation, 12 teachers completed the initial interest form via Qualtrics. In the form, I asked teachers for personal contact information, including their preferred name, pronouns, email address, and phone number. I asked about related to their teaching context, including the name & location of their current elementary school(s), what area(s) the were teaching in for the 2024-25 school year (e.g., general music, instrumental music, choir, and/or another area at the elementary level), and how long they had been teaching at their current school(s) as well as how long they had been teaching overall. Additionally, I asked teachers I they would be interested in attending optional Zoom meeting discussions and invited them to share their current definition of trauma-informed practices in an open-ended response item.

Finally, teachers who completed the interest form in Qualtrics received an email invitation to the teacher study group via Google Classroom, which included an assignment to read, sign, and upload the research study consent form approved by the University of Maryland IRB (see Appendix B). In total, five elementary music teachers consented to being a part of the online study group on trauma-informed approaches and persisted through the course.

Participants

While the essence of this study included the broader, case-level phenomenon of participant experiences in the teacher study group, an overview of participant identities/demographics is essential to forming a detailed understanding of participants' overall experiences. Next, both in Table 3.1 and in prose, I briefly describe selected information about each study participant.

Table 3.1

Participant sketches: pseudonyms and self-described demographics

Participant Pseudonym & Pronouns*	***Self-Described Gender****	***Self-Described Race/ Ethnicity****	***Primary Instrument****	***Age in Years***	***Total Years of Teaching Experience***	***State***	***School Locale(s) (number of students)***
Claire *She/her*	*Female*	*Asian*	*Piano and cello*	*42*	*3*	*MD*	Suburban-Large (350+) Suburban-Large (550+)
Eddie *he/him/his*	*M*	*White*	*Trumpet*	*55*	*6*	*VA*	Suburban-Large (700+)
Elizabeth *she/her*	*female*	*white*	*Oboe*	*33*	*11*	*MD*	*Suburban-Small (400+)*
Richard *He*	*Male*	*Black*	*Trumpet*	*40*	*16*	*VA*	Suburban-Large (800+)
Carrie *She/her*	*female*	*white*	*Flute/Voice*	*46*	*23*	*VA*	Suburban-Large (450+)

* = category is reported using participants' *in vivo* response via open-ended survey response

I used a combination of questionnaire items to gather descriptive information about each of the five participants in this study. At the time that I collected this information, all five participants taught at schools classified as either suburban-large or suburban-small according to the database provided by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Claire and Elizabeth taught in Maryland while Richard, Carrie, and Eddie taught in Virginia. Including the 2024-25 school year, participants represented a combined 59 years of teaching experience. Participants ranged from 33 to 55 years old with a median age of 42. In terms of self-reported

race/ethnicity, two participants identified as Asian and Black, respectively, and three identified as W/white. The three female-identifying participants identified their primary instrument(s) as piano/cello, oboe, and flute/voice, respectively, while both male-identifying participants played trumpet. Such individual information adds additional nuance to the overall portrait of the group experience, which represents an array of individual aspirations, perspectives, and experiences.

Online Teacher Study Group: Structure & Materials

To support a holistic approach to data generation and analysis within the online teacher study group, I intentionally established flexible structures within the teacher study group to support individual and collective experiences. For instance, participants engaged with readings, resources, journal reflection questions, and online discussion boards via Google Classroom where they could connect with other participants. Additionally, participants had the option to attend Zoom meetings to further discuss group content and make connections with colleagues. By providing simultaneous guidance and flexibility in each facet of the study group, I facilitated spaces for teachers to engage with course content through expected, predictable routines, which contributed to the potential for participants to experience safety and security throughout their professional development experience. These strategies allowed me to center participant needs and experiences while providing structure/safety, all of which are necessary components of both trauma-informed practices and ecological approaches to teacher agency. Finally, in addition to eight modules structured with readings and materials, participants were invited to contribute to co-constructed group norms (see Chapter 4).

Modules & Materials. As the facilitator and researcher for this online teacher study group, I compiled and organized materials for the course around the six principles of trauma-informed approaches as identified by the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services

Administration (SAMHSA, 2014). I grouped the course materials in two categories: multimedia content oriented toward reading/listening and prompts to facilitate writing/reflecting. To curate the reading/listening materials, I used my knowledge and expertise surrounding the available literature on trauma-informed practices. Mindful of the copyright law regarding fair use (17 U.S.C. § 107), I gathered written resources including peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, and open-access audio/video materials, including videos published on YouTube and podcasts hosted on popular streaming platforms. This multimedia approach provided multiple points of access for participants to engage with course concepts, including the six principles of trauma-informed approaches (SAMHSA, 2014). Table 3.2 shows an overview of course topics, essential questions, materials, and corresponding connections to SAMHSA (2014) principles, which guided my selection of materials and generation of reflection questions. The SAMHSA principles of trauma-informed practices are an appropriate and necessary foundation due to their broad, yet specific recommendations grounded in empirical work by leading trauma researchers and leaders in the National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC). Further, supported by my immersion in trauma-informed materials and my position as a music educator and music teacher educator, the modules outlined in Table 3.2 were designed to teach participants about the SAMHSA principles while teaching participants through the SAMHSA principles. A comprehensive list of the discussion questions and reflection prompts I used in the study group can be found in Appendix E.

Table 3.2

Overview of the Timeline, Materials, and Assignments in the Online Teacher Study Group

Modules, Dates, & Topics	***Essential Questions***	***Course Materials & Assignments***	***SAMHSA Principle***
Modules 1 & 2 *(Nov 24-Dec 7)* Group Introductions & Orientation to Google Classroom; Terms & Definitions	*What can I expect during this teacher study group?*	*Reading/Listening* - *Access Google Classroom* - *Research Study Consent Form* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Survey 1* - *Discussion 1: Introductions* - *Reflection 1: Welcome*	*N/A – Group onboarding & introductions*
	What is trauma? *What are trauma-informed practices?* *Why are they important to consider?*	*Reading/Listening* - Video*: What is Trauma?* [00:00-07:48] - Chapter: *The Body Keeps the Score* (pp. 80-88) - *Infographic: SAMHSA Principles* - *Video: SAMHSA Principles [00:00-17:10]* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Discussion 2: Group Norms* - *Reflection 2: Safety*	*Safety*
Module 3 *(Dec 8-14)* History & Context	*What is trauma-informed education and how did it develop?*	*Reading/Listening* - Chapter*: Developing a Trauma-Informed Care Classroom* (pp. 21-41) - *Excerpts: SAMHSA Principle* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Discussion 3: Supporting Teachers & Students* - *Reflection 3: Trustworthiness & Transparency*	*Trustworthiness & Transparency*
Module 4 *(Dec 15-21)* Overview of Trauma-Informed Music Education	*Why is trauma-informed education important in music teaching & learning?*	*Reading/Listening* - *Excerpts: SAMHSA Principle* - *Chapter: Trauma as a Compassionate Lens (pp. 384-394)* - *Podcast:* Trauma-Informed Music Education *[00:00-58:27]* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Discussion 4: Check-in* - *Reflection 4: Peer Support* - *Survey 2*	*Peer Support*
Winter Break (Dec 22-Jan 4) *No new material posted or due. Enjoy your winter break!* *Optional: Review readings, resources, discussion posts, and/or reflections.*			
Module 5 *(Jan 5-11)* Connections to Educational Approaches	*How might trauma-informed education intersect with other asset-based approaches in education?*	*Reading/Listening* - *Excerpts: SAMHSA Principle* - *Video:* Equity-Centered Trauma-Informed Education *[01:19-52:46]* - *Blog Entry: Unconditional Learning* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Discussion 5: Opportunities & Challenges* - *Reflection 5: Collaboration & Mutuality*	*Collaboration & Mutuality*
Module 6 *(Jan 12-18)* Connections Within Music Education	*Within music education specifically, how might trauma-informed education intersect with other asset-based approaches?*	*Reading/Listening* - *Excerpts: SAMHSA Principle* - *Article: Asset-Based Pedagogies in Music Education*	*Empowerment, Voice, & Choice*

Modules, Dates, & Topics	***Essential Questions***	***Course Materials & Assignments***	***SAMHSA Principle***
		- *Choice: Blog Entry, Previous Assignment, or Social Media Saves* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Discussion 6: Strategies* - *Reflection 6: Empowerment, Voice, & Choice*	
Module 7 *(Jan 19-25)* Looking Ahead	*What might it look/sound/feel like to move forward after our teacher study group?*	*Reading/Listening* - *Excerpts: SAMHSA Principle* - *Chapter:* Troublemakers *(pp. 171-181)* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Discussion 7: Suggestions for Resources* - *Reflection 7: Cultural, Historical, & Gender Issues*	*Cultural, Historical, & Gender Issues*
Module 8 *(Jan 26-Feb 1)* Group-Generated Resources	*What trauma-informed resources resonate with our group?*	*Reading/Listening* - *Choice: 1-2 Resources from Discussion 7* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Discussion 8: Final Questions* - *Reflection 8: Course Experiences* - *Survey 3*	*N/A - Closing*

Data Collection

Data collection involved three techniques (see Table 3.3). To generate data, I drew from a) participants' weekly reflection journals, which were submitted privately via Google Classroom), b) group discussions, including written content from online discussion boards and transcripts of an optional discussion hosted via Zoom, and c) a survey instrument measuring elements of the iterative, practical-evaluative, and projective domains of teachers' self-reported agency. In this procedural description, I group my explanations by approach to data collection.

Table 3.3

Overview of Data Types

Data Type	***Description***	***Participant Engagement***
Participant Journals	Weekly, individual reflection prompts. Participants had the option to respond via writing, audio recording, and/or video recording.	All participants chose to respond in writing via Google Classroom.
Participant Discussions	Weekly, group discussion board prompts. Participants had the option to upload images, videos, and/or audio recordings. Participants could also paste links and other resources.	All participants chose to respond by creating a new post and/or replying to a post. To accompany their written posts, a few participants shared images, links, or other resources.

Surveys 1, 2, & 3	16-item Trauma-Informed Agency Measure for Teachers (repeated measures) plus additional open response items, including demographic questions & definitions of trauma-informed practices.	Except for one participant who did not submit Survey 2, all participants completed each of the surveys and survey items.

Participant Journals: Weekly Reflection Questions

I invited members of the teacher study group to respond to weekly reflection questions. Participants had the opportunity to respond to the reflection questions by recording videos, audio clips, and/or written responses, submitted via Google Classroom. Participants chose to respond in writing for the entirety of the course. Over the course of the eight modules, I designed the reflection questions to:

1) Establish and maintain a sense of routine for participants in the teacher study group.
2) Prompt participants to engage with the notion of applying concepts to their particular school settings and work with students (practical-evaluative & projective domains of the ecological framework of teacher agency).
3) Explicitly address SAMHSA's (2014) core principles of trauma-informed approaches.

Appendix E provides a complete outline of the module contents, essential questions, course assignments, discussion questions, and reflection questions. As group facilitator, I used my own personal reflection responses as space to write reflexive memos to guide my analysis.

Participant Discussions: Discussion Boards & Group Conversations

To capture the nature of discussions among group participants, I generated transcripts of online discussion group conversations. In the online teacher study group, I borrowed from approaches to digital ethnography (Murthy, 2008) by participating in group discussion boards and writing reflexive memos before and/or after each interaction with the online participants.

Although participation in the group discussion boards was not mandatory for participants, this method of communication was made available and highly encouraged. Additionally, I hosted one optional Zoom meeting based on participants' interest and availability in order to facilitate further connections and conversations among group participants.

Teacher Agency Measure

As a point of triangulation, I used a teacher agency measure to support findings regarding the three temporal dimensions of teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015): iterational (past), projective (future), and practical-evaluative (present). Since agency is a latent or unobservable construct that cannot be measured directly, researchers have used quantitative tools to measure indicators of teacher agency. Using the ecological model of teacher agency as a framework, Leijen et al. (2024) developed a 24-item survey to measure teacher agency among pre-service and in-service teachers. This measure is different from similar scales pertaining to teacher agency in that it specifically differentiates between short-term and long-term aspirations in the projective dimension. The researchers used confirmatory factor analysis to assess the measure's psychometric properties and, ultimately, validate the measure. However, as the authors of the measure stated, "[a]gency is a highly idiosyncratic and context-specific phenomenon (Archer, 2000), and a structured questionnaire can only capture some general tendencies related to agency. For a more in-depth approach, mixed-methods and qualitative studies are more appropriate" (Leijen et al., 2024, p. 6). Therefore, given the aims of the present inquiry and the limitations of the agency measure, I adapted the measure to serve as a point of triangulation in my study by quantitatively measuring indicators of agency among the teachers in the PD study group. Next, I provide an overview of my adaptation process followed by a summary of the survey results using repeated measures.

To reduce response burden and make the questionnaire as relevant as possible to this PD study group experience, I selected 16 items from the original survey to adapt and include in my measure, which I have named the *Trauma-Informed Agency Scale for Teachers* (TIAST) for the purpose of this document. As a point of consistency between the TIAST and the original measure, I maintained the seven-point Likert-type scale in the TIAST. I also kept the language parallel whenever possible. Table 3.4 displays sample items from each dimension in the TIAST, the complete version of which can be found in Appendix F. As displayed in Table 3.4, TIAST items prompted respondents to reflect upon the past week of teaching and indicate to what extent the various items influenced their decision-making about trauma-informed practices in their school setting.

Table 3.4

TIAST Sample Items (adapted from Leijen et al.'s 2024 teacher agency measure)

Dimension of Teacher Agency *(Priestley et al., 2015)*		***Sample Item***
Iterational *(Past)*		*During the past week, when I have considered implementing trauma-informed approaches in my work with students, I have been influenced by* ***my confidence toward implementing trauma-informed approaches.***
Projective *(Future)*	Short-term	*During the past week, when I have considered implementing trauma-informed approaches in my work with students, I have been influenced by* ***short-term goals related to learners' acquisition of content knowledge.***
	Long-term	*During the past week, when I have considered implementing trauma-informed approaches in my work with students, I have been influenced* ***by long-term goals related to learners' acquisition of content knowledge.***
Practical-Evaluative *(Present)*		*During the past week, when I have considered implementing trauma-informed approaches in my work with students, I have been influenced by* ***my school's physical teaching environment (e.g., school building, classroom setup, physical materials/supplies).***

Before distributing the TIAST to study participants, I pilot-tested the TIAST among five music education graduate students at my institution. TIAST pilot testing took place between October

29th and October 31st of 2024 with an average response time of 6 min 54 s, with a median response time of 4 min 18 s. Given this information, I determined this survey would likely take participants 5-10 minutes to complete. This seemed like a reasonable amount of time for a repeated measure, which I included in the study group modules as an assignment in Module 1, Module 4, and Module 8 of the study group. *These three, pre-determined points were intentional. Survey 1 took place after participants signed their consent forms but before they participated in any module-related content. Survey 2 took place approximately 4 weeks later at the close of Module 4, around the time of winter break. Finally, Survey 3 took place at the very end of the course as the final item in Module 8.*

Facilitator/Researcher Role

Throughout the teacher study group, I embraced my role as a researcher and group facilitator. I engaged in reflexive memoing before and/or after each interaction with the teacher study group. Each participant interacted with 8 meeting modules. The modules included readings and resources for assignments, reflection questions, and discussion boards, which were housed in a private electronic learning management system (i.e., Google Classroom). Participants worked through each of the 8 self-paced modules from November 26, 2024 – February 1, 2025. I also hosted two optional Zoom meetings to connect with participants and discuss group materials.

Descriptive Summary

I recruited five elementary general music educators to participate in the asynchronous, online teacher study group focused on trauma-informed approaches in music teaching & learning. The study group consisted of eight self-paced modules hosted via Google Classroom. The modules opened in late November (2024) and closed in early February (2025). I encouraged participants to take two weeks off over winter break (between modules 4 & 5) by not assigning

any new readings or assignments. However, I left the modules open in case participants wanted or needed to access them. To support data generation and trustworthiness, I built in three surveys to the course (in modules 1, 4, and 8). Through the surveys, I gathered descriptive data about participants' identities, asked about their definitions of trauma-informed approaches, provided extra space to reflect in writing, and distributed repeated measures of an agency scale. Finally, to encourage connection among participants and provide additional opportunities to process course content, I hosted an optional group discussion via Zoom in January 2025 (during Module 5). Three participants were available to attend the group Zoom discussion midway through the course.

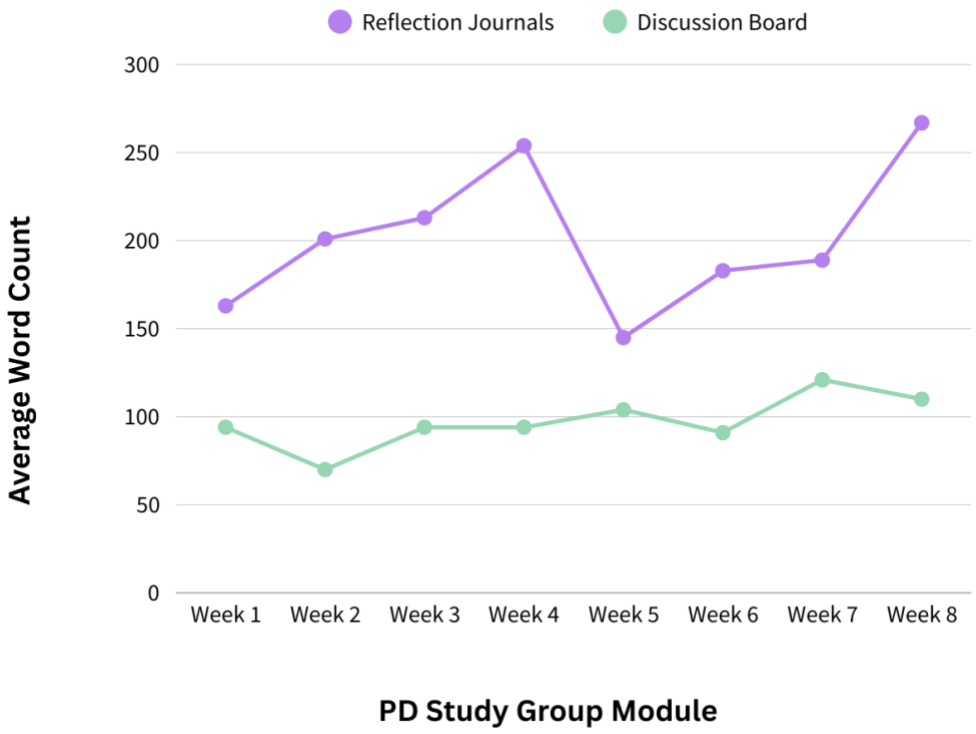
Descriptive data about participant interactions with course content provide additional insight and context to this inquiry. Similar to the Zoom meeting, the discussion board and reflection journals were conversational spaces in an online format. I often dialogued with participants via public (Padlet & Google Classroom) or private (Google Classroom) comments, and participants could also dialogue with one another. Four of the five participants regularly submitted individual reflection journals via Google classroom. All five participants completed each of the three surveys, regularly participated in the group discussion board via Padlet, and regularly accessed course materials.

The group Zoom discussion was 40 min 13 s in duration and generated a transcript with 4,998 words. On the Padlet discussion board, participants contributed 2,906 words over a total of 33 individual posts, including discussion prompts. 10 of the 33 posts included a link, image, GIF, video, or other multi-media resource that extended beyond text. In their written reflections, participants averaged a total of 1,620 words per course module for a combined total of 6,482 words. Figure 3.1 displays the average word counts in the individual journal responses and

discussion posts by study group module. On average, each participant took 4 min 14 s to complete each of the three surveys. In the open response survey items, teachers wrote an average of 70 words.

Figure 3.1

Average word counts in participants' weekly reflection journals & discussion posts



Although a detailed account of individual participant experiences is not the focus of this instrumental case study, a general sketch of individual participant characteristics supports an enriched and contextualized interpretation of these data. As displayed in Table 3.1, participants varied across several characteristics, including age, race/ethnicity, primary instrument, number of years at their current school, and years of teaching experience. At the time of data collection (2024-25 school year), participants were each presently teaching in at least one school in

Maryland or Virginia. All the participants' schools were classified as suburban by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2024).

Definitions of trauma-informed practices. Next, I share participants' initial definitions of trauma-informed practices as submitted in an open response item as part of Survey 1. With the intent to paint a more holistic portrait of teachers' experiences in the study group, these definitions (see Table 3.5) can inform our understanding of participants' prior knowledge, viewpoints, and understanding of trauma-informed practices prior to the first course module.

Table 3.5

Participants' initial definitions of trauma-informed practices from the interest survey (Nov 2024)

Participant Pseudonym	Initial Definition of Trauma-Informed Practices from Interest Survey (Nov 2024)
Claire	Trauma-informed practices involve creating a safe, supportive, and understanding environment that acknowledges the impact of trauma on individuals' behavior, emotions, and learning. It's about approaching people with compassion and an awareness that their actions may be shaped by past experiences. This means being sensitive to their needs, avoiding triggers, and building trust while fostering resilience. In practice, it involves clear communication, predictable routines, and opportunities for choice and control, which help individuals feel secure. It also requires self-awareness as an educator, ensuring that my responses are thoughtful, patient, and empathetic. Ultimately, it's about focusing on relationships, empowerment, and healing, so everyone feels seen, heard, and valued.
Eddie	An approach to my craft that is sensitive to students I teach with known or unknown traumatic experiences in their background. Being mindful at all times of the signs of trauma and doing my best to create a safe, welcoming environment for every student.
Elizabeth	I believe trauma-informed practices are based on understanding your students and their home environment. Students are a product of their home environment and being aware of those situations will help us understand how to handle various situations. I can modify my approaches to behavior disruptions, extreme emotions, and [dysregulation] by knowing my students, building relationships with them, and helping them process information by moving them through the brain states to learn skills they have not yet built.
Richard	Being thoughtful, considerate and sensitive of how instructional practices may impact students who have experienced trauma. Or how practices can actually be traumatic for others.
Carrie	Teaching and interacting with people from trauma with an informed knowledge of common behaviors and responses that those coming from trauma exhibit.

Since both granular details and overarching narratives are critical to an instrumental case study, in this chapter I intentionally introduce readers to individual participants followed by a pivot to reporting on themes across modules and study participants to provide a more holistic portrait of participants' experiences.

Group norms. One of the first group discussion boards prompted participants to co-create group discussion norms. To provide structure and guidance, I began by suggesting two examples of norms. Participants commented and replied, both in response to me and to one another, to establish the following norms, which served as pillars for our interactions in the study group:

- Engage with curiosity rather than judgment.
- Assume positive intent.
- Be open to growing through new strategies.
- We grow by sharing diverse perspectives and learning from each other's lived experiences.

Norms provided additional guidance for group conversations. Throughout the course, participants continued to share a wide range of perspectives, opinions, and personal anecdotes.

Analysis

In the current study, I explored elementary general music teachers' views on trauma-informed music approaches while engaged in a professional development experience centered around trauma-informed practices. Further, I sought to examine elementary music teachers' sense of agency in applying trauma-informed approaches in their work with students. To examine teachers' experiences throughout the online professional development experience, I

used several analytic approaches and tools, all of which are described in the following narrative. I also describe facets related to trustworthiness and study limitations.

First and foremost, I approached the analytic process iteratively. Each component of the study—including, but not limited to, curating module materials, developing discussion board questions, generating transcripts, engaging in coding processes, and identifying categories and themes—involved multiple passes where I organized and reorganized, shaped and reshaped information. Such approaches allowed me to center nuances among participants' individual experiences and identities while simultaneously focusing on the larger phenomenon of teacher experiences throughout the teacher study group. Using qualitative data analysis software (MAXQDA), I coded my individual participant reflections, transcripts of group conversations, and online discussion board conversations using constant comparison, being sure to label *in vivo* themes whenever possible (Saldaña, 2021). Throughout the coding process, I used analytic memos (Saldaña, 2021) to document my reflections about emergent patterns, categories, and themes. Just as teachers may iteratively navigate professional development content and its real-world applications in classroom practice, I prioritized cyclical processes while making meaning of these data.

I intentionally embedded the SAMHSA (2014) principles of trauma-informed practice and dimensions of ecological teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015) in my analytic process. While RQ1 focused on the nature of participants' experiences in the study group, RQ2 paid specific attention to the presence of SAMHSA (2014) principles in the course materials and reflection questions. RQ3 acknowledged the underlying nature of the ecological teacher agency framework (Priestley et al., 2015) in this study, while RQ4 focused specifically on participants' recommendations for future iterations of the course. Table 3.6 displays a data analysis matrix,

which describes the data sources, corresponding items, and analytic approaches I used in conjunction with each research question.

Table 3.6

Data Analysis Matrix

Research Questions (RQs)	Data Types	Items Analyzed	Analyses & Approaches
RQ1: What is the nature of participants' engagement with an online teacher study group focused on trauma-informed approaches?	Group Discussion Posts & Meeting Transcripts Individual Reflections & Questionnaire Responses	Descriptive items related to participant engagement (e.g., word counts, assignments completed, average response lengths, format of individual and group responses)	Measures of central tendency; descriptive coding.
RQ2: How do participants' individual and group responses align with or diverge from the principles of trauma-informed approaches as outlined by SAMHSA (2014)?	Group Discussion Posts & Meeting Transcripts Individual Reflections & Questionnaire Responses	Items that do and do not explicitly prompt participants to reflect on the SAMHSA principles, including participant responses to reflection questions, open ended questionnaire items, and discussion board conversations.	Iterative approach to deductive & inductive coding; SAMHSA (2014) principles of a trauma-informed approach as an *a priori* framework: ○ Safety ○ Trustworthiness & Transparency ○ Peer Support ○ Collaboration & Mutuality ○ Empowerment, Voice & Choice ○ Cultural, Historical & Gender Issues
RQ3: To what extent are the three temporal dimensions of teacher agency evident in participants' written reflections and survey responses?	Group Discussion Posts & Meeting Transcripts Individual Reflections & Questionnaire Responses	As participants were not introduced to these dimensions as part of the study, the ecological dimensions of teacher agency remain a latent framework used in data generation, analysis, and interpretation. Therefore, all participant responses & reflections are suitable for this analysis.	Iterative approach to deductive & inductive coding; Priestley et al.'s (2015) dimensions of an ecological approach to teacher agency as an *a priori* framework: ○ Iterational ○ Practical-evaluative ○ Projective ▪ Short-term ▪ Long-term
	Teacher Agency Measure (adapted from measure validated by Leijen et al., 2024)	16-item survey measuring teacher agency across three temporal domains	Measures of central tendency; repeated measures; points of triangulation with qualitative data

RQ4: Based on their experiences in the teacher study group, what recommendations do participants believe should inform future iterations of trauma-informed professional development?	Group Discussion Posts & Meeting Transcripts Individual Reflections & Questionnaire Responses	Reflection questions & discussion prompts related to participant recommendations for trauma-informed professional development efforts	Inductive coding; *in vivo* when possible

Trustworthiness

In this inquiry, I incorporated several techniques to ensure trustworthiness (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Stahl & King, 2020). For example, participants could edit their responses at any time throughout the duration of the study group. I also asked follow-up questions as I made meaning of their written responses, noted patterns in responses over time, and analyzed quotes in context. Additionally, my prolonged engagement in the field as group facilitator and researcher in the online teacher study group and reflexive memoing before, during, and/or after interactions with the teacher study groups enriched the quality of my observations and analysis.

To address RQ1, I employed an inductive approach that involved a combination of process coding, emotion coding, and open coding (Saldaña, 2021), using *in vivo* codes when possible. To analyze RQ2, I focused on a deductive approach that used SAMHSA's (2014) six principles of trauma-informed approaches as an *a priori* framework. Similarly, for RQ3, I used the three temporal domains of Priestly et al.'s (2015) model of teacher agency as an *a priori* lens through which to interpret these data. Finally, in RQ4, I returned to an inductive approach to capture participants' recommendations for future trauma-informed professional development efforts.

Finally, related to both validity and trustworthiness, the quantitative data collected through the teacher agency measure served as a point of triangulation for qualitative data related

to dimensions of teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015). As teacher agency is often measured through quantitative scales, this was an important consideration. Therefore, I decided to use repeated measures at pre-determined points in the course to administer the teacher agency measure, which was presented to participants in the form of a survey link in Modules 1, 4, and 8 (see Table 3.2). Further, this measure was adapted from Leijen et al.'s (2024) previously validated measure (via confirmatory factor analysis: "$\chi 2 = 587.709$, $df = 224$, $\chi 2/df = 2.62$, RMSEA = 0.068, CFI = 0.985, TLI = 0.981, and SRMR = 0.042," p. 4), which added additional rigor to this inquiry.

Limitations

Since this study focused on the experiences of and sense of agency among teachers throughout their participation in trauma-informed teacher study groups, I asked participants to reflect and report on their experiences. As a result, participant responses may or may not have been congruent with the lived experiences of students, teachers, families, administrators, and/or community members connected to participants' schools. However, as teacher perceptions and self-reported experiences are a critical component of enacting change in school experiences, this limitation serves to bolster understanding of trauma-informed approaches among elementary music teachers in the field.

This study is significantly limited by the notion that teachers who had the availability and time in their schedules, interest, and emotional/mental capacity to participate in several weeks of intensive study of trauma-informed practices in music education. The teachers in this study are teachers who opted-in to an extra commitment in which they received no monetary compensation for their time and/or energy. In terms of sampling, the geographic bounding (the states of Maryland and Virginia), school type (public), and teacher profiles (elementary general

music teachers) can also be viewed as limitations to this study. All five participants also worked in schools designated as suburban. However, given the dearth of empirical literature on the topic of trauma-informed music education, the lack of holistic evaluation of trauma-informed professional development efforts in education, and the need for granular teacher-level data, these limitations are also strengths. This study allowed for deeper understanding into a place-based case, which may illuminate contextual and/or community needs that could apply to other, similar contexts.

Researcher Positionality

As the facilitator of interpretation and analysis in this study, it is an **ethical** consideration for me to externalize selected components of my positionality and researcher lens. In the context of this study, I choose to share that I am a survivor of *complex trauma* (see Appendix A), largely due to prolonged periods of abuse that I endured throughout my childhood and adolescence. Despite the abusive persons and traumatic experiences in my life, I was a high-achieving, conventionally "responsible" student. I share this detail not for accolades or narratives of "overcoming hardship," but rather to shine light upon the pervasive, insidious, and breathtakingly incomprehensible ways in which trauma can impact an individual, potentially without others noticing the trauma and/or, instead, praising the high-achieving individual for their quiet compliance. School was my safe place; a place where I could (sub)consciously detach/disassociate from the realities of my abuse out of survival. Since then, I have spent most of my adult life in therapy, where I've worked consistently to reintegrate my traumatic past into a more empowered present as I pursue a more regulated and grounded future.

Although I identify as a survivor of trauma and abuse, I simultaneously hold multiple privileged identities. These traumas and privileges are inextricably intertwined. Similarly, I

understand that my experiences do not necessarily reflect others' experiences. Trauma—like many other areas of life—is multifaceted, complex, and deeply related to individual experiences and interactions with social contexts. I believe that we, as researchers, choose to investigate topics that mirror our interests, lived experiences, and/or identities. As I enter scholarly spaces surrounding trauma-informed ways of knowing and being, I acknowledge the complexity of my presence, particularly considering my personal experiences and multifaceted identities as: a music teacher, researcher, friend, colleague, and auntie; a U.S. citizen, white woman, PhD candidate, English speaker, and former elementary music teacher; a survivor of trauma whose cultural, academic, and social capital affords opportunities to access supports that support my health and healing. My privileges do not ameliorate my hardships, and my struggles do not weaken my accomplishments. Rather, I hold each and all in dynamic tension and reflective of a non-judgmental orientation (e.g., Brown, 2016; Patton, 2014), supporting my desire to engage with perspectives, opinions, and positionalities that diverge from my own.

My experiences as a PK-5 general music and beginning instrumental music educator also inform my positionality as it relates to this study. Throughout my eight years of teaching in one school community, I witnessed students become dysregulated and often struggled to regulate my own nervous system so that I could help to regulate them. I experienced student behaviors, including physical and emotional outbursts, that may have been rooted in trauma. I worked daily to not take student behaviors personally while also maintaining a sense of empathetic presence. I watched my colleagues and students roll their eyes when it was schoolwide "mindfulness time" and I, admittedly, rolled my eyes right along with them. I practiced hiding and evacuating the building with students in case an "unsafe adult" chose to enter our school building. I barricaded doors and endured police-facilitated trainings while caring for friends/colleagues; years later, I

fought back tears mid-Kindergarten-music-activity when a slamming metal door in the hallway reminded me of the gunshots from that one ALICE training where I was "just" a teacher. Today, my TikTok and Instagram feeds seem to be as occupied by news about the most recent school shooting(s) as they are baking tutorials and ice bucket challenges. Much has changed since I first became a teacher (e.g., the presence of COVID-19 and its impacts, for example…), but violence and trauma have undeniably persisted.

While writing a dissertation about trauma-informed practices, I realize that I could easily use this very space to self-indulge and process my own traumas; I would also be remiss to brush over the fact that I will likely benefit from writing this very document. As an alternative, I actively name and recognize my efforts to decenter my personal experiences with trauma while simultaneously centering the importance of trauma-informed music education. However, it is impossible to fully bracket my lived experiences and perspectives from this study. In fact, writing about this topic may very well lead to—or develop out of—my own processing. Therefore, I take great care to practice reflexivity (e.g., memoing, note-taking, and other reflective practices) throughout the present research to understand empirical nuances more holistically. I actively acknowledge and position my personal assumptions, dispositions, and expectations. It is a privilege to be afforded the space, time, energy, and support to explore scholarship related to my interests and others' work. My goal in this academic endeavor is to contribute to an empirical foundation for trauma-informed practices that may support spaces where future music education researchers, teachers, and students can flourish, thrive, experience safety, and mindfully move through direct and secondary stressors at school, during school, and/or because of school.

Chapter 4: Findings

Richard: *We need to handle discipline from a trauma-informed approach…what are some things that have nothing to do with a student's behavior? …I mean, in the article, the lady left the kids in the room by themselves, you know…she was trying to help out a student, but like…what are we teaching? What are the kids learning from that experience? Everyone walked away from that learning something or taking away something… How are we narrating all of the things that are happening in the class? I know in Module 6 they say like how specifically we might intersect with music…but is that just still like responding to problems? Or things that we don't have enough bandwidth—or we don't want to use our bandwidth—to respond to? […]*

Eddie: *I don't think that there is a way to prepare us for what teaching really is like…in a school setting. I think they can give us a set of tools and a set of strategies, and then WE have to have a passion for what we want to do. And then you find a group of people who act on that passion. And it's pretty obvious that we've got a little nuclear group here who fits that bill. I don't think we need to feel bad about what we're doing, I don't think everything depends on us…but I think just a little bit of care and compassion that the students can pick up on…we do so much good. […]*

Elizabeth: *Kind of bouncing off what you just said, Eddie I think that as musicians and, like, as artsy people, we are naturally like social creatures…as educators, we want to get to know our students, and we want to talk to them and have them tell us [their] stories. And I think that the other benefit for music… [is] that we see our students for multiple years […]*

I think that that's a special and unique tool that we have that's different from the general ed teachers…there's a lot of life changes that go on with that, but I think that's also a strength for [music teachers] in that we have…more time to get to know them because it's over years, rather than just seeing them all day, every day for a year.

Richard: *…I feel like when you hear about trauma-informed practices, it's typically presented in a way that it's supposed to assist you with discipline [chuckles], you know? It's, it's more like…it's like...[pauses while holding breath; exhales with a sigh]*

Elizabeth: *…it's almost like it's more reactionary than it is proactive.*

Richard: *Yeah, or something you should just DO, yeah. Um…[long pause]…yeah, yeah.*

Elizabeth: *I'm gonna tag-team off of that…because we're all elementary people, I think that we teach a lot of those skills…we just use music to do it, you know? We're doing circle games, we're doing partner activities, we're sharing instruments […] so it's almost like our curriculum allows us to be proactive, even though it doesn't always necessarily look like we're being proactive. But I think they talked about that, too, in the course: proactively teaching ideas and concepts so that when the kiddos are going through something…it's not always a reactive thing because you can pull back from what they already know or what you've already built within them.*

- PD Study Group Zoom Discussion, January 2025

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine elementary general music teachers' views on trauma-informed music approaches while engaged in a professional development experience centered around trauma-informed practices. Further, I sought to examine elementary music teachers' sense of agency in applying trauma-informed approaches in their teaching praxis. To examine music teachers' perspectives about trauma-informed education, I investigated teachers' behaviors, stated beliefs, and responses to surveys and reflective prompts in an online study group focused on trauma-informed approaches for elementary music educators. Four questions guided my inquiry:

1. What is the nature of music teacher participants' engagement with an online teacher study group focused on trauma-informed approaches?
2. How do participants' individual and group responses align with or diverge from the principles of trauma-informed approaches as outlined by SAMHSA (2014)?
3. To what extent are the three temporal dimensions of teacher agency evident in participants' written reflections and survey responses?
4. Based on their experiences in the teacher study group, what recommendations do participants believe should inform future iterations of trauma-informed professional development?

Organized by research question (RQ), next I describe the study findings using the inductive and deductive analytic approaches outlined in Chapter 3 (see Table 3.4). Additionally, I provide descriptive information related to participant responses and study group communication, including participant's initial definitions of trauma-informed approaches.

To represent the nature of the study group experience, I included participant quotes throughout my analyses. While individuality was not a focus, quotes from individual participants are threaded throughout the chapter. However, there is no thick description of individual characteristics and personalities because the case is framed as the professional development study group community rather than the individual members of the study group. Individual experiences, while not the focus of the present study, are important components of describing the experience of the case, framed in this inquiry as the teacher study group focused on trauma-informed practices. Next, I provide a detailed account of study findings organized by research question.

What is the nature of music teacher participants' engagement with an online teacher study group focused on trauma-informed approaches? (RQ1)

To center the general experiences of this group of individuals, I describe the two overarching themes I identified through inductive analysis: responding with candor and asserting perspectives while referencing assumptions. Readers should note that, due to the inductive nature of this analysis, the findings for RQ1 are noticeably longer than other RQs.

Theme I: Responding with Candor

As the opening vignette in this chapter demonstrates, participants thoughtfully and collaboratively navigated nuanced—and potentially challenging—conversations about trauma-informed music teaching with humor, vulnerability, and, particularly, candor. PD study group participants demonstrated their awareness of trauma-informed approaches across multiple contexts. In interpreting their reflections, I identified a candid willingness among participants to share their beliefs and perspectives through written reflections. With and without prompting, participants shared connections to their experiences in the study group and their personal

histories & professional experiences. Combined with a tangible self-awareness, participants responded candidly throughout the duration of the study group.

Study group experiences. Through individual reflections and group discussions, participants candidly acknowledged their strengths and weaknesses in the context of the PD experience. Eddie shared,

> I know that I am more aware of my mistakes and my victories as a result of this group study. It's made reflecting on my own work more well defined and given me some concrete ways to avoid and recover from my mistakes. (Eddie, Discussion 8)

In addition to gaining concrete strategies and learning how to move through missteps, Carrie expressed feeling relieved that she was also able to identify her strengths: "I keep telling other people about this class and how it has opened my eyes to, what [another participant] mentioned, my weaknesses and also some strengths (what a relief!)" (Carrie, Discussion 8).

Participants also shared a wide range of perspectives and opinions pertaining to the nature of trauma-informed education. For example, Richard referenced broader conversations about trauma-informed efforts:

> I do find myself being quite frustrated navigating some of these conversations. Many times, discussions are shallow, full of buzzwords, euphemisms and anecdotes that demonstrate a deficit mindset. They also tend to lack direct action / solutions *[sic]*. Honesty and assuming best intent are at the top of my list. I'm happy to have another opportunity to connect and grow with other educators. Especially those who teach the same subject. (Richard, Discussion 2)

Other conversations included dissenting perspectives, where participants directly yet kindly and respectfully disagreed with others in the group (including with me as the facilitator). Participants

also shared connections and affirmations throughout, and reinforced the notion that educational PD about trauma tends to lack specific, concrete suggestions directly tied to their content area (i.e., music education).

Course materials. I drew course materials from a variety of sources pertaining to trauma-informed practices, including articles, videos, podcasts, and book chapters. Some of the material was specific to music teaching and learning while other material served to orient participants to trauma more broadly. Throughout the study group, participants demonstrated a grounded awareness of their abilities, interests, and capacities related to course content. After reading an article from *Music Educators Journal*, one participant remarked "I am out of practice reading scholarly research materials" (Eddie, Reflection 6). At the end of the study group, someone else said, "I too had a hard time with the workload, even though it was not overtly arduous" (Carrie, Reflection 8). Carrie also expressed her appreciation for the multiple forms of media involved in each of the modules. Carrie's responses reflected the positive comments that participants would provide, like, "I loved this reading!" (Carrie, Reflection 2) and "…all of the readings were well thought through, and worth the time!" (Carrie, Discussion 8). Participants like also shared comments like, "[t]he readings this week did not really help my reflection on these issues, but did encourage me as an educator" (Eddie, Discussion 4) and "[w]hile I enjoyed the readings this week, it wasn't anything new. [Trauma-informed pedagogy] has been the hottest topic at my school this year, especially as it relates to [Universal Design for Learning]" (Carrie, Reflection 6). This variety of responses demonstrates participants' thoughtful engagement with study group materials and reflection processes. Diverging perspectives were also evident within course modules. For instance, addition to the comment from Discussion 4 above, Eddie remarked, "I noticed that this material feels much more specific to my teaching. I enjoyed finding many

scenarios in the reading and in the listening that related to my own situations, past and present. It felt more relatable" (Eddie, Reflection 4).

While expressing a variety of perspectives about the course materials, the teachers in the study group voiced their desire for "detailed instruction on teaching general music to students from [traumatic backgrounds]" (Carrie, Reflection 1), including what *to* do and what *not* to do in the classroom. After Module 5, which came directly after a module explicitly focused on making connections to trauma-informed practices in music education, one participant said,

> I noticed that the material [in Module 5] is less focused on music teaching and more general in nature. It is helpful, but I miss the connections that I was able to draw in Module 4. I wondered if the next modules will present more music specific material again. (Eddie, Reflection 5)

Participants described music-specific materials and "[h]aving a specifically MUSIC group of people [as] invaluable" (Carrie, Discussion 8), especially because they "do not have many opportunities to gain professional development that is music specific" (Elizabeth, Reflection 1). Similarly, participants expressed feelings of satisfaction when the modules contained material that reflected what they already do and/or come naturally in their teaching practices. One teacher wrote, "I did appreciate the music education focus, and feel good about some of the things that come naturally in my planning and teaching which reflect Trauma Informed practices" (Eddie, Reflection 6). Noticing and making connections between the course materials and what they *already* do in their music-specific contexts appeared to be encouraging.

Multiple truths. Throughout the PD study group, participants' reflections acknowledged the presence of multiple, simultaneous truths. In a "both/and" spirit, one person shared about feeling hopeful while navigating an initial reaction of doubt:

> As I read through this reading, I first thought at how my school does not address trauma very well. However, we are doing many of the principles that were explained [in the module]! So, that gave me some hope that we are helping our students. (Carrie, Reflection 3)

This both/and approach was evident in other participants' interactions with the course modules. In Discussion 7, Eddie responded to a prompt asking the group to share a trauma-informed resource with:

> I have nothing to share right offhand unless I go to the googles *[sic]* and search something, and somehow that seems like it doesn't hit the heart of the matter. What I will share is the gratefulness that I have for support groups at work and encouraging messages sent my way about how to deal with the fear that many of our families are now experiencing. I am energized to ensure that the place I meet them in can be safe, and plan to do everything I can to show that each day.

Study group participants communicated their understanding of PD structures through social spaces like the group discussion board, which was hosted via Padlet. The Padlet format allowed participants to post text, links, videos, images, and other forms of media. In this virtual space, participants interacted with each other and with me, the facilitator. When asked to reflect on what helps them feel safe and supported as learners, Claire shared, "I feel safe and supported when I feel successful" and "[r]eceiving validation for ideas, even if they are still forming, would encourage me to share more openly" (Claire, Discussion 3). Eddie was "flattered" that someone would ask him to share resources that he found helpful, which was the focus of one study group module. Growth mindset was evident in Claire's response when she said, "This is an ongoing learning process, and I look forward to hearing about your experiences!"

Another social space in this study was the group Zoom meeting, which occurred during Module 5 in mid-January, 2025. During this meeting, we got to talk synchronously as a group for the first time. Three of the five study participants (Richard, Elizabeth, and Eddie) were able to attend. During our conversation, I asked participants what would be helpful as we looked ahead to the remainder of the study group. Participants expressed that more general check-ins on the Padlet discussion board would be helpful and beneficial. After participants made that suggestion, I used the discussion board as an emergent and responsive space, where I crafted discussion questions based on the needs participants expressed and/or the needs among the group that I interpreted.

The Padlet and Zoom spaces also provided teachers with opportunities to connect about topics outside of the course content. Without prompting, participants would often share asides about the realities of their lives, both inside and outside of school. Toward the end of the PD sessions, one participant shared that they had been sick and asked, "Anyone else having the plague going around your school?" (Eddie, Discussion 7). During the Zoom meeting, Eddie and Richard bonded over their shared affinity for visiting different cities like New Orleans and hosting crab boils for family. Within the social space of the study group, participants made efforts to connect with each other apart from the course material.

Apologizing for performance. On multiple occasions, participants publicly and privately apologized for their performance in the self-paced course. One participant shared that he was "[f]eeling really good about the materials in [Module 4]" and "[f]eeling bad about being behind still" (Eddie, Discussion 4). That same participant apologized for the evening commitments in their school schedule, referencing the feeling of "drowning in school and professional musical obligations" (Eddie, Discussion 3). Someone else remarked, "I know my participation has been

spotty, and for that I truly apologize, I wish my schedule would allow more time for my own personal growth" (Carrie, Reflection 8). Although there was a due date for course assignments (individual reflections and group discussion posts after engaging with the module materials), participants were never graded on their assignments outside of Google classroom's default "check" to indicate completion. On a few occasions, I responded directly to others' comments about apologizing for "poor performance" in the study group by saying "I'm glad you're here!" or "Grateful we get to learn from you in this group," comments that PD participants might give to students at school. Desiring to grow their skills in identifying signs of trauma and "learn more about trauma-informed practices in the music classroom" seemed to arise from the lack of "opportunities to gain professional development that is music specific" (Elizabeth, Reflection 1).

Personal histories & professional experiences. Participants demonstrated a candid approach to sharing their personal histories and professional experiences. In their reflections, they wove together a nuanced yet critical awareness of their individual experiences and perspectives, including potential biases and misperceptions. This was evident both within the context of the PD space of our teacher study group as well as their roles and experiences with trauma-informed approaches beyond the study group.

Strengths & weaknesses. Through their individual reflections, group discussions, and replies to each other, participants openly yet specifically acknowledged their strengths and weaknesses in the context of the PD experience. Eddie shared,

> I know that I am more aware of my mistakes and my victories as a result of this group study. It's made reflecting on my own work more well defined and given me some concrete ways to avoid and recover from my mistakes. (Eddie, Discussion 8)

In addition to gaining concrete strategies and learning how to move through missteps, participants expressed feeling relieved that they were also able to identify their strengths. I keep telling other people about this class and how it has opened my eyes to, what [another participant] mentioned, my weaknesses and also some strengths (what a relief!)" (Carrie, Discussion 8).

Growth mindset. While the discussion prompts and reflection questions guided course participants to notice, wonder, and reflect on course material, the nature of their responses were often indicative of growth mindset and a desire to pursue concrete trauma-informed strategies to benefit students. Comments such as, "I don't think I will ever truly reach my goal, because my learning will never truly stop. I will continue to grow and develop over many years" (Elizabeth, Reflection 1) displayed participants' collective awareness of their continual growth as learners. In conjunction with general improvement, one participant spoke specifically about practicing the skill of identifying potential signs of trauma among students:

> I am mostly interested in developing my awareness of signs that a student is struggling and improving my approach to teaching in a manner that provides a safe, welcoming environment that they look forward to coming to each day. My goal is to improve, yet it is not a goal that I feel I will ever be satisfied with. Improving is great, but I feel I will always want to get better. (Eddie, Reflection 1)

Despite the tools and knowledge participants already had about trauma-informed approaches, they were interested in "adding more knowledge and tools to [their] toolkit[s]" (Elizabeth, Reflection 1). One participant shared,

> I am interested in some concrete ways I can foster peer support in the music classroom without a "morning meeting". I have done this in the past with students helping students,

> pairing students to learning something together, group work, and group assessment, but I would like more ideas. (Carrie, Reflection 4)

Simultaneously, participants explicitly identified their frustration with strategies rooted in deficit mindset, expressing that such approaches "tend to lack direct action / solutions" (Richard, Discussion 2). Yet, most identified the slow and often challenging nature of changing habits as a teacher. One participant expressed her encouragement with the PD experience "because so many other teachers are seeing the need to teach with sensitivity and love. I notice that I have so many students of trauma and it has taken 24 years for me to change my methods" (Carrie, Reflection 8).

The "real world." When asked to think about future opportunities and challenges related to trauma-informed approaches in their classrooms, participants connected their thoughts to broad social issues, many of which impact students and schools.

> I think the challenges that lie ahead can be daunting, with so many families experiencing food insecurity, transportation and housing problems, etc...I hope that we can provide an environment that the students feel safe, successful, and valued. And I hope the caring nature of our [music education] profession somehow goes viral and helps us carry these feelings out into the "real world". (*sic*, Eddie, Discussion 5)

Relating to education more broadly, Claire asserted that "[m]any students bring unique cultural perspectives and experiences shaped by migration or displacement, which can influence their learning styles and emotional states" (Claire, Reflection 8).

Carrie referred to trauma as the "hottest topic" at her school (Carrie, Reflection 6). While delving into the module material, some questioned whether their school was doing anything trauma-informed at all. However, the question of "are we doing these things?" was often "yes,

we are!" Despite the popularity of trauma-informed efforts as a buzzword, one participant referred to their school setting as a haven when it came to respecting students and their identities: "With what is happening politically I'm a bit distraught. However, at work I notice that students treat each other and are treated with respect" (Eddie, Reflection 7). Others expressed more detailed concern regarding the political climate:

> When I consider cultural, historical, and gender issues, I am very concerned with the month of January and the extreme changes that have been enacted in our country. I fear for the safety of my students and the safety of teachers like me who embrace and celebrate these differences in our students. I wonder what we can do to break down these ideas and actions we can take in our classrooms to help support a better future when it currently looks so bleak. (Elizabeth, Reflection 7)

After a module specifically about trauma-informed practices intersecting with other practices like equity and culturally responsive teaching, another participant shared similar sentiments:

> I do wonder, with the timing now of the [2024 presidential] election and how much has changed over the month [of January], how the topic of "equity" will be played out. As it stands now, people in my area are scared to even mention it for fear of losing their jobs, when just a month ago it was the biggest issue to highlight. (Carrie, Reflection 6)

Despite very real fear concerning broader social and political dynamics, some participants used words like "fortunate," "blessed," and "grateful" to describe the efforts being enacted at the school level. Others expressed feeling encouraged despite the underlying fear. Eddie wondered

> how much we will be able to support and encourage in the short years ahead. I hope that at the state level some semblance of mercy can emerge. Perhaps later this year. … I am

> fortunate to have a group of students who understand me and very regularly hear that I love them. (Eddie, Reflection 7)

Theme II: Asserting Perspectives & Uncovering Assumptions

Whether directly and/or indirectly, teachers communicated their views and underlying beliefs about trauma-informed approaches and related practices. Through reflections, responses, and discussion posts, participants' engagement in the study group involved processes like asserting perspectives and uncovering assumptions. In this section, I detail the categories related to participants' expressed views about: trauma & trauma-informed efforts; music education; teacher language; student (mis)behavior; power dynamics; and emotional regulation.

Trauma & trauma-informed approaches. Throughout the course, participants asserted their perspectives and assumptions about the nature of trauma and trauma-informed approaches. Each of the five teachers in the course reflected on the pervasive yet often invisible nature of trauma through statements such as, "I wondered how many students that I don't know of who have experienced trauma that still affects them. I'm sure far too many" (Eddie, Reflection 2). Given its many presentations and forms, teachers realized that students impacted by trauma "may not openly express distress" (Claire, Reflection 2). Several participants shared that they had a "student population many members with traumatic backgrounds" (Eddie, Reflection 1). Elizabeth shared her "passion for trauma-informed practices" (Elizabeth, Reflection 1). Others expressed their desire to "better support…students' diverse needs, especially in the areas of social-emotional learning, creating safe and supportive environments for all, and developing awareness that students may be exhibiting signs of trauma.

Participants also described their understanding of the impacts of trauma on the body and brain, particularly

> …how deeply trauma impacts not just emotional well-being but also cognitive and physiological functions. The connection between early traumatic experiences and their lasting effects…resonated with the challenges some of my students face in processing emotions or participating in group activities. (Claire, Reflection 2)

For example, while reflecting on their students' learning, Carrie said, "I often teach the subject matter but my trauma students do not grasp it as readily as others" (Carrie, Reflection 1).

When discussing other opportunities and challenges related to trauma-informed approaches, participants referenced the long-term nature of both possibilities and potential barriers.

> The opportunities to incorporate trauma informed practices into my teaching are endless. Students in our school face so many challenges now, and it seems as if it may worsen for many in the coming months and years (I hope I'm wrong). (Eddie, Discussion 5)

Finally, some teachers expressed that they were personally impacted by trauma, either by generally referencing a lived experience or reflecting on course materials that emotionally impacted them because they were reminded of their students. One participant named a traumatic situation their family was still in the process of recovering from, while another teacher stated the discomfort they felt after watching a video in one of the modules that reminded them of their students at school. Whether observed, experienced directly, or impacted in a secondary capacity, study participants identified their perspectives and assumptions about trauma and trauma-informed practices.

The nature of music education. Participants also communicated their perspectives and assumptions about trauma-informed practices in the context of music education & social identities. For example, Claire asked, "How can I support students who have experienced trauma

while still encouraging exploration and fun in music?" (Claire, Reflection 1) and "questioned how to integrate cultural, historical, and gender-responsive practices into [her] general music curriculum in a way that feels authentic and meaningful for students" (Claire, Reflection 6).

Structure vs. flexibility. Through journal entries, discussion posts, and group conversations, participants communicated their perspectives and assumptions about the need for structure and/or flexibility in trauma-informed music education spaces. Claire's responses captured the nature of this disposition across participants. For instance, she wondered about "integrat[ing] trauma-informed practices in a way that aligns with the joyful, creative nature of music education" (Claire, Reflection 1) while striking a "balance between maintaining high expectations in a structured music classroom and offering the flexibility needed to accommodate students navigating trauma" (Claire, Reflection 2).

A "natural" vehicle for community. Others named the "natural" ways in which music and/or music education facilitate community, shared power, and "naturally encourages teamwork" (Claire, Reflection 5). While reflecting on the SAMHSA pillar of peer support, Claire shared about

> how naturally music creates opportunities for collaboration and mutual encouragement. Whether students are singing in chorus, playing instruments together, or participating in group activities like the 'Steady Beat Parade,' they often rely on one another to stay in rhythm, follow cues, and create a cohesive performance. I have observed that students are often eager to help their peers, especially when someone is struggling to grasp a concept or remember their part. For instance, during chorus rehearsals, students will quietly assist each other with lyrics or hand motions, fostering a sense of community and teamwork. (Claire, Reflection 4)

Acknowledging the social and collaboration-oriented nature of music, others asserted the assumption that "students flourish when the classroom is collaborative" (Carrie, Reflection 5) and positioned the music classroom as a "collaborative community" (Eddie, Reflection 5). A few participants expressed their desire to learn about more "concrete" approaches to achieve such a community:

> I am interested in some concrete ways I can foster peer support in the music classroom without a "morning meeting". I have done this in the past with students helping students, pairing students to learning something together, group work, and group assessment, but I would like more ideas. I wonder how I can go about learning more about what my students like and use that in my classroom (the 5th graders to start). (Carrie, Reflection 4)

Music as an emotional & creative outlet. Another category involved teachers' perspectives and assumptions about music as an emotional and creative outlet. "Music often involves personal expression, creativity, and collaboration, which can evoke strong emotions or insecurities, particularly for students who have experienced trauma" (Claire, Reflection 4). While describing a certain strategy in their music classroom, one participant referenced "encourag[ing] students to express their emotions through improvisation or lyric writing. This gives them a creative outlet to voice their feelings while reinforcing the idea that their thoughts and perspectives matter" (Claire, Discussion 6). Assertions like, "creative movement is always something that engages students" (Eddie, Discussion 6) "some of the most beautiful art comes from trauma" (Richard, Zoom Discussion) were indicative of participants' beliefs about the complex relationships between creative expression, trauma, and music education. Finally, teachers alluded to the impacts of music education by drawing comparisons to student experiences outside the music room, which involved making assumptions about other contexts.

For instance, one teacher wrote, “I hope that [music educators] can provide an environment that the students feel safe, successful, and valued. And I hope the caring nature of our [music education] profession somehow goes viral and helps us carry these feelings out into the ‘real world’” (Eddie, Discussion 5).

Safety. Overall, participants communicated the assumption “most of [their] students do feel safe in [the music] classroom” (Eddie, Reflection 2). Some referenced safety as a process that involves “working with students to create a safe and supportive learning environment” (Claire, Discussion 4). Others identified the role of safety as a skill required for some aspects of music making, in that “fostering a sense of safety allows students to take creative risks, like singing solo or improvising in front of peers” (Claire, Reflection 2). One participant described safety as motivation for pursuing trauma-informed approaches in their teaching: “For so much of our population, school is the safest place in their lives. This feeling makes it even more important to me to seek out the students in need of support and see that it is provided” (Eddie, Reflection 3). The notion of feeling compelled and/or responsible to ensure an environment of safety was apparent in others’ responses: “I completely believe we have a HUGE opportunity and responsibility in our tiny music classrooms to create places to ‘Be love’*[sic]*” (Carrie, Reflection 7). Simultaneously, participants wondered “how to communicate safety effectively to families, especially those from diverse backgrounds, to ensure a holistic approach to student well-being” (Claire, Reflection 2). Despite this commitment, participants expressed their fear of “trying new [classroom strategies] that may fail” (Carrie, Discussion 5), even if they understand that the new strategy may further support safety and inclusion in the classroom.

Diversity & inclusion. For many, safety also involved committing to maintaining a diverse and inclusive classroom space. Teachers referenced “supporting students’ diverse needs”

(Claire, Reflection 1) by "meet[ing] students where they are" (Claire, Reflection 1). In addition to general diversity among different students and their various needs as learners, participants prioritized emotional diversity (e.g.,"students are different every day and every time they come to music," Elizabeth, Reflection 2), cultural diversity (e.g., "create a more culturally responsive music curriculum that reflects and celebrates the diverse backgrounds of my students," Claire, Reflection 7), and diversity in lived experiences (e.g., the "invisible burdens of trauma and migration," Claire, Reflection 8). According to participants, such considerations are imperative because they can "profoundly shape a student's sense of identity and emotional well-being, which directly affects their ability to engage in learning" (Claire, Reflection 8). Another important skill involved being "more aware of the difference between culturally responsive and trauma informed teaching" (Eddie, Reflection 8), which one person voiced as a personal outcome of their participation in the PD course. Another course outcome involved noticing "how gender norms and stereotypes can unintentionally influence how students engage with music and how they perceive their roles within the class" (Claire, Reflection 7). Such foundational understandings may support teachers to support inclusion and diversity in emotion, thoughts, and experiences in the music classroom.

In addition to understanding, study group participants also identified their roles in responding to diverse cultures and experiences. The teacher who spoke about the unseen burdens of trauma and displacement immediately pivoted to their responsibility in "ensuring that [classroom] assessment is fair, empathetic, and aligned with [students'] individual needs" (Claire, Reflection 8). However, while participants understood that being aware of students' "cultural backgrounds helps [music educators] create a more inclusive music environment"

(Claire, Reflection 8), some expressed they "[felt] ill equipped to lead such an experience" (Eddie, Reflection 8) when they completed their final course reflection.

Teacher language. Within the teacher language category, participants both expressed the need to change their language practices (e.g., reactions and responses) and communicated existing assumptions about students through their PD reflections and responses, including the "right" way to engage with trauma-informed practices.

The need to transform language. Participants thoughtfully and thoroughly identified the importance of teacher language in the music classroom, including ways they could improve and transform their language. Often, participants provided unsolicited context that indicated their self-awareness on the subject:

> I know that my language is so powerful when i *[sic]* am addressing misbehavior. I also know that I have a tendency to blow my cool when i *[sic]* am provoked, and use language that is harsher that what I would wish it to be. I do this with my students and my own children! I need new language! I need new ways of scripting love because in the moment I cannot creatively think of them! (Carrie, Reflection 2)

In response to the materials in Module 2, the same teacher expressed

> needing more concrete examples of language for how I can speak to children about misbehavior. I don't want to do a deep psychiatric dive into the reasons why my 1st graders are always shouting for attention, because that isn't appropriate. So what's the language i *[sic]* can use? (Carrie, Reflection 2)

While some felt "nervous about expanding [their] territory and trying new things that may fail" (Carrie, Discussion 5), others voiced wanting to "build a bigger [collection] of go-to phrases to use when students are struggling," (Elizabeth) working with "a team of social workers and

counselors who give us language to help students work through difficulties," (Carrie) and teaching colleagues to use a "calm, even, kind tone when speaking with students" (Elizabeth, Reflection 3). Despite their clear desire to continue transforming and improving their teacher language, participants also referenced the challenges of incorporating school-wide practices (like "morning meeting") in a 30-minute music class.

The "right" way. Directly and indirectly, responses reflected teachers' perspectives and assumptions about the "right" or "correct" way to engage with trauma-informed approaches and related topics. In the opening transcript excerpt, one participant asked where to find "ideal practices" for trauma-informed music teaching. In a written journal response, someone else referred to "the proper response to misbehavior" (Carrie, Reflection 2). While reflecting on pacing and other instructional considerations related to trauma-impacted students, another participant wondered "if the pace is different from a non-trauma class" and questioned

> if the expectations should be different, if language plays a role - i.e. if bi-lingual students have different needs. I'd like to know how sound level effects students, how classroom set up effects students, how singing should be approached, and how groupwork can be successful. (Carrie, Reflection 1)

Others commented about aiming creating spaces where all students—including "trauma" and "non-trauma" students—"feel comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully" (Claire, Reflection 1). However, one teacher's comments expanded the "right way" narrative by validating what they are already doing in their school community:

> As I reflect on my experience in this course, I notice that I am doing all the "right" things. I am using the strategies and skills that work toward a trauma informed music classroom. I am making a difference in the lives of my students, even if I don't see it every day. I

> wonder how I will continue to develop these skills over time moving forward. Who will I meet and talk to, what books will I read, and will I expand my presence in this community by being more of a leader? (Elizabeth, Reflection 8)

Normative practices. Although this study group guided participants to establish norms for group conversation, several participants referenced practices in their work with students that they consider to be normative.

> I notice that I place a lot of importance on how we treat each other in the music classroom. I am respectful to my students, so I expected them to be respectful toward me and other students. I work hard to create a personally supportive classroom in which we ask if others are okay, apologize for mistakes/accidents, and use a calm and even tone and words when speaking with each other. (Elizabeth, Reflection 4)

Similarly, while reflecting on trust and transparency, one study group member "noticed how critical it is to not only set clear expectations but to model consistency in [their] words and actions to foster a sense of reliability for [their] students" and how "tone [of voice] and body language play a significant role in building trust, as students often look for reassurance through [the teacher's] demeanor" (Claire, Reflection 3). In later module, one participant found a resource that dealt with countertransference (i.e., a therapeutic term used in counseling practices to refer to the emotional impact of a patient's emotional responses on the therapist) in the context of teacher-student interactions and expressed wanting to apply the concept to specific situations at school. Combined, participants made several connections between the course materials and normative practices in their work with students. Finally, another participant asserted their perspectives about where, how, and with whom these classroom management beliefs and norms begin to form:

> Even though I teach the youngest children, this is where classroom ideas and norms start - this is the age that begins their expectations of school. It is our job to set them up for success and to break down those classroom walls of punishment-based consequences. I wondered what skills and strategies we can teach teachers or provide professional development on to help them integrate this love into their classrooms. Do we need to talk to [teachers] about how they speak to students? Or, teach them how to react to scenarios? Or, provide them the language and concepts to address behavior concerns? (Elizabeth, Reflection 7)

While some concepts surrounding teacher language certainly overlap with some of the therapeutic/counseling literature, teachers viewed establishing trauma-informed educational environments as a shared responsibility for all adults working with students: "The principle that 'one does not have to be a therapist to be therapeutic' highlights the universal responsibility of every staff member in creating a supportive environment" (Claire, Reflection 5).

Student (mis)behavior. The notion of teacher language extended to the ways in which participants spoke about "classroom management," as well as student "behaviors" and/or "misbehaviors." I use the term *(mis)behavior* to acknowledge the simultaneous presence of behavior and misbehavior in participants' dialogue surrounding classroom management, particularly to highlight the loaded meanings that may be attached to language about student actions. As demonstrated by their conversation at the beginning of the chapter, participants' dialogue situated the nature of trauma-informed PD as often a) reactive and b) seemingly focused entirely on student (mis)behavior. Largely, participants viewed trauma-informed efforts as designed to "handle discipline" or "infractions" reactively rather than proactively engage with "discipline from a trauma-informed approach" (Richard, Zoom Discussion). Some commented

on how the module readings "spoke exactly to [their] thoughts on rewards/punishments/behavior systems and discipline" (Carrie, Reflection 2).

On a few occasions, participants referred to "problem students" while describing responses to (mis)behavior. Similarly, participants shared phrases like "behavior disruptions" and "disciplinary issues." Context around such statements can provide a more holistic understanding of how teacher-participants used these terms. In a written reflection, one teacher named the danger of creating negative reputations for students based on (mis)behavior:

> I noticed a theme of seeing behavior as a problem we can solve rather than a problem that we need to control. I wondered how do we get teacher buy in to this concept? *[sic]* Behavior problem students are often view as a [nuisance] and black spot on the class or grade level. This extends this negative feeling even across the school and grade levels for some students. (Elizabeth, Reflection 5)

In a similar response, another teacher shared, "I do have some problem students that I have a hard time with. I wish I had time for therapy!" (Carrie, Reflection 5). Despite the potentially negative connotations with the phrase "problem student" or "discipline problems," the context surrounding participants' responses also demonstrated awareness of their role(s) in processing the impacts of student (mis)behavior and regulating their own emotions in challenging situations. However, participants also identified the "assumption that if the teacher did their job, then everything else will fall in line & if it doesn't go as planned, the teacher must clearly be a failure" (Richard, Discussion 4). This assumption resonated with several participants, in that they identified it as a misnomer; while teachers certainly hold positions of power in the classroom, it is unreasonable to expect that a teacher is capable of controlling every aspect of the classroom environment.

Power dynamics. Another prominent category involved power dynamics. Teachers referenced power in terms of empowering students in the classroom, wondering about specific strategies to level power dynamics, and critically examining their own positions as classroom facilitators.

Empowering students. Participants voiced their commitment to "help[ing] students feel safe, understood, and empowered. One person shared that noticing "students feeling more confident and engaged" would be one indicator of success as they worked to implement trauma-informed strategies in the classroom. Acknowledging that "students seem to thrive when they feel their contributions matter" (Claire, Reflection 4), others echoed the importance of fostering belonging and connection. Such ideas were especially present in the module materials that focused on the SAMHSA principle of peer support. In response to a reflection journal that specifically asked about peer support, one participant elaborated on specific skills and opportunities for student-to-student support:

> I wonder how I can create even more structured opportunities for students to engage in meaningful peer-to-peer support. I want to find ways to empower students to take on leadership roles, such as mentoring younger or less confident peers, and to recognize the value of their contributions in supporting one another. I also wonder how I can better identify students who may feel isolated or disconnected and help them build positive relationships within the group. Ultimately, I want to ensure that my classroom is not only a space for musical growth but also a space where students feel connected, cared for, and supported by their peers. (Claire, Reflection 4)

"Leveling power differences." Empowering students involved the notion of autonomy and choice, often with the intent to ameliorate power differentials in classroom communities.

Specifically, "[t]he emphasis on leveling power differences and fostering partnerships resonates deeply with the idea that healing occurs through relationships and shared decision-making" (Claire, Reflection 5). Teachers expressed their desire to cultivate environments reflecting collaboration, shared decision-making, and autonomy in their music classrooms.

In addition to larger, overarching ideas to foster power among students, participants referenced music-specific techniques and strategies, such as

> …involv[ing] students in decisions about the performance, such as selecting specific verses to emphasize, brainstorming staging ideas, or even voting on dynamics for certain sections of a song. This empowers them to take ownership of their performances and feel valued as contributors. (Claire, Discussion 6)

As examples of how they have "already begun implementing some trauma-informed strategies," others referenced "giving the students more choice" by "voting on their own graduation song" and "providing students with opportunities to choose songs or instruments that resonate with them" (Claire, Reflection 6). Someone else referenced allowing students to "choose material that they will perform for assessments" (Eddie, Discussion 6). In contrast to statements about seeking students who appear to be fully participating or engaging with perceived confidence, one teacher reflexively acknowledged their own "need to better support students who may feel less confident or safe expressing their voice, particularly those who are still adjusting to school or facing other challenges" (Claire, Reflection 6). Finally, acknowledging the power of intentional teacher moves, one person asserted "that even the most fiercely independent students can be incorporated into a collaborative effort if given proper guidance" (Eddie, Reflection 5), which reifies the power teachers hold in establishing and sustaining classroom dynamics.

Teacher power. Teachers openly recognized their own positions of power in the classroom. They shared about feeling "honored and humbled in knowing the power [they] have in [their] classroom to create an environment of love" (Carrie, Reflection 2). Using their power to create a music classroom where students felt safe was a clearly—and repeatedly—stated priority for all five study group participants. Yet, despite this obvious priority, participants continued to identify ways in which they allow their individual power to override what may be "best practices" for creating opportunities for shared power and student autonomy in the classroom:

> I have always been interested in creating stations and free-play but I always decide against it due to a variety of reasons including time, curriculum topic, and my personal control anxiety. However, I believe this style of instruction could be beneficial for students and provide them an opportunity for personal connection. (Elizabeth, Reflection 4)

Referencing a personal habit, another teacher lamented, "I still catch myself making mistakes and just wanting to show my power in the classroom when I am frustrated" (Carrie, Reflection 8). Study group participants iteratively engaged with beneficial and potentially harmful impacts of power in the classroom.

Emotional/nervous system regulation. The notion of emotional and/or nervous system regulation was threaded throughout participant responses, both written and verbal. Within this category, teachers focused on two areas: skills and strategies for students, and the importance of the teacher's role in self-regulation.

Skills & strategies to support students. Some participants asserted the absence of students' self-regulation skills, which was often (if not always) followed by ideas for strategies

to support students build the skills needed to emotionally re-regulate. One teacher noticed that "some students may struggle with self-regulation, which might indicate underlying trauma or other stressors" (Claire, Reflection 2). Another teacher "wonder[ed] how to better address the needs of students whose [personal experiences, like trauma] may lead to heightened emotional responses in the classroom" (Claire, Reflection 8). Some recommendations to support students' self-regulation skills included creating resources spaces like a "calming corner." One person described her vision for such a resource:

> I am working on creating a calming corner for my classroom. I am thinking about having a carpet and pillows with a bin of a pinwheel, fidgets and signage that reflects breathing and yoga that would mirror warmup concepts we use in our music lessons. I would also like to put some emotion-based posters in my classroom to talk about zones of regulation and feelings and help teach students [to] think when they are disregulated *[sic]*. (Elizabeth, Discussion 5)

In Discussion 5, teachers were prompted to consider both opportunities and challenges related to trauma-informed practices in their classrooms. First, someone described opportunities to provide "growth through music," asserting "[a]ctivities like SEL-focused Lunch Bunch sessions or calming rhythms help students regulate emotions" (Claire, Discussion 5). Similar suggestions in her response included: "Start small with routines, choices, and greetings. Collaborate with counselors and staff for additional support. Use music as a tool for healing and emotional regulation" (Claire, Discussion 5). In the same thread, another teacher explained the logistical challenges she anticipated in establishing a calming space:

> I struggle with how to start incorporating [a calming corner] into my classroom. I want to teach students how to use the calming corner and the strategies during music class. But

> should I incorporate the calming corner and then start teaching or teach the strategies and then slowly integrate the calming corner in pieces? Maybe start with the carpet for the space and then slowly add extra pieces as we review the strategies? (Elizabeth, Discussion 5)

In response via comment, I offered my own experiences using a similar strategy in my K-5 teaching.

> I wonder if anyone else in our group has experience with implementing something like a calming corner? I did while I was teaching, but also had the full support of the school using zones of regulation, so kids experienced it outside of my classroom too. What's your situation like, Elizabeth? (Discussion 5)

I decided to chime in because I noticed, in a previous individual reflection, that another participant had shared about school-wide supports like "chart[s] in every classroom that students and mark their energy level and happiness level – even in the music room!" (Carrie, Reflection 3). Additionally, I was reminded of my own personal experiences teaching K-5 music and I wondered if the teacher establishing the calming corner was being encouraged by administrators or other teachers/staff. However, in reply to my comment, the teacher in the group thread responded,

> My school is a mixed bag. Admin, counselors, and a few teachers focus on Conscious Discipline, and a few have calming corners. But overall, we are truly the outliers of the school. Most don't necessarily believe in the power of teaching emotional regulation and only focus on punitive consequences and no processing. (Elizabeth, Discussion 5)

The notion of the music classroom being isolated and/or markedly different from the remainder of the school echoed similarly throughout other participants' reflections.

Participants also expressed their views about connections among and assumptions about constructs like self-discipline and self-regulation.

> …the longer I spend as a father and as a teacher, the more firmly I believe that discipline is something that can only really be achieved internally. The kids have to have self-discipline and self-regulation. I cannot discipline them. I can try to shine a light on a consequence of a choice or a consequence of an action. But really my understanding of the word discipline...it has to be something that is taken internally…I can't make anyone do anything, and no one can make me do anything. It's…it's all wrapped up in choice. (Richard, Zoom Discussion)

Through conversations about emotional regulation among students, participants demonstrated their perspectives and assumptions about student needs and abilities, including autonomy, choice, and connection.

"Being a mirror": the teacher's role in self-regulation. From the onset of the course, participants asserted their understanding of teachers' roles and responsibilities related to modeling self-regulation, In Module 1, I invited participants to state specific goals for this PD study group, followed by a question about how they will know if/when they have achieved their goal. One participant responded,

> My goal is to create a music classroom where all students feel comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully. I'll know I've achieved this when I see students feeling more confident and engaged, and when I'm able to handle challenging moments with greater understanding and calmness. (Claire, Reflection 1)

Such a reply encompassed the nature of participants' willingness to assert their beliefs about emotional regulation in the music classroom, all while critically considering their own

contributions to and participation in creating and sustaining environments of regulation and re-regulation.

Through their responses and conversations, study group participants identified the necessity for teachers to teach students skills related to regulation: "[Teachers] have to be able to teach [students] the regulation skills they are missing" (Elizabeth, Reflection 2). However, in the context of responding to emotional dysregulation in a student who had been experiencing homelessness, Richard asserted, "it shouldn't feel like the onus is on the teacher to… to fill all of these gaps [in students' emotional regulation]. And I feel like oftentimes it does" (Richard, Zoom Discussion).

Participants explained not only importance but also the effects of and purposes behind centering emotional regulation in music classrooms.

> I always focus on my students' emotions in the class, and I feel it has created a better bond and relationship between us if I am also honest with how and why I am feeling the way I do in the moment. I am also teaching them to identify their emotions and think of a solution or strategy to help then moving on *[sic]*. (Elizabeth, Discussion 6)

Connecting to the notion of discipline and the role of adults setting students up for success via questioning, another participant shared,

> I noticed that providing opportunities for students to make choices empowers them to take ownership of their actions and learning. It reminded me of Conscious Discipline strategies that provide choices to the child that are agreeable to the parent/adult to help teach them emotional regulation. I wonder if I provide enough opportunities for voice and choice in my classroom or if I could/should include more. (Elizabeth, Reflection 6)

Such processes involve modeling self-regulation for and with students. One teacher shared about their own “emotional honesty” when communicating with students:

> This school year I have been more open and honest about my feelings and emotions to the students while I'm teaching. For example, if many students come over to me to share something or give hugs, which I always encourage, I will be honest and say "Can you back up a little? I need some space." or "I love hugs, but I'm a little overstimulated right now and can't take a hug." or "I feel a little overwhelmed, let's take a few breaths together." Then, I say I feel better when I'm ready and we move on. (Elizabeth, Discussion 6)

Such modeling is a form of “[b]eing a mirror” for students, identified by one participant as “a big theme throughout [the PD study group]” (Elizabeth, Discussion 6).

Finally, participants asserted their beliefs and assumptions concerning teachers’ preparedness to “manage” classrooms and supporting self-regulation among students. “[W]e are expecting teachers to have a trauma-informed lens, but they may be disregulated *[sic]* themselves” (Elizabeth, Reflection 4). In the Zoom discussion, a different participant elaborated on their perspectives on previous course module materials while connecting to their own experiences with regulation and navigating situations alongside their coworkers:

> I think it was maybe in week three…? I don't remember which, um, article or like material it came from…but it talked about the importance of, um, like, teacher prep programs and how we don't really adequately prepare teachers in their undergrad to complete classroom management and how to help students learn to regulate themselves. And then when you're coming through this trauma informed lens, where we want teachers to do all of these steps, but they don't necessarily have the background in it…and

then the second layer to that is, you know, not everyone goes to individual therapy or a couple's counselor or works on their own individual goals. So, their point was you're asking deregulated humans to learn to help other tiny humans self-regulate, but yet they don't have the skills or they don't use the skills themselves. So how do you teach… dysregulated people to regulate other humans? Which I thought was, like, really impactful to me when looking at like, I have been in individual counseling for a really long time. So I actively work on these skills for myself. So when I look into my students and I'm like, okay, I, I can understand that you're being triggered by this and that you're, you know, you're in the survival state because I can identify that in myself…but when I talk to my coworkers, they don't have that same awareness for themselves…so when I try to talk about it with the [teacher], I'm like, well, you know…"Why did the student elope? Like what? What happened? Like what triggered them there?" They're like, "Well, the student's just bad," you know, "they just tore the room apart." And I'm like, well…no, there's something that triggered them. But, like, [the teacher isn't] necessarily receptive to that feedback because they either are not aware or…they are like in denial that they don't want it or, they don't have [those] skills for themselves, so they can't see it in other people or, students. (Richard, Zoom Discussion)

In reply to a discussion prompt that asked participants for a general check-in midway through the course, one participant titled their post discussion post "Ego," and wrote:

> There's a lot to unpack, but the thing that stood out to me when reading the article about the music teacher who had recurring issues with a student was this assumption that if the teacher did their job, then everything else will fall in line & if it doesn't go as planned, the teacher must clearly be a failure. I appreciate the acknowledgement of how teacher

> education training doesn't adequately prepare us to navigate this terrain. We have to figure out how to recruit, train and retain educators who are learning to make a difference and succeeding in these spaces. (Richard, Discussion 4)

While a desired outcome certainly involved supporting students' self-regulation skills, participants were acutely aware of the roles that teachers play in supporting students' regulation through identifying, modeling, and verbally externalizing their own self-regulation strategies.

How do participants' individual and group responses align with or diverge from the principles of trauma-informed approaches as outlined by SAMHSA (2014)? (RQ2)

To address RQ2, I used SAMHSA's (2014) six principles of trauma-informed approaches (i.e., safety; trustworthiness & transparency; peer support; collaboration & mutuality; empowerment, voice, & choice; cultural, historical, & gender issues) as a deductive, *a priori* analytic framework. Using this framework, I analyzed data generated through individual reflection journals, discussion posts, and group conversations. While certain discussion prompts for group & individual reflections invited participants to engage with specific parts of the SAMHSA framework, participant responses reflected the "deeply interconnected [nature of] the six key principles" (Claire, Reflection 6) and the potential for "the SAMHSA principles [to] be adapted to address the cultural and linguistic diversity in [their] classrooms" (Claire, Reflection 2). Organized by SAMHSA pillar, I share exemplar responses and their connections to the SAMHSA framework.

Safety

The notion of safety was threaded throughout participants' responses across the study group modules. Reponses centered safety as a—if not "the"—foundational principle of trauma-informed pedagogy and participants referred to safety as both a prerequisite in and a product of

learning spaces. Safety was framed as something to consistently strive toward, often used synonymously with words like inclusive, empathetic, supportive, and/or reliable.

In Module 2 (Reflection 2), I invited teachers to reflect on Module 2 materials, which were explicitly connected to the SAMHSA principle of safety. The reflection prompt read:

REFLECTION 2

This week's materials centered the trauma-informed principle of safety and introduced the other 5 SAMHSA principles. Thinking specifically about your current elementary general music teaching setting, complete the following sentence starters (please write as much as you would like!)

First, reflect on this week's readings/materials:

- *While exploring this week's materials, I noticed...*
- *While exploring this week's materials, I wondered...*

*Then, reflect on **safety** related to your current school setting.*

- *When I think about safety in my current work with students, I notice...*
- *When I think about **safety** in my current work with students, I wonder*

I maintained this "I notice… I wonder…" structure for each of the reflection journal prompts, changing out the bold/underlined SAMHSA pillar (i.e., ***safety*** in Reflection 2) to represent the concepts introduced in the module materials. For a complete list of module materials and corresponding SAMHSA prompts, see Table 3.1 in Chapter 3.

In the Module 2 reflection about safety, participants named the importance of "creating a physically and emotionally safe space is critical for engagement in music activities" (Claire) and were "pleased to read about the importance of creating a safe space," (Eddie) referring to the idea as "one of the most important aspects of a music room" (Eddie, Reflection 2). Teachers

identified feelings of safety among students through their willingness to show vulnerability, take risks (e.g., singing solo), and engage with other curricular content in the music classroom. They also named specific indicators of safety and/or unsafety among students (e.g., "heightened emotional responses") and "wondered about how to communicate safety effectively to families, especially those from diverse backgrounds, to ensure a holistic approach to student well-being" (Claire, Reflection 2). Referencing the *Troublemakers* text in Module 2, one person shared,

> I liked some of the examples of how as a teacher I can "be love", but i am needing more concrete examples of language for how I can speak to children about misbehavior. I don't want to do a deep psychiatric dive into the reasons why my 1st graders are always shouting for attention, because that isn't appropriate. So what's the language i can use? *[sic]* (Carrie, Reflection 2)

Participants focused heavily on growing in the area of teacher language, where they noted the potential impacts of a teacher's response to student (mis)behavior through words, actions, and dispositions.

While participants reflected on safety in the context of fostering safe spaces for/with students, participants also engaged with their own and others' safety within the study group. For example, in Module 3 (Discussion 3), I asked teachers to consider what helps them to feel safe and supported as learners, specifically in the context of our teacher study group. Some shared, "Receiving validation for ideas, even if they are still forming, would encourage me to share more openly" and "fitting into our 'norms', assuming that I am only trying to be positive. Sometimes I can word things that put my foot in my mouth, but I don't intend it that way!" (Carrie, Discussion 3). Beyond Module 3, participants' recommendations for future trauma-informed efforts were largely rooted in the SAMHSA principle of safety. For one person, noticing others recognize the

need for ensuring safety in the classroom was encouraging: “I am mostly encouraged by this [research] study because so many other teachers are seeing the need to teach with sensitivity and love” (Carrie, Reflection 8), which can be indicators of prioritizing safety. Whether directly prompted or not, the notion of “working with students to create a safe and supportive learning environment” (Claire, Discussion 4) was tangibly present throughout each of the modules, reflections, and discussions.

Trustworthiness & Transparency

Using the previously described “I notice…I wonder…” prompt structure, I invited participants to think about trustworthiness & transparency in their reflection for Module 3, the content for which also focused on trustworthiness & transparency. In Reflection 3, participants appeared to gravitate toward routines and structures, both at the school level and the classroom level. School-wide routines (e.g., morning meetings built into the school schedule) and resources (e.g., fidget bins and SEL-focused charts in all classrooms) were generally upheld as important. However, one teacher identified the reality of time constraints associated with teaching music; after describing the obstacles, they shifted their focus from physical materials & routines to teacher language & classroom norms:

> As a music teacher, I notice that we are given many tools, but it always comes down to I teach students in 30 minute blocks. I cannot have morning meetings in every class. I can review the classroom norms and point them out, but I do not do this prior to an infraction, because I have so much else on my mind to get the teaching done! I'm thinking about how I can impart a common opening language that helps to remind students quickly and consistently that this classroom is safe, and we treat each other with kindness, that we

> assume the best in each other, and anything else that my students come up with that is important to their well-being. (Carrie, Reflection 3)

Within Module 3, participants also highlighted building trusting relationships with students as a foundation of the teacher-student rapport. Teachers highlighted the importance of teacher language that reinforces such trusting relationships. This was clear in their reflections about their own use of language in addition to noticing differences among their colleagues' language use: "I wonder how I can impress on my coworkers the importance of building relationships with students and using a calm, even, kind tone when speaking with students" and "model consistency in [their] words and actions to foster a sense of reliability for [their] students" (Claire, Reflection 3). The notion that "[the teacher's] tone and body language play a significant role in building trust" (Claire, Reflection 3) was another important consideration for participants. In addition to communicating with students, teachers referenced the importance of establishing trusting relationships with their colleagues.

> I feel blessed when I consider my work situation and trustworthiness. I feel that most of my students trust me and feel safe in our space. Even more of a blessing, my colleagues on the music and specialist team trust and support each other. Our administrators see this and reciprocate. There's a lot of magic in my work life right now. (Eddie, Reflection 3)

Finally, when considering students who may have experienced trauma alongside the needs of teachers and other students, one teacher "also questioned how [they] could incorporate trust-building activities into [their] lessons without taking away from instructional time" (Claire, Reflection 3). Such comments echo the struggles with balancing trauma-informed content and musical goals, as described in the findings for RQ1.

Participants also referenced trustworthiness & transparency outside of Module 3. This was especially noticeable in Module 4, where peer support was used somewhat interchangeably with "trust." Teachers referenced the unique structure of elementary general music to support students. For example, one teacher expressed their views about the longitudinal impacts of a teacher's long-term presence in the classroom:

> I have long felt that my classroom could be a supportive and even healing environment. I have noticed that this is truer every year that I remain in the same school. Previously, I was in schools for 2, 4 or 5 years. I began to see growth and relationships, but now that I am in my 7th year at my current school, the level of student trust has grown, even though these students only see me for 6 years. (Carrie, Reflection 4)

In Module 6, participants articulated "how safety, trust, and empowerment are foundational to creating a supportive environment for students" (Claire, Reflection 6). Teachers tended to speak about trust as a prerequisite to other aspects of trauma-informed approaches, like skills related to self-regulation and self-advocacy in a learning environment.

Peer Support

Module 4 centered participants' focus on the SAMHSA principle of peer support. Participants expressed that this material "felt more relatable" (Eddie, Reflection 4) and "much more specific to [their] teaching" (Eddie, Reflection 4) than previous modules. Teachers seemed to enjoy the specific, concrete examples, where they could see themselves and/or their students represented in the material. Whether focused on mistakes or victories, participants felt "relieved" and supported when they engaged with materials that reminded them of their own teaching experiences, including those previously endured during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Module 4, participant reflections demonstrated a variety of connections sparked by

conversations about peer support, including professional development to support personal care for teachers, suggestions for teacher preparation, empowering students as leaders and mentors in the classroom, and continued references to teacher language.

Outside of the specific prompts about peers support (Module 4), participants continued to reference community and teamwork among students. Often, teachers leaned on the "collaborative nature of music" to communicate this and similar ideas. However, participants also recognized similar aspects among colleagues, including those in the study group. While speaking about an environment of peer support in their classrooms, participants engaged in peer support for/with one another in the study group. For instance, while constructing the group norms in module 2, someone responded,

> I appreciate all that's been added and thought through for our group norms. I am sorry to come late to the discussion, but it seems like I am surrounded by good thinkers, and I am looking forward to these discussions! (Carrie, Discussion 2).

Such a comment acknowledges not only the support this person is willing to provide, but also the support that the group provided while this participant was catching up on other work. Additionally, this participant reflected their appreciation back to the group, affirmed their confidence in their peers, and communicated their intent to engage more actively in future processes. Such an interaction shines light onto one of the many supportive dynamics that could be identified throughout this PD study group experience.

Collaboration & Mutuality

Following the established structure for reflections, Module 5 prompted participants to consider the principle of collaboration & mutuality. One response in particular encapsulated not

only the general tenor of the materials in Module 5 but also the nature of other teachers' responses:

> The emphasis on leveling power differences and fostering partnerships resonates deeply with the idea that healing occurs through relationships and shared decision-making. The principle that "one does not have to be a therapist to be therapeutic" highlights the universal responsibility of every staff member in creating a supportive environment. (Claire, Reflection 5)

Another participant offered a more specific example, noticing that "providing options for student choice is empowering and displaces a power dynamic between the student and the teacher" (Elizabeth, Reflection 5). Participants offered responses that were similar to the previous module (Module 4, Peer Support) and centered on "mutual respect and collaboration" and the notion that "students flourish when the classroom is collaborative" (Carrie, Reflection 5).

Collaboration naturally arose as a topic across other modules, usually in the form of sharing ideas, materials, and/or experiences. Teachers wondered how they might be able to "better encourage students to share their lived experiences or cultural connections to music in a way that feels safe and inclusive" (Claire, Reflection 6), especially because of "how naturally music creates opportunities for collaboration and mutual encouragement" (Claire, Reflection 4). In other modules about other principles, teachers also expressed desires to connect with colleagues: "Additionally, I began to reflect on how I can collaborate with other educators, counselors, and support staff to ensure my approach is consistent and aligned with the needs of individual students" (Claire, Reflection 4). As has been the trend with other SAMHSA principles and as evidenced by participant responses, collaboration & mutuality were clearly woven throughout multiple study group modules.

Empowerment, Voice, & Choice

Similar to its peer principles, empowerment, voice, & choice were present across several study group modules. When directly asked to reflect on the principle in Module 6, teachers recognized what they were doing well and what they could be doing better, especially for creating choice-driven opportunities in the classroom:

> I notice that I've already begun implementing some trauma-informed strategies, such as providing students with opportunities to choose songs or instruments that resonate with them. In my chorus class, I encourage students to collaborate and share ideas, fostering mutuality and respect. However, I also recognize that I need to better support students who may feel less confident or safe expressing their voice, particularly those who are still adjusting to school or facing other challenges. (Claire, Reflection 6)

Such responses demonstrate further evidence of self-awareness, "humility," and growth-oriented mindset among participants, as well as their ability to weave in connections from previous study group modules and corresponding SAMHSA principles. Other teachers described "empowerment and voice…at the center of [their] work with students" (Eddie, Reflection 6). Several teachers described the prevalence of choice in their teaching, such as giving students opportunities to choose instruments, choose where to stand in the classroom, choose a part to sing, choose a song for a specific performance like graduation, and/or choose between two options that are agreeable to the teacher (Elizabeth, Reflection 6). One teacher stated, "I wonder if I provide enough opportunities for voice and choice in my classroom or if I could/should include more" (Elizabeth, Reflection 6).

In spaces apart from Module 6, participants made constant comparisons to empowerment, voice, & choice. One teacher described empowering students as, "Validating emotions and

identities aligns *[sic]* with your culturally responsive teaching goals" (Claire, Discussion 5). Another teacher described their desire to implement a "calming corner" in the music classroom, complete with "a carpet and pillows with a bin of a pinwheel, fidgets and signage that reflects breathing and yoga that would mirror warmup concepts we use in our music lessons" (Elizabeth, Discussion 5) and center student choice and empowerment. Another participant also referenced wanting to "help students feel safe, understood, and empowered" (Claire, Reflection 1) as part of their impetus for joining the PD study group. Empowerment, voice, and choice appeared regularly and throughout the study group reflections and discussions.

Cultural, Historical, & Gender Issues

While connections to culture, history, and gender were certainly present throughout the module materials, Module 7 was the first place where participants were asked to directly reflect on this SAMHSA pillar as it connected to their classroom contexts and work with students. One teacher remarked, "To be honest, I'm having a hard time separating this week's learning from module 6! There is so much overlap, that I find myself wanting to repeat things" (Carrie, Reflection 7). Another teacher reflected on their teaching across "schools [serving] different demographics, which impacts the needs of [their] students" (Claire, Reflection 7). "These cultural differences," the participant reflected, "require me to approach each school with tailored strategies to ensure inclusivity and relevance" (Claire, Reflection 7). In addition to a "tailored" or structured approach, the same participant wondered about flexibility in their teaching to "challenge traditional gender roles in music (e.g., boys playing drums, girls singing) to encourage all students to explore freely" (Claire, Reflection 7).

Since Module 7 took place in late January, the 2025 presidential inauguration was a current event topic that a few participants chose to explicitly reference in their reflection journals

concerning cultural, historical, and gender issues. One person remarked, “I'm at a loss for words today when I consider these things right now, especially the gender topic. With what is happening politically I'm a bit distraught” (Eddie, Reflection 7). To close their reflection, a different participant said,

> When I consider cultural, historical, and gender issues, I am very concerned with the month of January and the extreme changes that have been enacted in our country. I fear for the safety of my students and the safety of teachers like me who embrace and celebrate these differences in our students. I wonder what we can do to break down these ideas and actions we can take in our classrooms to help support a better future when it currently looks so bleak. (Elizabeth, Reflection 7)

Participants expressed their fear for students in the present political climate, focusing their responses on identifying “implicit biases in [their] teaching practices that might impact students differently based on their gender or cultural identity” and wondering “how [they] might address these biases to ensure that all students feel represented and valued in [their] classroom,” which may include noticing “how gender norms and stereotypes can unintentionally influence how students engage with music” (Claire, Reflection 7).

From the very outset of the course, participants expressed their interest in and awareness of students’ identities and histories. This was evident in the ways that participants spoke about supporting students needs (Carrie & Claire, Reflection 1) across ages, races, and ability levels, as well as how participants chose to disclose their own histories, personal cultures, and experiences. In their introductory discussion post, one participant shared that they identified as someone who had experienced several “ACEs,” or adverse childhood experiences:

> Hello everyone. I'm [participant name]… I'm new to the area, most of my experience comes from teaching high school band in [city, state] and [city, state]. This subject [trauma-informed practices] is one I'm passionate about, as all of my teaching experience has been serving the most vulnerable populations of the communities I've lived. I'm also a product of [city name] Public schools and someone who has had multiple ACE's. It has been quite interesting to observe the differences in the educational landscapes of [previous home city] and [current home city]. I'm hoping to gain some valuable insight, share my experiences and grow professionally. (Richard, Discussion 1)

As part of Module 1, a different participant shared, "As I have mentioned, my family has its own traumatic experience we are still recovering from. My student population has many members with traumatic backgrounds, and unfortunately many who will likely experience trauma ahead in their lives" (Eddie, Reflection 1). In a later reflection, while reacting to module materials, another participant shared, "I was especially struck by the emphasis on recognizing and addressing historical trauma, as it resonated with my own experiences of cultural deculturalization and the importance of fostering cultural identity in schools" (Claire, Reflection 6). Whether through recognizing experiences among students, realizing their own role in supporting students, or vulnerably sharing part of their own trauma histories, participants navigated the entirety of the course with an expressed awareness of dynamics related to culture, history, and/or gender.

Alignment with & Divergence from SAMHSA Definitions

Using the six SAMHSA principles (safety; trustworthiness & transparency; peer support; collaboration & mutuality; empowerment, voice, & choice; cultural, historical, & gender issues) as a deductive, *a priori* analytic framework**,** I analyzed reflection journals, discussion posts, and

group zoom conversations. The nature and prevalence of participants' responses demonstrated the deeply interconnected nature of the six principles and their prevalence throughout the duration of the PD study group. Next, I briefly summarize participants' responses related to each principle while comparing participant responses to the SAMHSA (2014) definitions of each of the six principles. Specifically, I highlight areas where participant responses aligned with and/or diverged from the SAMHSA definitions.

Safety. Safety was widely viewed as the foundational principle, described by participants as a prerequisite for and a potential product of trauma-informed music classrooms. When thinking about students in a music classroom, some indicators of safety included musical risk-taking (e.g., solo singing), willingness to be vulnerable, and engagement in lessons/activities. Participants focused on the power of teacher language and modeling safety with words, actions, and dispositions. Teachers were also invited to reflect on what helps them feel safe in learning settings, which was particularly relevant for the present study group.

According to SAMHSA (2014), safety includes the following:

> *Throughout the organization, staff and the people they serve, whether children or adults, feel physically and psychologically safe; the physical setting is safe and interpersonal interactions promote a sense of safety. Understanding safety as defined by those served is a high priority.* (p. 11)

Participant responses closely aligned with the SAMHSA definition of safety, particularly through interpersonal interactions and including adults and children in the definition. Although they did not explicitly mention psychological safety, this term could be inferred throughout their responses. Safety was a clear priority in participant responses and served as a bedrock for future interactions with PD course material.

Trustworthiness & Transparency. Using exemplars like consistent routines, clear communication, and reassuring verbal and/or nonverbal responses, participants communicated their understanding of trustworthiness & transparency. The reality of time constraints for music class was communicated as a barrier to incorporating school-wide routines (e.g., morning meeting) that may further support developing trust among students & staff alike. Participants highlighted the importance of building trusting relationships with colleagues and valued collaborative actions from administrators. In the music classroom, an environment of trust could support students' self-regulation and self-advocacy for their learning & well-being.

> In SAMHSA's definition, trustworthiness & transparency includes the following:
>
> *Organizational operation and decisions are conducted with transparency with the goal of building and maintaining trust with clients and family members, among staff, and others involved in the organization.* (2014, p.11)

While participants made explicit connections to the "trust" component of this principle, transparency was also evident in the ways in which they spoke about shared decision-making and shared power in the classroom. Several participants mentioned multiple stakeholders in their responses, demonstrating their awareness of the foundational aspects of this principle. However, unlike the definition, participants heavily focused on the teacher-student aspect of relational trust. This is an understandable finding, especially considering the ways in which participants were asked to reflect on their experienced (i.e., "in your current work with students").

Peer support. For a few study group members, Module 4—where peer support was formally/explicitly introduced as a principle—was perhaps the most relatable and engaging module of the course. Participants communicated the helpful nature of relatable examples, including scenarios where teachers were "successful" and where they made (and subsequently

moved through) mistakes. One participant even referred to noticing her strengths through the module as a "relief"! Such experiences helped participants to normalize their struggles and validate their victories. Finally, teachers also referenced the "naturally" social and/or collaborative aspects of music-making.

> Alongside mutual self-help, SAMHSA positions peer support as one of the *key vehicles for establishing safety and hope, building trust, enhancing collaboration, and utilizing their stories and lived experience to promote recovery and healing. The term "Peers" refers to individuals with lived experiences of trauma, or in the case of children this may be family members of children who have experienced traumatic events and are key caregivers in their recovery. Peers have also been referred to as "trauma survivors."* (2014, p. 11)

While there may be obvious differences to consider in a school environment, the SAMHSA definition generally aligns with what I interpreted in participants' responses. Safety, hope, trust, collaboration, and personal experiences were threaded throughout Module 4 discussions/journals and other modules. However, participants used the term "peers" to generally refer to other students rather than other trauma survivors. Given that teachers may not always know exactly who might (or might not) be navigating the physical, emotional, and/or cognitive impacts of trauma, this seems like a reasonable adaptation of the principle for school environments. Apart from references to their own therapy needs or naming counselors at their school, the notion of key caregivers in recovery was largely absent from teachers' responses.

Collaboration & mutuality. By addressing differentials in power dynamics and supporting shared decision-making, participants threaded collaboration & mutuality throughout their reflections and discussions. Such dynamics were reflected in teacher-student interactions

and in partnering with school-based staff members and administrators. Participants named the collaborative nature of music, particularly in group music making and other activities in an elementary general music space. Teachers highlighted the notion of "mutual respect" and desired to make connections to students' cultural musics.

In SAMHSA's (2014) account of collaboration & mutuality,

> *[i]mportance is placed on partnering and the leveling of power differences between staff and clients and among organizational staff from clerical and housekeeping personnel, to professional staff to administrators, demonstrating that healing happens in relationships and in the meaningful sharing of power and decision-making. The organization recognizes that everyone has a role to play in a trauma-informed approach. As one expert stated: "one does not have to be a therapist to be therapeutic."* (p. 11)

Participants drew clear and affirming connections to this definition. Several of their journals provided bigger-picture framing for these ideas, followed by concrete examples of classroom considerations or practices. While participants highlighted the role of "teachers" or "all staff" in supporting a trauma-informed approach, their reflections diverged from the definition in that they did not include as much nuance about different school stakeholders. Similarly, one participant made direct reference to the "one does not have to be a therapist to be therapeutic" idea and no other participants talked about the line between being a trauma-informed teacher and taking on the role of a therapist. This holds no moral judgement and is neither "good" nor "bad." Rather, this is another data point that may support our understanding of these teachers' experiences in this study group as they reflected on the SAMHSA pillars.

Empowerment, voice, & choice. Teachers connected strongly to this principle, in that they were already providing opportunities for choice in their classrooms and deeply cared about

student voice and empowerment. Responses indicated that the music classroom is rife with situations in which teachers can support student choice, including choosing instruments, songs, and standing or sitting spots in the room. A few teachers wondered what opportunities they might have been missing to further support student choice and how they might be able to better support students who have difficulty expressing themselves, which may be a sign of trauma or distress. Teachers brought up empowerment in the context of validating students' emotions, identities, and contributions to the music class environment. Additionally, one teacher focused on their desire to create a physical space ("calming corner") separate from the primary teaching area to promote choice alongside emotional regulation and music class concepts.

Though the SAMHSA definition of empowerment, voice, & choice is lengthier compared to its counterparts, I decided to include the full definition because of its nuance, specificity, and relevance to participants' responses:

> *Throughout the organization and among the clients served, individuals' strengths and experiences are recognized and built upon. The organization fosters a belief in the primacy of the people served, in resilience, and in the ability of individuals, organizations, and communities to heal and promote recovery from trauma. The organization understands that the experience of trauma may be a unifying aspect in the lives of those who run the organization, who provide the services, and/or who come to the organization for assistance and support. As such, operations, workforce development and services are organized to foster empowerment for staff and clients alike. Organizations understand the importance of power differentials and ways in which clients, historically, have been diminished in voice and choice and are often recipients of coercive treatment. Clients are supported in shared decision-making, choice, and goal setting to determine*

> *the plan of action they need to heal and move forward. They are supported in cultivating self-advocacy skills. Staff are facilitators of recovers rather than controllers of recovery. Staff are empowered to do their work as well as possible by adequate organizational support. This is a parallel process as staff need to feel safe, as much as people receiving services.* (2014, p. 11)

Despite the "organizational" and "service-oriented" language in the SAMHSA definition, myriad connections and parallels can be applied to school settings. Study group participants named these connections primarily from a student-focused lens, which, again, may be unsurprising given the nature of the reflection prompts. Participants focused heavily on providing choice, making connection to what they already do well as teachers, and seeking opportunities for growth. However, while this definition focuses on empowerment among "staff and clients alike," teachers did not appear to emphasize their own experiences of empowerment, voice, choice, and safety. Further, the notion of "coercive treatment" toward clients has potential to draw connections to classroom management and the possibility for manipulative and/or coercive behavior toward students. While this notion was somewhat glazed over in participant responses, this divergence from the SAMHSA definitions does not indicate a lack of care or attention to matters of classroom management; rather, as stated earlier, this noticing is another litmus test of the nature of participants' experiences in the group.

Cultural, historical, & gender issues. Teachers noticed that this principle overlapped with content from previous modules. While there were certainly connections noticed among prior modules, Module 7 was the first instance of someone outwardly expressing their tendency to combine or confuse material from previous modules. In their reflections, some teachers spoke about adapting their practices to accommodate differences in culture and/or "demographic."

Teachers indicated their desire to challenge existing stereotypes, including those that had to deal with gender norms and instruments. Participants also named the 2024 presidential election and corresponding inauguration, alluding to a "bleak" future ahead while expressing concerns about the safety and well-being of students and their families in a tumultuous political climate. Finally, participants also incorporated their own cultural histories and experiences of trauma as they reflected upon the material and connected with their peers in the study group.

In defining this final sixth principle, SAMHSA categorized the presence of cultural, historical, and gender issues with the following:

> *The organization actively moves past cultural stereotypes and biases (e.g. based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, gender-identity, geography, etc.); offers access to gender responsive services; leverages the healing value of traditional cultural connections; incorporates policies, protocols, and processes that are responsive to the racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of individuals served; and recognizes and addresses historical trauma.* (2014, p. 11)

Compared to the SAMHSA definition, I interpreted participants' responses as primarily aligned with gender-identity, cultural stereotypes, teacher biases, general history/past experiences, and race and/or ethnicity. Despite feeling "ill equipped" to enact such practices, several participants voiced their excitement about connections between culturally responsive and trauma-informed pedagogies. They wondered about music-specific applications and recognized the importance of culturally responsive and trauma-informed intersections. While some shared windows into their trauma histories, most of the teachers did not address historical trauma in their reflections or group discussions. One participant did reference migration and displacement, which was a topic that one person found in a resource, but the topic was not widely acknowledged by the group.

Participants also omitted certain social identities, such as sexual orientation, age, religion, and geography. While participants references "students with IEPs and 504s" and "demographic differences," participants did not explicitly mention dis/ability, race, or ethnicity.

Summary: SAMHSA's Key Principles Across Participant Responses

Using SAMHSA's (2014) six principles of trauma-informed approaches as a guiding analytic framework, I examined data from participant reflection journals, discussion posts, and group conversations. While certain prompts explicitly invited engagement with specific SAMHSA principles, participants acknowledged the interconnectedness of the framework and its adaptability for culturally and linguistically diverse classroom contexts. Given the intentional reflection structure, readers may not be surprised to see the six SAMHSA principles in participants' written responses. However, identifying the mere presence of the SAMHSA principles misses the heart of RQ2, which aims to examine the potentially interconnected nature of these principles within and throughout participant responses. Therefore, through analyzing participants' responses, I sought to examine their alignment with and/or divergence from the SAMHSA principles. Overall, participant responses aligned with the basic definition of the principles. However, some specificity and nuance from the definitions were not present in participants' responses. While this does not necessarily indicate misunderstanding among participants, participants' noticings (i.e., their responses to "I notice…I wonder…" prompts) can provide valuable insight into the experiences and perspectives among study group participants.

To what extent are the three temporal dimensions of teacher agency evident in participants' written reflections and survey responses? (RQ3)

In response to RQ3, I employed the three time-oriented dimensions of teacher agency as defined by Priestley et al. (2015) as an *a priori* framework to analyze the written reflections. As a point of triangulation, I conducted repeated measures using an agency scale (Leijen et al.,

2024) to measure the three dimensions of teacher agency via a seven-point Likert-type scale. After sharing my analytic process for examining the written reflections, I present selected findings from the agency measure. Then, positioning the survey as a point of triangulation, I briefly summarize my findings.

Agency in Written Responses

Agency can play a critical role in shaping educational praxis, functioning both as an enabler and constrainer of reflection and action in praxis. Rather than a static attribute or an inherent trait, agency is best understood as something teachers *do* as they dynamically interact with specific contexts (Biesta et al., 2015). This "doing" of agency is deeply entangled with the ways teachers reflect on their experiences, imagine future possibilities, and respond to their present realities, all of which are central to praxis development.

To conceptualize teacher agency in the context of PD and its relationship to praxis, I drew on Priestley et al.'s (2015) ecological model of teacher agency, which emphasizes three interrelated, temporal dimensions: the iterational dimension (the influence of teachers' past experiences and professional histories); the projective dimension (teachers' short- and long-term goals, aspirations, and imagined futures); and the practical-evaluative dimension (teachers' engagement with present cultural, structural, and material facets of daily life). In the context of the PD study group on trauma-informed practices, teacher agency is expressed when educators drew from their past (iterational), envisioned what could be (projective), and made decisions within the realities of their daily work (practical-evaluative).

To analyze teachers' written responses in group discussions and individual reflections, I used the three dimensions of the Priestley et al. (2015) framework to as an *a priori* framework to deductively explore my findings from RQ1. After multiple passes through the data, I identified *in*

vivo quotes from participant responses that were representative of one or more of the three temporal domains of the ecological model of teacher agency. Table 4.1 displays exemplar quotes from this process, organized in a matrix that highlights where my inductive themes intersect with the three temporal dimensions of teacher agency. For instance, at the intersection of the iterational (past) dimension and the personal & professional experiences category, one participant shared, "…it has taken 24 years for me to change my methods" (Carrie, Reflection 8). While this statement could be argued into a few of the agency dimensions, it is most representative of the iterational dimension of teacher agency because the teacher relied on the notion of past personal and professional experience and emphasized the amount of time it has taken to adjust their methods. Under the practical-evaluative dimension in the same category, another teacher shared about module materials connecting to "their strengths and weaknesses (what a relief!)" (Carrie, Discussion 8). Since this statement focuses on the participant's present feeling of relief upon seeing both their strengths and weaknesses represented in the study group materials, this statement best aligned with the cultural (i.e., pertaining to ideas, beliefs, discourses, and/or language) sub-category of the practical-evaluative dimension. Finally, in Reflection 7, Elizabeth stated, "I wonder what we can do to break down these ideas and actions we can take in our classrooms to help support a better future when it currently looks so bleak." Even though the first part of this statement is grounded in the present cultural and structural aspects of a classroom, the future-oriented nature of the teacher's wonderments about the longer-term future despite short-er term turmoil lands this statement solidly in the projective dimension. Table 4.1 displays exemplar quotes within each theme of the inductive findings and dimension of agency.

Table 4.1

Matrix: Intersections of Inductive Themes (RQ1) with Dimensions of Teacher Agency

Dimensions of Teacher Agency (Priestley et al., 2015)	**Iterational** (Past) *Life histories & professional histories*	**Practical-evaluative** (Present) *Cultural*	*Structural*	*Material*	**Projective** (Future) *Short-term & long-term goals*
Theme I: Responding with Candor					
About experiences in the study group *Course materials*; *Multiple truths*; *Apologizing for performance*	"I know my participation has been spotty, and for that I truly apologize…" (Carrie, Reflection 8) "While I enjoyed the readings in this week, it wasn't anything new." (Carrie, Reflection 6) I enjoyed finding many scenarios in the reading and in the listening that related to my own situations, past and present. It felt more relatable." (Eddie, Reflection 4)	"Many times, discussions are shallow, full of buzzwords, euphemisms and anecdotes that demonstrate a deficit mindset. They also tend to lack direct action / solutions." (Richard, Discussion 2)	"I feel safe and supported when I feel successful… Receiving validation for ideas, even if they are still forming, would encourage me to share more openly." (Claire, Discussion 3)	"I am out of practice reading scholarly research materials." (Eddie, Reflection 6) "I too had a hard time with the workload, even though it was not overtly arduous." (Carrie, Discussion 8)	"I wondered if the next modules will present more music specific material again." (Eddie, Reflection 5) "This is an ongoing learning process, and I look forward to hearing about your experiences!" (Claire, Discussion 4) I wish my schedule would allow more time for my own personal growth." (Carrie, Reflection 8)
		"What I will share is the gratefulness that I have for support groups at work and encouraging messages sent my way about how to deal with the fear that many of our families are now experiencing." (Eddie, Discussion 7)			
About personal histories & professional experiences *Strengths & weaknesses*; *Growth mindset*; *The "real world"*	"…it has taken 24 years for me to change my methods." (Carrie, Reflection 8) "I have done this in the past with students helping students, pairing students to learning something together, group work, and group assessment…" (Carrie, Reflection 4) "As I have mentioned, my family has its own traumatic experience we are still recovering from." (Eddie, Reflection 1)	"my weaknesses and also some strengths (what a relief!)" (Carrie, Discussion 8) "I often teach the subject matter but my trauma students do not grasp it as readily as others." (Carrie, Reflection 1)	"With what is happening politically I'm a bit distraught." (Eddie, Reflection 7) "I am fortunate to have a group of students who understand me and very regularly hear that I love them." (Eddie, Reflection 7)	"…adding more knowledge and tools to [their] toolkit[s]." (Elizabeth, Reflection 1) "…but I would like more ideas." (Carrie, Reflection 4)	"I don't think I will ever truly reach my goal, because my learning will never truly stop." (Elizabeth, Reflection 1) "I wonder what we can do to break down these ideas and actions we can take in our classrooms to help support a better future when it currently looks so bleak." (Elizabeth, Reflection 7)
Theme II: Asserting Perspectives & Uncovering Assumptions					
About trauma & trauma-informed approaches	"…resonated with the challenges some of my students face in processing emotions or participating in group activities." (Claire, Reflection 2)	"…passion for trauma-informed practices." (Elizabeth, Reflection 1) "I find that I often teach the subject	"[develop their] awareness of signs that a student is struggling." (Eddie, Reflection 1) "I wonder...how I can better involve families	"I would like tools in classroom management, and imparting of knowledge…" (Carrie, Reflection 1)	"The opportunities to incorporate trauma informed practices into my teaching are endless." (Eddie, Discussion 5)

		matter but my trauma students do not grasp it as readily as others." (Carrie, Reflection 1)	and colleagues in supporting trauma-informed strategies to build a more unified approach across the school community." (Claire, Reflection 5)	"We also have a chart in every classroom that students can mark their energy level and happiness level - even in the music room!" (Carrie, Reflection 3)	
About the nature of music education *Structure vs. Flexibility; A "natural" vehicle for community; Music as an emotional & creative outlet; Safety; Diversity & inclusion*	"…students are different every day and every time they come to music." (Elizabeth, Reflection 2)	"…the balance between maintaining high expectations in a structured music classroom and offering the flexibility needed to accommodate students navigating trauma." (Claire, Reflection 2) "Music often involves personal expression, creativity, and collaboration, which can evoke strong emotions or insecurities, particularly for students who have experienced trauma." (Claire, Reflection 4)	"I notice how naturally music creates opportunities for collaboration and mutual encouragement." (Claire, Reflection 4) "Collaboration is necessary on every level in our school, and it surely makes sense to draw students into our collaborative community as much as possible." (Eddie, Reflection 5)	"…how I can create a more culturally responsive music curriculum that reflects and celebrates the diverse backgrounds of my students." (Claire, Reflection 7)	"…how can I better encourage students to share their lived experiences or cultural connections to music in a way that feels safe and inclusive?" (Claire, Reflection 6)
About teacher language *The need to transform language; The "right" way; Normative practices*	"I work hard to build relationships with students, and I put a lot of focus on my words, tone, and delivery to ensure I do not damage these relationships when helping students deal with a struggle in the music room." (Elizabeth, Reflection 3)	"I notice that I am doing all the "right" things. I am using the strategies and skills that work toward a trauma informed music classroom. I am making a difference in the lives of my students, even if I don't see it every day." (Elizabeth, Reflection 8)	"We have a team of social workers and counselors who give us language to help students work through difficulties." (Carrie, Reflection 3)	"In addition to the reading materials that have been included here, I would like to include play based scenarios with staff. Where people model what to say and how to say it, then force/encourage participants to practice these models/phrases with others." (Elizabeth, Reflection 8)	"I wonder how I can impress on my coworkers the importance of building relationships with students and using a calm, even, kind tone when speaking with students." (Elizabeth, Reflection 3)
Student (mis)behavior	"I make a point to explain the reasoning behind rules, like the attendance policy for chorus, to ensure students understand that these guidelines are meant to support fairness and commitment." (Claire, Reflection 3)	I was honored and humbled in knowing the power that I have in my classroom to create an environment of love and the proper response to misbehavior. (Carrie, Reflection 2) "…some students may struggle with self-regulation, which might indicate underlying trauma or other stressors." (Carrie, Reflection 2)			"I wondered how I can build a bigger collection of go-to phrases to use when students are struggling in the classroom that can help with different scenarios - behavior disruptions, anxiety, worry, etc." (Elizabeth, Reflection 3)

Power dynamics *Empowering students; "Leveling power differences"; Teacher power*	"…during our chorus practices, I involve students in decisions about the performance, such as selecting specific verses to emphasize, brainstorming staging ideas, or even voting on dynamics for certain sections of a song. This empowers them to take ownership of their performances and feel valued as contributors." (Claire, Discussion 6)	"The emphasis on leveling power differences and fostering partnerships resonates deeply with the idea that healing occurs through relationships and shared decision-making." (Claire, Reflection 5)	"I wish I had time for therapy!" (Carrie, Reflection 5) "I still catch myself maki ng mistakes and just wa nting to show my power in the classroom when I am frustrated." (Carrie, Reflection 8)	"In the classroom I like to, as much as possible, let the student choose material that they will perform for assessments." (Eddie, Discussion 6)	"My goal is to create a music classroom where all students feel comfortable expressing themselves and participating fully. I'll know I've achieved this when I see students feeling more confident and engaged, and when I'm able to handle challenging moments with greater understanding and calmness." (Claire, Reflection 1)
Emotional/nervous system regulation *Skills & strategies to support students; "Being a mirror"*	"This school year I have been more open and honest about my feelings and emotions to the students while I'm teaching." (Elizabeth, Discussion 6)	"I still catch myself ma king mistakes and just wanting to show my p ower in the classroom when I am frustrated." (Carrie, Reflection 8)	"I really appreciated the moment in the podcast that stated how we are expecting teachers to have a trauma-informed lens, but they may be dysregulated *[sic]* themselves." (Elizabeth, Reflection 4)	"I noticed a new book I haven't read, yet! I put a hold on 'The Body Holds the Score' from the library to read soon!" (Elizabeth, Reflection 2)	

As demonstrated in Table 4.2, a combination of the inductive themes from RQ1 and the *a priori* framework related to RQ3 create a rich, interwoven tapestry of findings, demonstrating the presence of the iterative, projective, and practical-evaluative dimensions of agency across participants' experiences in the teacher study group.

Agency in Survey Items

I used the TIAST as a point of triangulation in this instrumental case study. Each of the 5 participants who persisted throughout the course completed each of the three surveys, except for one person who had blank/missing responses for Survey 2 only. On average, study group participants who completed the surveys did so in approximately 4 min 26 s, with a median response time of 4 min 15 s. I handled the nonresponse data as "missing." Similarly, a different participant answered "6" or "Mostly Agree" on the 7-point Likert-type scale for each of the 16 items across the three surveys. Given the amount of time participants spent taking each survey, it may be reasonable to conclude that the participant who selected "Mostly Agree" across the board

truly resonated with that level for every agency dimension. Table 4.2 shows measures of central tendency for each of the three iterations of the TIAST.

Table 4.2

Self-reported teacher ratings (TIAST)

TIAST Survey Item by Dimension	Teacher Ratings					
	Survey 1 n = 5		Survey 2 n = 4		Survey 3 n = 5	
	Mean	Mode*	Mean	Mode*	Mean	Mode*
Iterational Dimension (Past)						
During the past week, when I have considered implementing trauma-informed approaches in my work with students, I have been influenced by:						
My confidence toward implementing trauma-informed approaches	**5.2**	**6**	**5.0**	**--**	**5.8**	**6**
Knowledge, skills, or beliefs developed from my personal life experiences	**6.0**	**6**	**6.3**	**7**	**6.6**	**7**
Knowledge, skills, or beliefs developed based on my professional teaching experiences	**6.4**	**7**	**6.5**	**6**	**6.6**	**7**
Projective Dimension (Short-Term)						
During the past week, when I have considered implementing trauma-informed approaches in my work with students, I have been influenced by:						
Short-term goals related to learners' acquisition of content knowledge	**5.2**	**6**	**5.3**	**5**	**5.0**	**6**
Short-term goals related to supporting learners' motivation	**6.0**	**6**	**6.5**	**6**	**6.4**	**6**
Short-term goals related to learners' development & well-being	**6.6**	**7**	**6.3**	**6**	**6.8**	**7**
Short-term goals related to my personal development & well-being	**5.4**	**6**	**5.0**	**--**	**5.8**	**6**
Projective Dimension (Long-Term)						
During the past week, when I have considered implementing trauma-informed approaches in my work with students, I have been influenced by:						
Long-term goals related to learners' acquisition of content knowledge	**5.0**	**6**	**6.0**	**6**	**5.8**	**6**
Long-term goals related to supporting learners' motivation	**5.8**	**5**	**6.3**	**6**	**6.2**	**6**
Long-term goals related to learners' development & well-being	**6.6**	**7**	**6.5**	**6**	**6.8**	**7**
Long-term goals related to my personal development & well-being	**5.6**	**6**	**5.3**	**--**	**5.6**	**6**
Practical-evaluative (Present)						
During the past week, when I have considered implementing trauma-informed approaches in my work with students, I have been influenced by:						
Class/student group structure (e.g., group size, percentages related to student demographics)	**5.4**	**5**	**6.5**	**6**	**6.0**	**6**
Physical teaching environment (e.g., school building, classroom setup, physical materials/supplies)	**5.8**	**7**	**4.8**	**--**	**5.2**	**6**
School organizational culture (e.g., collaborative orientation, professional learning)	**6.6**	**7**	**5.8**	**7**	**5.8**	**6**
Administrators at school (e.g., mentoring, scheduling/workload, intervention support)	**6.4**	**6**	**4.0**	**--**	**5.4**	**6**
Colleagues at school (e.g., other teachers, specialists, and/or staff)	**6.2**	**6**	**4.3**	**5**	**4.8**	**6**

*Responses measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree)

Several interesting items can be gleaned from this set of repeated measures. Since none of the teachers responded with any form of "disagree" to any of the questions, nuances involved in the varying types of "agree" responses are even more important and compelling to consider. First, teachers consistently rated the influence of students' well-being higher than the influence of their own well-being. On average, the only items that consistently ranked lower than short-term learner knowledge were related to teacher well-being. The extent to which participants agreed that their past experiences influenced their present decision-making about enacting trauma-informed approaches increased over the three surveys. Trending in the opposite direction, participants reported that the influence of learners' future (short-term) knowledge acquisition decreased over time. Interestingly, short-term knowledge acquisition among learners was the only item to demonstrate a net decrease over the course of the three surveys. In Survey 2, several items in the practical-evaluative dimension decreased noticeably but then experienced slight increases in Survey 3. Apart from the practical-evaluative dimension, all dimensions of agency experienced an average net increase from Survey 1 to Survey 3.

Agency in Written Responses & Survey Items

While neither the qualitative matrix nor the quantitative can deterministically represent teachers' agency in applying trauma-informed approaches, such analyses can provide valuable insight into teacher processes (including agency) throughout the PD study group on trauma-informed practices. Rooted in Priestley et al.'s (2015) ecological model of teacher agency, the combination of deductive qualitative analysis and TIAS survey suggest the consistent presence of all three dimensions of teacher agency throughout the duration of the study group.

Based on their experiences in the teacher study group, what recommendations do participants believe should inform future iterations of trauma-informed professional development? (RQ4)

To address RQ4, I used part of Module 8 (Reflection 8 & Discussion 8) to ask participants to share their recommendations for future trauma-informed PD efforts:

> *REFLECTION JOURNAL 8*
>
> *...Finally, imagine you are responsible for designing and facilitating a professional development experience for music teachers about trauma-informed approaches.*
>
> *How would this experience look/sound/feel?*
>
> *What might you include or exclude and why?*
>
> *GROUP DISCUSSION 8*
>
> *What recommendations do you have for future courses about trauma-formed approaches in music education?*

Participant recommendations ranged from specific strategies and lesson sequencing to broader dispositions and considerations in teacher education. In the following section, I present findings from *in vivo* coding to center emic voice and report participant recommendations using participant pseudonyms.

Engaging with Students & Pedagogies to Support Professional Development

In response to the prompts about suggestions for future PD courses on trauma-informed approaches for music teachers, two participants wrote specifically about teaching (in general and in combination with particular approaches) as PD. Before recalling some specific mistakes she made in the classroom, Carrie noted that she was "encouraged by [this PD experience] because so many other teachers are seeing the need to teach with sensitivity and love" (Reflection 8). She

referenced “creating more opportunities for choice” as a powerful way to engage in “some new learning – for [her] and [her] students!” (Carrie, Reflection 8). Carrie’s response reflected her prioritization of daily teaching practices and the notion that teachers and students need support to learn from one another.

Eddie’s responses echoed similar sentiments by sharing the importance of “focus[ing] on the flexibility necessary to support students in crisis” (Eddie, Reflection 8). He went on to share about his experience with both Orff and Kodaly approaches, as well as his intention to take a variety of levels courses from different pedagogical ways of thinking. Referencing a particular approach, Eddie asserted that

> focusing on student voice and choice with multiple points of entry is very helpful for students who have traumatic experiences in their lives. It helps to make the music room a safer place where [students] can let go of their fears, cares, and worries. (Eddie, Reflection 8)

Eddie also alluded to staying in contact with group members in a longer-term capacity while candidly sharing about his limited time: “I appreciate having been a part of this group…I hope we can stay in contact somehow. Not that there’s much free time in my life right now…but this is a group that I’ve learned from:” (Eddie, Discussion 8). Combined, Carrie and Eddie communicated their beliefs about continuing to engage with students and other teachers as a pragmatic form of PD.

Facilitating Professional Development

In addition to participating in PD, one person brought up her interest in “designing and facilitating a PD experience based on trauma informed education” (Elizabeth, Reflection 8). Elizabeth shared that she was “a semifinalist for [an educational award/grant program]…that

may open some such doors for [her] moving forward" (Reflection 8) as she seeks to design and share trauma-informed PD resources, especially those that focus on teacher skills and teacher language. Though she expressed planning to use materials from the present study, she "would like to include play-based scenarios with staff…where people model what to say and how to say it, then force/encourage participants to practice these models/phrases with others." Elizabeth stated, "I firmly believe if teachers do not have the experience, they are not going to use the skill, and it takes a long time of practice and modeling to hone skills" (Reflection 8). Such an interactive, skill-based PD experience seemed to be of utmost importance to Elizabeth.

Addressing Cultural Needs

While the entire group was focused on this topic, Claire and Eddie's responses were particularly geared toward integrating trauma-informed and culturally-responsive practices. In her discussion post, Claire shared three recommendations for future courses: "Include real-world case studies and practical scenarios. Explore connections with [social emotional learning] and cultural diversity. Provide tools for advocacy and peer collaboration" (Claire, Discussion 8). She went on to describe other specific recommendations for future PD experiences, largely drawn from one of the videos in our PD course:

1. Culture and Migration Journeys: Educating teachers about the emotional impact of migration and how cultural identity intersects with trauma.
2. Trauma-Informed Assessment: Training on empathetic and flexible assessment practices that prioritize student well-being over rigid academic metrics.
3. Practical Strategies: Examples of how to incorporate culturally responsive teaching in music, such as allowing students to share their cultural music traditions.

4. [Social emotional learning] Integration: Activities that help students process emotions through music, fostering a sense of safety and belonging.

The [PD] experience would:

1. Look: Engaging, with role-playing scenarios and hands-on activities.
2. Sound: Collaborative, with open dialogue and sharing of strategies.
3. Feel: Compassionate and empowering, giving teachers tools to support their students effectively.

I'd exclude overly abstract content, ensuring all sessions remain practical and relevant, directly addressing the challenges music teachers face in diverse classrooms. This approach ensures alignment with the needs of students impacted by trauma and migration. (Claire, Reflection 8)

Such considerations both resonate with and diverge from opportunities provided in the present PD setting contextualizing this study.

Considerations for Music Teacher Education

Finally, Richard's suggestions problematized what may be considered best practices in music education. For example, he spoke at length in the group Zoom discussion about approaches that we are explicitly taught to do in music education that may actually be harmful and/or trauma averse:

I'm thinking about how, like...specifically as a music teacher, what are some of the things that we teach (and/or do) that are not…trauma informed? Like things that we are learning at whatever music education school you go through…whatever songs we're teaching… where are we with that? Where are we with that as a group? As educators, how could we

> consider that? …I don't know if that's something that I'm not aware of, but I think we can make growth in those areas. (Richard, Zoom Discussion)

In the conversation, Richard's perspectives were lifted in affirmation by group members, both verbally and non-verbally. In his written response, Richard specifically focused-in on the role of teacher education in the process of reinscribing what music educators canonically know as best practices:

> I appreciate the acknowledgement [in this PD course] of how teacher education training doesn't adequately prepare us to navigate [trauma-informed] terrain. We have to figure out how to recruit, train and retain educators who are learning to make a difference and succeeding in these [trauma-informed] spaces. (Richard, Discussion 4)

Though a formidable and consequential undertaking, such an outlook on and re-envisioning of trauma-informed approaches in music education resonated strongly with the participants in the PD study group.

Summary: Participant Recommendations for Future Trauma-Informed PD

In reflecting on their experiences, participants offered a range of recommendations for future trauma-informed professional development efforts in music education. Such recommendations included practical pedagogical strategies centered on student voice, choice, and culturally responsive practices, as well as the importance of experiential learning for teachers. Carrie and Eddie emphasized daily teaching as an ongoing form of PD, highlighting flexibility, sensitivity, and student engagement. Elizabeth advocated for interactive, skill-based PD that includes modeling and practicing teacher language. Claire proposed integrating real-world scenarios, SEL, and cultural diversity into PD design, while Richard called for critical reflection on traditional music education practices and a reimagining of teacher preparation

programs. Together, these perspectives suggest that effective trauma-informed PD must be ongoing, contextually relevant, and grounded in both reflective practice and action-oriented, collaborative learning.

Chapter 5: Discussion

> *"As trusted adults, educators can promote resilience, provide opportunities for growth, and inspire their students to work towards positive change in themselves and others. Educators are in a position to be able to walk alongside students as they make sense of the world and prepare to be engaged and responsible global citizens. But none of this works if educators do not have the information and support that they need. All of these factors underscore the necessity of including training around trauma-informed, equity-promoting practices in teacher preparation programs as well as through ongoing professional development opportunities." (Schepers et al., 2022, p. xii)*

The purpose of this study was to examine explore elementary general music teachers' experiences throughout a professional development experience centered around trauma-informed practices. Further, I sought to examine elementary music teachers' sense of agency in applying trauma-informed approaches in their teaching praxis. Using instrumental case study design, I conducted an asynchronous, online teacher study group focused on trauma-informed approaches. In this chapter, I begin by sharing a summary of my findings organized by research question (RQ). Then, I present a discussion of findings and implications for practice that converge with, extend, and/or refute points in extant literature. Next, I provide suggestions for future research and considerations for preservice music teacher preparation, practicing music educators, and facilitators of trauma-informed PD efforts. Finally, I end this chapter with a few closing thoughts pertinent to this study and future trauma-informed efforts in music education.

Summary of Findings

In this section, I provide a summary of findings from Chapter 4, which involved the experiences of five participants throughout an eight-week professional development teacher study group comprised of eight modules informed by trauma-informed approaches established by SAMHSA (2014). Within modules, participants completed surveys, written reflections, and group discussions. Organized by research question, this summary is intended to provide context for the reader in preparation for the discussion of findings in conversation with extant literature and suggestions for future studies.

Summary: RQ1

RQ1 focused on the nature of participants' experiences in the study group. Prior to interacting with materials in Module 1, participants shared their initial definitions of trauma-informed practices, most of which pertained to teacher practices and student outcomes, such as behavior. Just as definitions can create a common ground for conceptual understanding, participants used the group discussion board to co-construct group norms in Module 2. Their norms reflected commitments to maintaining positive intent and sharing diverging perspectives.

In their journal responses and group discussions, participants candidly asserted a variety of opinions about the course materials, which varied in format and content. The course modules (which included readings, blogs, podcasts, and videos) began with an introduction to trauma, trauma-informed principles, and later connected to music-specific contexts. Participants voiced their appreciation for the music-specific material and connected to examples where teachers experienced "success" and/or moved through mistakes that felt familiar to their own experiences. One teacher even expressed feeling "relieved" to discover that they were seeing their strengths reflected in the module material. In response to a practitioner article in *Music Educators Journal,*

one participant voiced their lack of endurance for reading research-oriented scholarship while another participant lamented that there had not been more music-specific content earlier in the study group. Others shared that they enjoyed the materials that spoke broadly about trauma and classroom management while others explicitly identified when that same content "wasn't anything new." Several participants shared that they wanted more practical language examples and tools rather than a "psychological deep dive." Overall, teachers appeared to enjoy the material that felt relatable, although their definitions of "relatable content" certainly diverged.

Participants also shared candidly about their personal histories, a few of which involved trauma. In response to one of the opening group discussion posts, one participant shared that they had previously endured several adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Another participant openly referred to a traumatic situation their family was healing from. A third participant shared about their experiences with trauma related to deculturalization, wherein aspects of their culture were ignored and/or dismissed in school. When asked to discuss their students, all participants responded with some level of awareness about teaching students who had experienced trauma or who "[came] from trauma," indicating that students bring trauma to school with them and could leave a "a black spot" on their social record at school.

Participants in the asynchronous, online study group demonstrated a desire to further their own learning. Since these teachers self-selected into a study group for the purposes of learning more, knowing better, and doing better, a growth-mindset was part of what compelled these participants to join the study group in the first place. Yet, as they shared about their desires to continue learning and growing as educators, participants connected to broader social contexts, including the 2024 presidential election. While acknowledging their own continued growth as educators, teachers explicitly named the dearth of basic needs (e.g., insecurity with food,

housing, transportation, and/or medical care) among the families in their school communities. A few participants stated students' insecurity with basic needs as motivation to continue learning about trauma-informed practices and creating safe environments for all students.

Directly and indirectly, study participants asserted their perspectives, which often resulted in uncovered assumptions, either by the participants themselves or me as the facilitator. For example, while reflecting about the pervasive and often invisible nature of trauma, one participant stated they were certain that many of their students had experienced trauma: "I'm sure far too many." Another teacher asserted that, although they teach the musical content, "[their] trauma students do not grasp it as readily as others." Through such statements, participants present snapshots of the underlying belief structures—such as academic deficiency among "trauma students"—implicitly embedded throughout teachers' words and actions.

In addition to trauma, other responses provided windows into participant beliefs about music and music education. One participant asked how they could go about "support[ing] students who have experiences trauma while still encouraging exploration and fun in music." Such a question led me to wonder if this participant might be conflating "surviving trauma" with "seriousness" or "lack of exploration and fun." Another teacher had a similar thought when they wondered about "integrat[ing] trauma-informed practices in a way that aligns with the joyful, creative nature of music education," implying that the music classroom is inherently joyful and creative, while trauma-informed practices are fundamentally different. Similar assumptions appeared when teachers spoke about music activities as a "naturally social" or "collaborative," meaning they could easily foster community and teamwork, therefore ameliorating the impacts of trauma. Someone referenced "the caring nature of our [music education] profession" as a beacon of hope for the future of the "real world." Another person shared that "creative

movement is always something that engages students" while someone else stated that "some of the most beautiful art comes from trauma." In approaching these statements from a non-judgmental orientation (Brown, 2016), I remind myself that participants' beliefs and my interpretations of them are neither "good" nor "bad" but indicative of this group's present perceptions of trauma-informed practices in music education.

Participants also asserted their individual and collective desires to create and sustain physically and emotionally safe spaces for students. This was a resounding priority among the teachers, who directly connected students' "ability to engage in learning" with their "sense of identity and emotional well-being." Though some felt "ill equipped" to facilitate teaching environments that were responsive to the intersections of trauma and culture, participants maintained their commitment to safety in several forms, which included student identities along the lines of race, ethnicity, citizenship status, and gender.

Teacher participants shared with candidness and vulnerability about their areas of strength and weakness, which conveyed an intent to engage with course material beyond simply "absorbing" or "collecting" information. Participants criticized their own performance in the study group, particularly when they happened to be behind on submitting an assignment. While this asynchronous course was self-paced and ungraded, participants communicated their appreciation of a music-specific PD experience and held themselves to high performance standards in the study group while acknowledging their power in teacher-student interactions, demonstrating their simultaneous awareness of and use of their power and autonomy.

Participants also recognized when their power was hindering their practices. In a reflection, one teacher explained how they continue to catch themselves "making mistakes and just wanting to show my power in the classroom when I am frustrated." Such vulnerability and

transparency of thought demonstrates participants' willingness to use their reflections as spaces to communicate something other than their "good teaching" through the course modules. In a similar reflection, a different teacher explicitly named their desire to incorporate more "free-play" activities in the music classroom, but they have "always decide[d] against it due to a variety of reasons including time, curriculum topic, and [their] personal control anxiety." The teacher explicitly named the potential benefits for students while actively identifying the ways in which they were preventing students from experiencing such an activity. Like their PD peers in the study group, this participant identified a disconnect between their beliefs and practices, highlighting their power to avoid "best practices" to maintain teacher comfort and control.

Teacher power often connected to the notion of empowering students, which was often described as allowing students to choose classroom repertoire (e.g., students choosing songs for certain activities or performances, like fifth grade graduation). Participants viewed song-choosing as a primary way for students to "take ownership" and "feel valued as contributors." Others referred to empowerment among students as "full participation" or participating with "confidence." While I assume these responses came from a place of positive intent among participants, such approaches highlight the teacher's perception of student empowerment rather than students' actual, lived experiences. Participants did not question or problematize statements like "full participation" and appeared to frame "confidence" as a certain type of involvement and/or behavior in the class. However, participants reaffirmed the importance of teaching and learning about skills like emotional regulation, which are essential for everyone, including teachers. The educators in the study group expressed that it was within their "teacher power" to regulate their own emotions before helping students to self-regulate.

Finally, through the asynchronous, online teacher study group, participants problematized "classroom management" systems and their own teacher-student interactions in a way that centered their own experiences and teaching contexts, which may impact their future person-to-person actions with students. They continuously sought out "appropriate" teacher language and commented on noticing they were doing all the "right" things based on course materials. Yet they also realized that no one approach, strategy, or phrase would miraculously "heal" students or "fix" trauma. While undoubtedly committed to supporting students, study participants spoke about feeling like "the onus is on the teacher…to fill…gaps" in students' emotional regulation skills.

Summary: RQ2

In RQ2, I sought to examine the presence of the SAMHSA (2014) principles in participants' written and verbal responses. Guided by structured reflection prompts and scaffolded module materials, study participants engaged with the SAMHSA principles throughout the duration of the PD study group. Participants primarily focused on the principles (defined by SAMHSA and intersecting with foundational empirical work by Harris & Fallot, 2001) in the context of their classroom environments and daily interactions with students. This may be unsurprising and perhaps expected, particularly given that the reflection structures encouraged participants to reflect on their current work with students. However, such individual interactions are also inextricably connected to power structures and systems beyond the control of individual teachers. Notably, participants acknowledged the imperative role that teachers play in enacting trauma-informed practices while simultaneously realizing that it's not solely the teachers' responsibility to "solve the problem" of trauma.

Summary: RQ3

I structured RQ3 to examine the presence of the temporal domains of teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015) across participant responses. Although I prompted participants to reflect on elements of past, present, and/or future in certain reflections and discussion questions, all three elements were evident in participants' contributions throughout the duration of the study group. Teachers' reflections on their *past experiences* encompassed their opinions about study modules, prior strategies used with students, their own previous traumatic experiences, and reflections on their 20+ years of working to change their teaching practices. Study participants also shared their *short- and long-term aspirations*, including working with others for the remainder of the study group, wishing for more music-specific materials, picking up a new book related to trauma from the library, wondering about supporting students for the long-term in a bleak political landscape, wishing for a schedule that would accommodate their personal growth, and influencing colleagues to adopt language that would better support students. Finally, participant responses also indicated their *engagement with the present*, including their struggles with the current study group module materials and being "out of practice reading scholarly materials," feeling relieved, distraught, fortunate, and/or frustrated, among other emotions as they considered the current social state of the U.S., expressing their "passion for trauma-informed practices," and wondering about how to innovate within cultural, structural, and material facets of their music classrooms and school communities.

As a point of triangulation, the *Trauma-Informed Agency Scale for Teachers* (TIAST) indicated findings like those in participant responses. However, teacher self-report data indicated the following areas contributed least to their decisions about trauma-informed approaches: participants' personal confidence, physical teaching environment, colleagues at school, personal

well-being (long-term and short-term), and short-term goals for students' acquisition of content knowledge.

Summary: RQ4

Finally, in RQ4, I wondered what this insightful group of experienced music educators—who expressed deep commitment to trauma-informed practices in music education—would suggest for future professional development efforts. In Module 8 (final module), participants answered direct prompts about their recommendations for future trauma-informed PD efforts. Participants voiced being encouraged by other educators, wanting to learn alongside their students, and requiring flexibility to assist "students in crisis." Another participant stated their intent to design and facilitate a similar PD experience, which would include active, role-playing scenarios to support teachers' language skills in teacher-student interactions. In their recommendations, others focused on the intersection of culturally responsive and with trauma-informed approaches, which both overlapped with content in this study and incorporated content that was not part of this study. One participant questioned the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs to adequately prepare teachers to use trauma-informed approaches.

While all participants provided insightful ideas, their suggestions for practice lacked specificity. This contrasted noticeably with the degree of detail they appeared to be asking for in the study group. Words like "practical," "relevant," and "empowering" appeared throughout participant responses, but apart from general ideas for activities, participants tended to steer away from specific details for preservice or in-service teacher learning. While this could be a result of an imagined scenario devoid of concrete context, it is also possible that the teachers' vocabulary of concrete, trauma-informed practices or confidence to suggest enacting certain practices is limited.

Discussion & Implications

While generalizability was not a goal of this study, the instrumental nature of the design allows for transferability to similar settings. As such, my implications are broadly framed for the field of music education. In the following sections, I present a discussion of findings in conversation with prior literature, woven with implications for music education & music teacher education as they converge with and/or diverge from extant literature.

Convergence with Extant Literature

In this section, I discuss selected findings and present implications from my study in conversation with ideas that echo, extend, and/or refute existing literature. For ease of reading, I have grouped this conversation into the following topics: identifying systems of harm & oppression; supporting emotional regulation & agency while disrupting deficit; and supporting effectual PD efforts.

Identifying systems of harm & oppression. In their definitions of trauma-informed practices, only one of the five participants explicitly identified the possibility that schools and schooling practices and/or policies could harm students. While this does not necessarily indicate that the other four participants believed otherwise, the notion that most teacher participants identified trauma as something that "students carry into the classroom" rather than a systemic part of schools and schooling is a narrative worthy of continued attention and problematization. Educators who refer to students "bringing trauma" with them may be unintentionally communicating the notion that trauma only exists outside of school, implying the absence of trauma caused within schools and because of schooling norms & practices. While it is true that some students may regularly experience intra-familial violence, abuse, neglect, or other heinous forms of trauma, the implication that students *only* bring trauma into the classroom if they bring

it from outside of school is a misnomer. For instance, Thomas-Durrell (2021) reflected on her journey with untangling trauma caused by her musical erasure from the school music classroom; in her case, one form of school-induced trauma that is not "brought" from home can involve the act of erasing what Thomas-Durrell called "already-present musical identities" in the music classroom via their omission in the "academic" curricula (2021). Through the teacher study group, my findings both support and extend work previously established in the literature (e.g., Thomas-Durrell, 2021).

The SAMHSA (2014) principles have been presented and enacted in myriad forms throughout existing literature. In this study, participants expressed their understanding that teachers are powerful in—though not ultimately responsible for—"solving the problem" of trauma. Such a stance aligns with Berring et al.'s (2024) assertion that researchers should seek to explore trauma-informed approaches in real-world settings with systems-level changes, focusing on the processes rather than the outcomes of trauma-informed efforts (e.g., "compliant" student behavior, test scores, and academic outcomes). The feasible, real-world setting of this PD study group demonstrates one way to move toward process-focused, systems-level change. Although the SAMHSA (2014) principles can support such efforts, researchers must also actively frame their inquiries to center systems-level changes rather than solely focus on student-level academic outcomes and (mis)behavior.

Supporting emotional regulation & agency while disrupting deficit. An essential prerequisite to establishing SAMHSA-oriented practices in the classroom involves modeling process of emotional regulation for students and with students. As the individuals often tasked with implementing trauma-informed approaches, teachers must receive intentional guidance and support as they navigate reacting and responding to students' regulated and dysregulated

behaviors. To help dysregulated students move toward a regulated state, a teacher must first be able to self-regulate (Venet, 2023). This is because students who are still learning to self-regulate require co-regulation with a regulated nervous system in order to re-regulate (Van der Kolk, 2014). Such processes may mirror conventional educational techniques (e.g., "I do, we do, you do"), which are often used when sequencing academic content for children. Alongside content knowledge and pedagogy, a music teacher's ability to self-regulate to serve as a source of co-regulation for children is an idea that is becoming more prevalent in the music education literature (e.g., Bailey, 2022; Bauman-Field, 2024; McEvoy & Salvador, 2020; Ryals, 2022; Salvador & Culp, 2022). Alongside narratives of healing in music (e.g., Bonny, 1986, p. 3; Hajar, 2002; Van Putten, 1992) and care in music education (e.g., Hendricks, 2023), narratives involving self-regulation may be more present because elementary music teachers often see student cohorts over multiple years (McEvoy & Salvador, 2020). While it is valid that kindness and energy can be "felt" (Richard, Zoom Discussion), trauma-informed skills and competencies encompass feelings which should be accompanied by strategies and skills—like self-regulation—which require thoughtful and intentional scaffolding.

Despite the valid feeling that, as one participant expressed, teachers should not be solely responsible for making up for all the "gaps" in students' regulation, teachers ought to realize that a) they are responsible for self-regulating, which might involve steps such as seeking out therapy dealing with their own trauma, and b) students can be taught to self-regulate through co-regulation with another regulated nervous system. As adults charged with caring for students at school, music teachers are among those who interact with students in short- and long-term capacities. Aligning with assertions made by Venet (2023) and others, such interactions are also crucial to interpersonal relationships in education. In a music education setting, a teacher's

ability to model and facilitate (self-)regulation skills may drastically impact students' abilities to engage with musical skills and content.

Just as Brown (2016) framed behavior among school-leaving, street-involved youth as seeking adaptive well-being rather than making "bad," "dysfunctional," or "immoral" choices, music educators can disrupt notions of deficit by interpreting students' undesired behaviors as adapting to their environment and, at their core, seeking a form of safety, whether it be physical, mental, emotional, psychological, or otherwise. Since behavior may be a sign of an unmet need, the role of the teacher ought to involve responding to students in ways that prioritize dignity, uphold humanity, and seek more nuanced approaches to reacting/responding to a students' dysregulated state. While dysregulation is a commonly used term in the literature, future researchers might consider using a different term that more adequately reflects a non-judgmental orientation and rejects dysregulation. Without an adequate replacement word or phrase, for the purpose of this document I will continue to use dysregulation.

When a teacher is trying to help a student move from dysregulation to regulation, the teacher might consider a verbal explanation from the child to be the most direct and helpful way to support a child's needs in that moment. However, the findings related to emotional regulation demonstrate the need for continued education for teachers regarding the physical and psychological processes involved in states of dysregulation among children. If teachers are to truly support the developmental needs of children, then their responses must be in line with the actual developmental needs of children, including what they need when they are in dysregulated states. As such, teacher preparation programs, organizations, PD efforts, administrators, and individual teachers must work to learn about students' developmental needs—mentally, socially,

psychologically, physically, and musically—in order to provide a music education experienced by students as safe, supportive, and inclusive, regardless of their emotional state.

Participants' responses painted a portrait of engagement across the temporal dimensions of agency, as well as varied interactions with individual, school, and community contexts, congruent with Priestley et al.'s (2015) ecologically-situated framework for teacher agency. Like participants in other dissertations related to trauma-informed music education (i.e., Bailey, 2022 & Ryals, 2022), PD participants also recognized the power held by teachers and other educational stakeholders (e.g., staff, administrators, families, community members, local representatives, researchers, etc.) involved in implementing trauma-informed efforts. While there are many ways to approach and possibly ameliorate power differentials, participants constantly questioned their roles, reactions, and future strategies to navigate power differentials. Such questioning was especially important as participants reflected about empowering students, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and supporting musical skill development. In a proactive rather than reactive process, trauma-informed principles—like those established by SAMHSA (2014)—can support foundational growth and development among children, including their musicianship. However, as evidenced by the findings in this study, teachers desire concrete, context-oriented, content-specific strategies. While there is no one right way to define or enact trauma-informed practices (e.g., Venet, 2023), teachers require pragmatic support in order to implement trauma-informed practices in the classroom (Schepers et al., 2022), which may be provided in the form of PD that values and centers teacher agency.

Supporting effectual PD efforts. To effectively implement collaborative PD efforts, PD facilitators must be explicitly taught *how* to implement collaborative PD and seek to understand *why* that PD might be "effective." Similarly, the teachers participating in PD also need explicit

guidance in or order to learn *how* to implement trauma-informed practices as well as understand *why* those processes may be effective. Such scaffolded approaches align with the aims of other PD-related studies in music education, though they did not focus explicitly on trauma-informed approaches (e.g., Cullen, 2018; Grimsby, 2020; Knapp, 2024; Lewis 2022; McNickle, 2021; Sindberg, 2016; Stanley, 2009, 2011, 2012). By incorporating reflective practices like journaling and intentional group discussions throughout the PD, I aimed to scaffold participants' understanding of how and why trauma-informed practices can be impactful in the music classroom. In such spaces, teachers may encounter ways of thinking, knowing, and being that can disrupt rather than perpetuate the status quo in music education. Regardless of an organization's written or stated values, a group's normative practices can be tangibly felt, experienced, and remembered by its constituents. The same can be said for teacher-student interactions and other relationships within school communities, including PD settings. Like students, teachers also "know energy," perhaps especially when that energy is directed toward performative acts of collaboration and community. By intentionally centering teachers' lived experiences and perspectives—instead of putting folks in a room together for the sake of putting them in a room together—PD initiatives pertaining to trauma-informed practices may tangibly to communicate to teachers that their expertise is seen, valued, and appreciated. A first step in such a practice within a PD setting, for example, involves listening to teachers, hearing what they want and need, and responding to their needs—and assets—with intention.

Though the teachers in the study group centered the notion of growth through learning new ways of thinking and sharing diverse perspectives, the act of mutually agreeing upon a set of normative practices does not guarantee transparency or meaningful engagement in a professional development experience. As Stanley (2011) asserted, the use of a particular PD configuration

does not automatically equip and/or enable teachers to disrupt the status quo. Such assertions hold true for multiple forms of professional development that have been explored in music education, including collaborative teacher study groups (e.g., Knapp, 2024; Lewis 2022; McNickle, 2021; Stanley, 2009, 2011, 2012), communities of practice (e.g., Grimsby, 2020; Sindberg, 2016); teacher collaboration groups (e.g., Cullen, 2018); and the teacher study group in the present inquiry. When designed to honor the lived experiences of group members while encouraging discussion and reflection over several interactions, collaborative PD efforts and processes (e.g., co-constructing group norms) may center teacher-participant expertise, areas for continued growth, which can subsequently support students and their musicianship (Stanley, 2011). In the spirit of such aims, I designed the asynchronous, online teacher study group to decenter my experiences and lift up participants' experiences by modeling reflective listening, consistently incorporating reflective questioning techniques in written prompts and discussions, and supporting participants in generating their perspectives through reflections which were directly connected to their daily work with students. While not musical in nature, such strategies may be transformative for participants' future interactions with students and, subsequently, students' musical skill development.

In an environment where teachers could have easily used their reflection spaces to say "all is fine/good," study group participants transparently shared their candid thoughts about the PD materials. Contrary to the belief that positive feedback indicates a "successful" PD workshop, a lack of "positive" or "affirming" feedback from participants can be informative about the nature of the study group. Importantly, participants appeared to most enjoy music-specific materials where they could see themselves reflected (either through their strengths or their weaknesses) in the course resources. Like teaching students, PD facilitators might consider

a combination of approaches and techniques to simultaneously affirm, motivate, and challenge the teachers. To encourage a more nuanced or honest mindset among teachers, PD facilitators can vary the format of materials (e.g., using multiple forms of media, including audio and video), provide choice in PD activities, and prioritize time and space for teachers to connect to their past experiences, present situations, and future aspirations (Priestley et al., 2015).

Divergence from Extant Literature

In this section, I engage in discussion and implications exploring ways in which this study departs from extant literature through the following areas: designing & evaluating trauma-informed PD; the prevalence of ACEs; and misalignment between intent & impact.

Designing & evaluating trauma-informed PD. This study departs from prior music education studies (e.g., Grimsby, 2020; Knapp, 2024; Lewis, 2022; McNickle, 2021; Ryals, 2022) in its asynchronous format and focus on teacher processes as opposed to student outcomes. Because it is well documented that teacher processes impact student experiences and teacher interactions, a focus on teacher praxis is of paramount importance. Given the nature of the surveys and design of the PD course, it is true that social desirability bias could have played a significant role in the PD survey results and journal reflections alike. However, it is also reasonable to assume that, while teachers care about their own well-being for instance, a teacher might rank student well-being higher on their list of what influences them to consider incorporating trauma-informed practices into their teaching. Unlike prior studies that have focused on student outcomes (e.g., Maynard et al., 2019), this study uniquely contributes to the literature related to teacher agency and contextual influences while consciously entertaining the notion of implementing trauma-informed efforts.

Related to trauma-informed practices outside of education, Alvarez (2017) and others (e.g., Maynard et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2024; Thomas et al., 2019) noted that the moves made by teachers are under investigated and under evaluated. As previously mentioned, school-based trauma-informed practices primarily focus on student-focused outcomes rather than teacher-based processes. This cycle can unintentionally place the onus for the "success" of a trauma-informed intervention on the behavior of children. Thomas et al. (2019) identified the need for research to focus on concrete contexts, where teachers engage with the complexities of navigating trauma-informed efforts in the specific context of their work with students. In exploring a concrete, feasible, and scalable teacher PD context using an asynchronous, online setting, this study makes an important contribution to the literature involving context-focused, content-specific PD for trauma-informed approaches.

Prevalence of ACEs. Through the study group, participants were introduced to the unfortunate reality of trauma's presence among adults who continue to endure is long-lasting impacts (Felitti et al., 1998; Ferraz et al., 2023). In such conversations, terms like "ACEs" from Felitti et al.'s (1998) study—which has been scrutinized for its methodology—are cited across literature pertaining to trauma-informed educational practices. However, while the study group modules introduced participants to ACEs, teachers did not maintain use of that specific term throughout the duration of the study group. This is an interesting point of departure from existing literature because of the high visibility of the ACEs framing in trauma literature (Lacey & Minnis, 2020). While the prevalence of trauma—both in the lives of students and adults—was a given in each participant's eyes, they did not focus on the mere existence of trauma among students. Instead, guided by the material and structure of the study group, participants reflected on their own interactions with students and examined processes through which they might be

able to create and sustain trauma-informed music classrooms and corresponding pedagogies. Such a shift away from a past-oriented perspective that positions trauma as something students "carry" with them demonstrates the evolution of trauma-informed approaches since Felitti et al.'s (1998) ACEs study, which adopted a medical model of trauma as something the "fix." A pivot away from a medical model of trauma holds subsequent implications for educational stakeholders as they seek to support post-traumatic growth and healing among students (Bargeman et al., 2022).

Misalignment between intent & impact. This study also diverges from extant literature because it highlights misalignment between teacher intent and teacher impact. Whether experienced in a direct or indirect capacity, teachers and students are constantly encountering trauma and its impacts; however, survivors of trauma may be retraumatized when their undesired behaviors are viewed as what one participant described as "a black spot" on a student's reputation at school. While this participant may have intended to share their concern about "negative" connotations for students based on behavior, such a framing has impacts tied to morality, trauma, and race. First, the notion of "a black spot" on a record may position behavior as an indicator of morality, or levels of "goodness" and "badness," that follow children throughout their time in school. Second, idea that "misbehavior" among "trauma students" (e.g., Hess, 2021) as a type of social "pollution" may have severe consequences for students, teachers, and families alike. Finally, while not a new construct in society, the use of blackness as interchangeable with "badness" is surprising in a group of teachers who express commitment to trauma-informed care, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Further, terms like "black spots" on "behavior records" appear to be more indicative of a carceral system than an educative one. While maintaining a non-judgmental orientation, problematic teacher expressions in PD

reflections ought to be approached as student behavior ought to be approached: with an assumption of good will, the intent to understand the underlying message, and the calm yet firm and clear redirection of energy toward replacement phrases/behaviors to align intent with impact. Rather than call out teachers for misalignment, a non-judgmental orientation (Brown, 2016) may encourage repair and renewal in student-teacher interactions by adjusting the words teachers use.

Several teachers also brought up "help[ing] students think when they are [dysregulated]" to help students achieve emotional regulation. This aim, while undoubtedly rooted in good intent on part of the teacher, directly contradicts the extant literature about regulation and dysregulation. When children are dysregulated to the point where they are in a fight, flight, fawn, or freeze survival state, children may be unable to access the language area of the brain (Van der Kolk, 2014), rendering strategies such as "thinking through the emotions" or "just tell me what's going on" useless. By asking a child who is in a dysregulated emotional state to think, well-meaning teachers can unintentionally escalate the situation and make it worse, which can lead to continued undesired behaviors among adults and children alike. Because a child in that dysregulated emotional state requires a separate, regulated nervous system to re-regulate through co-regulation, the adult's regulation in such a scenario is imperative. Without knowledge pertaining to regulation and dysregulation, including necessary information about the child's brain during such episodes, teachers may unknowingly contribute to a child's further dysregulated state, which can result in retraumatization for the child and/or secondary traumatization for the onlooking teachers, staff, and/or students. As a group of music educators highly interested in trauma-informed practices, examining the (mis)alignment in their impact versus their intent can be informative for future trauma-informed PD for music educators. As a starting point for implementation of trauma-informed classroom practices, teachers need to

understand their own regulatory processes and the ways in which they can manage in a classroom environment. Educators are then charged with understanding the developmental, cognitive, and physical nature of children experiencing dysregulation, as such understanding is necessary in building appropriate vocabulary, skills, and classroom systems to enact trauma-informed praxis.

Recommendations for Praxis

In this section, I provide suggestions and insights pertinent to praxis related to preservice & practicing music educators, as well as trauma-informed professional development.

Preservice & Practicing Music Educators

Across preservice and practicing settings, the findings in this study illuminate the necessity for music educators to realize what they can and cannot change and/or control. Though potentially cliché at first glance, juxtaposing participants' confidence about their own professional learning with the deep fear and concern for broader humanitarian contexts indicates the levels to which participants were engaging with facets of ecologically-situated agency throughout the teacher study group (e.g., Priestly et al., 2015). By focusing on what they could control amid social and political strife, participants demonstrated resilience, regulation, and the ability to reason, all while navigating past, present, and future dimensions of their own agency. Given that schools and schooling are inherently connected to broader societal contexts largely out of the control of teachers, it may be beneficial for PD facilitators to strategically emphasize elements of the PD experience that are within teachers' sphere of control. Such an approach could incorporate Priestley et al.'s (2015) temporal dimensions of teacher agency to ground PD in participants' lived experiences while supporting teachers as they identify their spheres of control in various contexts. This work can be supported by similar efforts in music teacher

preparation practices, which can situate existing curricula in a frame that supports agency among preservice teachers.

My findings also emphasize the inextricable connections among teacher beliefs and practices, as well as the importance of maintaining a non-judgmental orientation (Brown, 2016; Fetterman, 2010) when examining convergence and divergence among beliefs and practices. Words and phrases related to "trauma students," "the caring nature of music education," and "the calming nature of music" may be indicative of participants' foundational beliefs related to trauma, music education, and music writ large. While a relatively short PD course might introduce teachers to new ideas and call practices into question, such a course may not be sufficient to transform long-held practices. A necessary next step may be to incorporate critical questioning in conjunction with teachers' beliefs; rather than aim to change teacher beliefs, mentors and those facilitating PD efforts ought to kindly yet clearly guide participants to interrogate *why* they believe what they believe. For instance, asking open-ended questions such as, "Why do you think that is?" or "What does that look/sound/feel like for you?" may lead teachers to question their own thoughts through deeper intellectual discernment. Such processes will likely benefit from adopting non-judgmental orientations while simultaneously using trauma-informed principles to drive the structure of PD and cultivate safety, trust, transparency (etc.) within PD group settings. When interacting with lived experiences, beliefs, and practices—elements that may be incredibly personal to discuss—PD facilitators must take care to revisit group norms and ground their own responses and reactions in a group setting. Such practices can be extended to undergraduate and graduate-level coursework, too, where preservice teachers are formatively socialized into the field of music education.

Although the teachers in this study group incorporated cultural diversity and inclusion in their definitions of safety, this may not be a trend for all teachers. In the opening dialogue in Chapter 4, when one participant said, "it's pretty obvious that we've got a little nuclear group here who fits that bill," he was referring to the group's unique passion for and commitment to trauma-informed approaches in music education. Such a comment is indicative of the possible skew among this group of music educators, wherein the five persons who persisted through the PD study group—from the initial opt-in invitation to the final module—may have certain qualities or characteristics in common, including their beliefs about diversity and inclusion as core components of safety. Compared to this group of educators, interest and initial commitment to trauma-informed practices among those in the music teaching profession is much more varied. Therefore, teachers across levels and contexts as well as those facilitating teacher PD must take care to thoroughly communicate their specific and inclusive definitions of terms like safety. Furthermore, within this study, even the teachers who felt that diversity and inclusion were a core part of trauma-informed approaches expressed feeling "ill-equipped" to facilitate a meaningfully diverse and inclusive classroom environment. Therefore, preservice preparation and continued professional learning for preservice teachers ought consider the degree to which teachers feel equipped to facilitate the experiences they learn about in educative settings. Given the diversity among school-aged children compared to the demographics of music educators, teacher preparation becomes especially important and, perhaps, more challenging. However, teacher agency can also contribute to teachers feeling adequately equipped to enact culturally responsive and inclusive practices alongside trauma-informed approaches. Ultimately, teachers must decide to engage in the enactment of their agentic beliefs, which is supported by critical

and curious engagement with past experiences, present materials & circumstances, and future aspirations.

Compliant children demonstrating desired behaviors at the direction of the teacher may simply be an absence of misbehavior, which can feel markedly different from actual empowerment. Teachers should critically examine their personal conceptions of constructs like empowerment and engagement, particularly as they might relate to notions of teacher control and student compliance. Working to identify biases and assumptions about students and their behaviors may be a place to begin (e.g., Venet, 2023). Such a process involves identifying reasonable expectations for a classroom space while developing a comprehensive understanding of children's developmental, social, physical, emotional, and musical needs. Additionally, teachers need to reckon with their definitions of engagement and empowerment such that these concepts are contextualized and evolving. How are student engagement and empowerment defined? Who decides? What roles, if any, do the teachers' perspectives play in determining empowerment? How does the teacher role support and/or inhibit student engagement and/or empowerment?

Finally, the findings from this study indicate the complexity with which teacher participants may be navigating the temporal dimensions of teacher agency in PD settings. In this inquiry, the dimensions of teacher agency remained latent/unobserved by participants. Preservice and practicing teachers may benefit from conceptually exploring the temporal dimensions of teacher agency in an effort to bring their understanding of potential impacts of agency upon praxis from the unnamed/implicit to the named/explicit. Such strategies may support teachers in the development of their own processing and understanding; further, PD facilitators, professors, and researchers might gain insight into how teachers navigate cycles of action and reflection

related to trauma-informed educational praxis. Teacher agency is an imperative component of creating and sustaining PD processes (Spruce et al., 2021). Rather than accept the notion of "being professionally developed," PD stakeholders should entertain, accept, and be willing to enact PD that prioritizes choice.

Trauma-Informed Professional Development

In this study, participants critiqued the study group materials for their lack of actionable, concrete, and specific resources. Simultaneously, participants tended to avoid sharing specific strategies from their own teaching experiences in their group discussions and personal reflections about their individual classroom contexts. Those designing future PD efforts might consider providing more active role-playing scenarios connected to specific language to support teacher-student interactions and/or more pointed and specific strategies with which participants can interact. Given the increasingly full nature of curricula in PK-12 and preservice teacher preparation programs, music educators and music teacher educators might consider weaving in more specific examples throughout their curricula, uplifting strategies that teachers are already doing well, and explicitly connecting those strategies to trauma-informed principles. Further, given that the teachers in this study teachers self-selected into a professional development experience where reciprocity included learning and growing in community without compensation, teacher perspectives in this study may be particularly informative for the development of future courses and materials concerning trauma-informed music education.

By providing a PD context that focuses on processes and experiences among teachers rather than outcomes among children, trauma-informed approaches can begin to shift from reactions to students' trauma-induced behaviors to environments proactively embedded with trauma-informed care. Participant conversations—such as the dialogue featured at the beginning

of Chapter 4—repeatedly reinforced this sentiment. Yet, participants identified discomfort, underdeveloped skills & knowledge, and lack of music-specific professional development as barriers to enacting such environments. Further, the shallow, jargony, surface-level nature of trauma-informed PD more broadly deterred participants, especially when recommendations lacked what participants labeled as concrete action. Although teacher agency remained unnamed in their reflections, participant responses indicated high levels of engagement across the temporal domains of agency. A reasonable and appropriate response to such circumstances can prioritize teachers' decision-making processes, self-regulation, and understanding of their own agency.

Finally, given the often overworked and under-supported nature of being a teacher in the U.S., PD must be relevant, feasible, accessible, and sustainable. Given the apparent lack of content-specific music PD in general (e.g., Gallo, 2018), this study indicates the need for trauma-informed practices that are at least partially music-specific. Without the ability to—or, frankly, interest in—gathering for in-person professional development on a potentially difficult and/or triggering topic, some elements of trauma-informed PD may be best suited for online and/or asynchronous settings. Through an asynchronous, online teacher study group, this study demonstrates one way to support teacher agency associated with developing trauma-informed approaches among elementary general music teachers. Such an online environment may support teachers as they navigate potentially sensitive, personal, and/or triggering topics like trauma and trauma-informed practices.

Future Research

This study demonstrates an array of pathways for future research related to trauma-informed PD approaches in music education. In this section, I explore possible avenues for

trauma-informed PD, as well as methods and research questions for future inquiries about trauma-informed PD efforts in music education.

Avenues for Research Involving Trauma-Informed Professional Development

While previous studies have explicitly uplifted the further exploration of music teachers' agency (e.g., Tucker, 2020) and the nature of trauma-informed approaches in music education (e.g., Ryals, 2022), no studies in music education have explicitly investigated the experiences and expressions of agency related to enacting trauma-informed approaches through a professional development experience analyzed through a process-based lens. In this way, this study makes a notable contribution to the literature. As gleaned from insights among the findings and implications in this study, future music education researchers might engage in PD efforts in a variety of ways: longitudinally examine teacher language and other practices related to trauma-informed approaches; examine teacher beliefs related to high expectations, asset-based pedagogies, and trauma-informed music teaching/learning; empirically examine the intersections of trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and ability-responsive approaches; curate additional PD materials to support continued teacher learning in the area of trauma-informed practices; investigate the strategies and processes through which individual teachers transform their trauma-informed praxis; identify structural, cultural, and material barriers to enacting trauma-informed approaches; and examine the ways in which preservice teacher preparation programs equip music teachers to encounter dysregulation and "undesired student behaviors." Such inquiries may further illuminate the complex and multidimensional facets related to teacher agency in applying trauma-informed approaches in music education while prioritizing teacher processes in lieu of student outcomes.

Suggested Methods & Research Questions

Extant literature has indicated the need for empirical work across methods and approaches. While trauma as it is socially known today grew out of roots in Felitti et al.'s (1998) ACEs study, a variety of methodological approaches may be beneficial to the lines of inquiry involving trauma, trauma-informed practices, and music education. As healing and repairing rupture happens in person-to-person relationships (Noddings, 2015, 2019), the nuances of lived experiences and the human condition are essential to examine through rigorous qualitative methods, like case study research. To guide inquiry, research questions could include:

- What is the nature of music teachers' dispositions toward trauma-informed practices?
- How do participants connect to their past (iterational) experiences, and what are those experiences?
- How and when in professional development settings do participants prioritize their present (practical-evaluative) experiences?
- How and when do participants envision their future (projective) aspirations, both long- and short-term?

Another study could deeply and richly investigate intent and impact with a single question: How do participants identify—and subsequently navigate—(mis)alignment among impact and intent in classroom praxis? Such questions can provide additional insight into the inner-workings and processes of critical constructs—like teacher agency—in concert with trauma-informed approaches in music education.

Similarly, explanatory sequential mixed methods designs may illuminate the nature of asset-based, agency-centered teacher dispositions by using emergent qualitative design to explain phenomena observed in quantitative data. Research questions of this nature could include:

- To what extent are the temporal domains of teacher agency represented among music educators seeking to incorporate trauma-informed approaches into their work? (Quant/Strand I)
- How are the temporal domains of teacher agency represented in participants' conversations about trauma-informed praxis? (Qual/Strand II)
- How do participants rate or interpret their conversational responses related to teacher agency? (Qual/Strand II)
- How do the Strand II data explain the Strand I data? (MMR)

Closing Thoughts

> *"If we are clear that praxis is a combination of action and reflection, then it can be argued that praxis is about a relationship with self, and a relationship with the wider community." (Penney & Warelow, 1999, p. 260)*

I examined elementary music teachers' experiences in an asynchronous, online study group focused on the topic of trauma-informed approaches. Further, I examined their sense of agency in applying these approaches in their teaching praxis. Throughout the study group, teachers demonstrated curious and candid behaviors that were indicative of their commitment to developing their skills and competencies related to trauma-informed practices in music education. Although some problematized course material and critically questioned existing structures and processes, each of the teachers simultaneously asserted and/or uncovered their assumptions related to the nature of trauma, trauma-informed approaches, and/or music

education. By adopting a non-judgmental orientation (Brown, 2016; Fetterman, 2010), I prioritized teacher processes and experiences. While this study offers numerous implications for educational stakeholders at multiple levels, primary implications for this work reside in the design, distribution, and evaluation of trauma-informed professional development efforts for music educators. By reflexively engaging with their past, present, and future, teachers have the potential to adjust their attunement to students' needs and abilities, particularly concerning regulation and dysregulation. Such adjustments require teachers to consider the (mis)alignment among intent and impact in their words, dispositions, and behaviors.

As music educators and music teacher educators are to purport that music classrooms care for the needs of the whole child, then trauma-informed approaches must be foundational components in our interactions with and reactions to students. However, praxis is more than interactions between teachers and students or delivering content to students. Since teachers draw on their past, present, and future experiences in the process of reflecting and/or enacting trauma-informed approaches in the classroom, then teacher processes —rather than student behaviors and "discipline" outcomes—are necessary places to begin. Preservice teacher education and continued professional learning via professional development are natural sites to begin and continue this work. Through care driven by asset-based, trauma-informed approaches, teachers can engage with cycles of reflection and action as they seek proactive avenues for holistic student support and musical development.

Appendix A

Types & Definitions of Trauma, According to the National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)

The definitions in Appendix A were copied directly from the information available on the NCTSN website. For full definitions from NCTSN, please visit: https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types

Bullying

Bullying is a deliberate and unsolicited action that occurs with the intent of inflicting social, emotional, physical, and/or psychological harm to someone who often is perceived as being less powerful.

Community Violence

Community violence is exposure to intentional acts of interpersonal violence committed in public areas by individuals who are not intimately related to the victim.

Complex Trauma

Complex trauma describes both children's exposure to multiple traumatic events—often of an invasive, interpersonal nature—and the wide-ranging, long-term effects of this exposure.

Disasters

Natural disasters include hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, wildfires, tsunamis, and floods, as well as extreme weather events such as blizzards, droughts, extreme heat...

Early Childhood Trauma

Early childhood trauma generally refers to the traumatic experiences that occur to children aged 0-6.

Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), also referred to as domestic violence, occurs when an individual purposely causes harm or threatens the risk of harm to any past or current partner or spouse.

Medical Trauma

Pediatric medical traumatic stress refers to a set of psychological and physiological responses of children and their families to single or multiple medical events.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse occurs when a parent or caregiver commits an act that results in physical injury to a child or adolescent.

Race-Based Trauma

The US history of colonialism, genocide, slavery, and white supremacy continues to impact BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) children and families through covert and overt forms of racism...

Refugee Trauma

Many refugees, especially children, have experienced trauma related to war or persecution that may affect their mental and physical health long after the events have occurred.

Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is any interaction between a child and an adult (or another child) in which the child is used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or an observer.

Sex Trafficking

Child sex trafficking involves the giving or receiving of anything of value (money, shelter, food, clothing, drugs, etc.) to any person in exchange for a sex act with someone under the age of 18.

Terrorism and Violence

Families and children may be profoundly affected by mass violence, acts of terrorism, or community trauma in the form of shootings, bombings, or other types of attacks.

Traumatic Greif

While many children adjust well after a death, other children have ongoing difficulties that interfere with everyday life and make it difficult to recall positive memories of their loved ones.

Appendix B

IRB Exempt Letter

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

1204 Marie Mount Hall
College Park, MD 20742-5125
TEL 301.405.4212
FAX 301.314.1475
irb@umd.edu
www.umresearch.umd.edu/IRB

DATE:	November 14, 2024
TO:	Amy Sierzega
FROM:	University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB
PROJECT TITLE:	[2257988-1] Asynchronous Agency?: Investigating Online Teacher Study Groups as Avenues for Elementary Music Teachers' Professional Learning About Trauma-Informed Approaches
SUBMISSION TYPE:	New Project
ACTION:	DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE:	November 14, 2024
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Exemption category # 45CFR46.104(d)(1)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at 301-405-4212 or irb@umd.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Maryland College Park (UMCP) IRB's records.

Participant Consent Form

Institutional Review Board
1204 Marie Mount Hall • 7814 Regents Drive • College Park, MD 20742 • 301-405-4212 • irb@umd.edu

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE: Online Teacher Study Group

Project Title	*Online Teacher Study Groups as an Avenue for Elementary Music Teachers' Professional Learning About Trauma-Informed Approaches*
Purpose of the Study	*This research is being conducted by **Amy Sierzega, a PhD candidate in music education at the University of Maryland (UMD), College Park**. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you currently teach elementary general music in the state of Maryland or Virginia and may be interested in learning more about trauma-informed practices in music education. The purpose of this research project is for a group of music educators to work together, engaging in conversations and collaborative learning about trauma-informed educational practices. As a participant, you would participate in a collaborative teacher study group to explore their beliefs and perspectives about trauma-informed music education and consider how these practices may translate to your work with students.*
Procedures	*The procedures involve participating as a member of an **online Collaborative Teacher Study Group from November 17, 2024 – February 1, 2025.** This online group will feature primarily asynchronous components (readings, reflections, multi-media resources, and discussion boards, all housed in UMD Canvas course modules) and will include the option to attend a maximum of three 1-hour synchronous group meetings hosted via Zoom. All course activities are research-specific. Your participation in this course indicates your willingness to participate in the research study. Participation is completely voluntary (see the "right to withdraw" section for more information).* *As a participant, you will engage with eight modules' worth of readings, discussion questions, and surveys (~16 hours total; 2 hours per week over the course of 8 weeks) related to trauma-informed music education. Additionally, you will be asked to keep a weekly reflection journal throughout the study, which involves reflective prompts provided by the researcher. These reflection questions will relate to the content in the weekly modules and will ask you to consider those topics related to your current teaching context. All course materials (including reflection questions, discussion board responses, and Zoom conversations) will be used as part of the data analysis for this study.* *To access these materials, you will have the opportunity to engage*

	with other participants through a private course hosted through UMD. Identifying information will not be shared outside of the course, and study participants will agree to keep all course-related conversations within the private Canvas course. *Enrolling in this course is completely voluntary. Enrollment in the course requires study participation. Anyone who does not wish to be part of this study may not enroll in this iteration of the course.* *Combined, course readings, reflections, and surveys will require approximately 2 hours per course module.* *Should you elect to participate in additional/optional Zoom meetings throughout the course, Zoom meetings will be video and audio recorded for transcription purposes only. Permission to be recorded will be required for participation in these Zoom meetings.*
Potential Risks and Discomforts	*Regarding the course structure, the course instructor is the primary investigator of this study. As part of the data collection approaches, the instructor/researcher will also be a participant-observer throughout the course. As such, the instructor/researcher will be aware of who is participating (or not participating) in the course.* *In terms of course content, there may be some risks in the form of discomfort from participating in this research study. Due to the nature of the topic (i.e., trauma-informed practices), you might experience discomfort should you a) engage with your own memories related to trauma, and/or b) witness others share about their traumas. The researcher will not require nor prompt your to divulge personal information or stories related to trauma. However, given the personal nature of the subject matter and exploring personal beliefs related to teaching students who may experience trauma, it is possible that you or other participants may choose to share personal stories in individual reflections and/or group message board conversations. Additionally, readings about trauma-informed education will include definitions of trauma and may share vignettes about groups or individuals to illustrate concepts and support participant learning. Therefore, you should be aware that, given the topic of trauma-informed music education, conversations related to trauma, violence, and/or abuse may come up in group conversations and readings.* *Should you experience discomfort from discussing trauma throughout this course, we encourage you to:* - *reach out to the primary investigator/instructor (Amy) so she can make accommodations to support you;* - *contact UMD-based resources such as the counseling center; and/or* - *contact the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by dialing 988 (24/7 helpline for people in Maryland experiencing mental health or substance use emergencies) or the National*

	University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678 *For more information regarding participant rights, please visit:* https://research.umd.edu/research-resources/research-compliance/institutional-review-board-irb/research-participants *This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.*	
Statement of Consent	*Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you currently teach general music at a public elementary school in Maryland; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.* *If you agree to participate, please print and sign your name below.*	
Signature and Date	**NAME OF PARTICIPANT** **[Please Print]**	
	SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT	
	DATE	

Study Recruitment Email

November 15, 2024

Good afternoon!

Please see the message below about an opportunity to join an **online professional development course from November 24th, 2024-February 1st, 2025**. The course topic will be trauma-informed approaches in music education.

Please note that **course enrollment closes on Friday, November 22nd.** To enroll, read the letter below and follow the link provided to complete the course interest form.

I appreciate your time and consideration. Please reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,
-Amy

Are you an elementary general music teacher at a public elementary school in Maryland or Virginia? Are you interested in learning more about trauma-informed music teaching? ***You're invited to join an Online Teacher Study Group that will explore core tenets & applications of Trauma-Informed Music Education!***

- Like many other well-intended initiatives in music education, "trauma-informed" teaching is an important concept that has also become a buzzword. Professional development is similarly important, but it does not always suit the needs of music teachers and students. Further, trauma-informed programs and initiatives are rarely assessed in education at large. These programs also fail to support teachers and their daily interactions with students. Even when teachers have the time, energy, and interest to learn more about trauma-informed music teaching, current programs and professional development efforts do not always acknowledge the expertise that music teachers bring to their school communities.

- Collaborative Teacher Study Groups (CTSGs) are becoming more popular in music education. Rather than a professional development session where someone else lectures, these CTSGs provide teachers space to share their expertise and learn from each other. With a topic that is as personal and widespread as trauma, CTSGs offer unique opportunities for learning and improving teaching practices alongside peers who are interested in exploring similar topics.

- Modeled after CTSG elements, this **online course about trauma-informed music education** will meet asynchronously from **November 24th, 2024 through February 1st, 2025** to read, study, and participate in conversations about **trauma-informed approaches in music education**. The facilitator of this course is the researcher, Amy

Sierzega, who will engage with group members as a participant & facilitator. As a participant, in this study, you would participate in an asynchronous, online course comprising eight (8) modules. Course participants will use written journal prompts to reflect on their teaching experiences and practices and consider how trauma-informed education might apply within their school contexts and daily work with students. Upon successful engagement with all online course elements (individual reflections, discussion boards, readings, and optional Zoom meetings), participants will receive a certificate from the researcher acknowledging 16 hours of completed professional learning.

- Again, enrolling in this course is completely voluntary. Enrollment in the course requires study participation. Anyone who does not wish to be part of this study may not enroll in this course.

For more information and **to indicate interest in participating, please complete this brief interest form no later than Friday, November 22nd: https://go.umd.edu/traumaPD-interest**

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Amy Sierzega (she/her)
PhD Candidate & Graduate Assistant
Music Education | University of Maryland
sierzega@umd.edu

Appendix D

Study Interest Form

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

You're invited to join a Teacher Study Group focused on Trauma-Informed Practices in Music Education!

This research study is being conducted by Amy Sierzega, a PhD candidate in Music Education at the University of Maryland, College Park. You are invited to participate in this research because you are an elementary general music teacher at a public school in Maryland or Virginia.

The **purpose of this research** is to provide a professional development experience for general music teachers through collaborative teacher study groups. In these study groups, teachers will read articles and reflect on their teaching experiences and practices. Specifically, teachers will consider how trauma-informed education could apply within their school contexts and daily work with students and improve practices in music education.

The **goal of this interest form** is to gather contact information from teachers who are interested in participating in an **online Trauma-Informed Teacher Study Group from November 24th, 2024-February 1st, 2025.** No money will be paid to or required from teachers who choose to participate in this study. **Your responses will be kept confidential** and will be used to establish the teacher study group. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. By completing this interest form, you agree to be contacted by the researcher about participating in a Trauma-Informed Teacher Study Group as part of your professional development as an elementary general music teacher in Maryland or Virginia. **By completing this form, you indicate your interest to participate in this research project. You will receive a separate message with a consent form to confirm your commitment to the study.** Completing this interest form does not commit you to participating in this study.

This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects. Should you complete this form but ultimately decide to not participate in or withdraw from this research, the data you provide on this form will be destroyed as soon as possible.

Please contact the researcher with questions:
Amy L. Sierzega
sierzega@umd.edu
2130D Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
IRBNet Package: 2257988-1

By continuing in this interest form, you confirm that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read the information above; you currently teach elementary general music in Maryland or Virginia. Please retain a copy of this statement for your records.

→

Your First Name

Your Last Name

Preferred Name (if different from above)

Preferred Email Address

Contact Phone Number (with area code)

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

What do you currently teach? (Select all that apply)

- [ ] Elementary General Music
- [ ] Elementary Choir
- [ ] Elementary Instrumental Music (band/orchestra)
- [ ] None of the Above
- [ ] Other (please describe)

Where do you currently teach elementary general music?
(Name of School, City & State)

If you teach general music at multiple schools, please list all schools.

Including the current school year, how many **years** have you...

1 11 21 30 40 50

...been a **teacher**?

...been an **elementary general music** teacher?

...been an elementary general music teacher **at your current school(s)**?

Please provide any **other information about your school(s), teaching context**, or **experiences** that you think might be helpful for the researcher to know.

←

→

In an effort to facilitate connection among group members, I will host 2-3 synchronous/live Zoom sessions throughout this online learning experience. These sessions are entirely optional and are meant to support you and your connections with other participants. **If you'd like to join these extra Zoom meetings, which of the following weeknights** (after 6pm Eastern Time) **are you available to meet?** Select all that apply:

- [ ] Mondays
- [ ] Tuesdays
- [ ] Wednesdays
- [ ] Thursdays
- [ ] Fridays
- [ ] I'm not interested in attending these additional Zoom meetings

Appendix E

Asynchronous, Online PD Study Group Module Content

Course Schedule, Essential Questions, and Overview of Module Materials

Overview of the Timeline, Materials, and Assignments in the Online Teacher Study Group

Modules, Dates, & Topics	***Essential Questions***	***Course Materials & Assignments***	***SAMHSA Principle***
Modules 1 & 2 *(Nov 24-Dec 7)* Group Introductions & Orientation to Google Classroom; Terms & Definitions	*What can I expect during this teacher study group?*	*Reading/Listening* - *Access Google Classroom* - *Research Study Consent Form* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Survey 1* - *Discussion 1: Introductions* - *Reflection 1: Welcome*	*N/A – Group onboarding & introductions*
	What is trauma? *What are trauma-informed practices?* *Why are they important to consider?*	*Reading/Listening* - Video*: What is Trauma?* [00:00-07:48] - Chapter: *The Body Keeps the Score* (pp. 80-88) - *Infographic: SAMHSA Principles* - *Video: SAMHSA Principles [00:00-17:10]* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Discussion 2: Group Norms* - *Reflection 2: Safety*	*Safety*
Module 3 *(Dec 8-14)* History & Context	*What is trauma-informed education and how did it develop?*	*Reading/Listening* - Chapter*: Developing a Trauma-Informed Care Classroom* (pp. 21-41) - *Excerpts: SAMHSA Principle* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Discussion 3: Supporting Teachers & Students* - *Reflection 3: Trustworthiness & Transparency*	*Trustworthiness & Transparency*
Module 4 *(Dec 15-21)* Overview of Trauma-Informed Music Education	*Why is trauma-informed education important in music teaching & learning?*	*Reading/Listening* - *Excerpts: SAMHSA Principle* - *Chapter: Trauma as a Compassionate Lens (pp. 384-394)* - *Podcast:* Trauma-Informed Music Education *[00:00-58:27]* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Discussion 4: Check-in* - *Reflection 4: Peer Support* - *Survey 2*	*Peer Support*
Winter Break (Dec 22-Jan 4) *No new material posted or due. Enjoy your winter break!* *Optional: Review readings, resources, discussion posts, and/or reflections.*			
Module 5 *(Jan 5-11)*	*How might trauma-informed education intersect with other asset-based approaches in education?*	*Reading/Listening* - *Excerpts: SAMHSA Principle* - *Video:* Equity-Centered Trauma-Informed Education *[01:19-52:46]* - *Blog Entry: Unconditional Learning*	*Collaboration & Mutuality*

Modules, Dates, & Topics	***Essential Questions***	***Course Materials & Assignments***	***SAMHSA Principle***
Connections to Educational Approaches		*Writing/Reflecting* - *Discussion 5: Opportunities & Challenges* - *Reflection 5: Collaboration & Mutuality*	
Module 6 *(Jan 12-18)* Connections Within Music Education	*Within music education specifically, how might trauma-informed education intersect with other asset-based approaches?*	*Reading/Listening* - *Excerpts: SAMHSA Principle* - *Article: Asset-Based Pedagogies in Music Education* - *Choice: Blog Entry, Previous Assignment, or Social Media Saves* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Discussion 6: Strategies* - *Reflection 6: Empowerment, Voice, & Choice*	*Empowerment, Voice, & Choice*
Module 7 *(Jan 19-25)* Looking Ahead	*What might it look/sound/feel like to move forward after our teacher study group?*	*Reading/Listening* - *Excerpts: SAMHSA Principle* - *Chapter:* Troublemakers *(pp. 171-181)* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Discussion 7: Suggestions for Resources* - *Reflection 7: Cultural, Historical, & Gender Issues*	*Cultural, Historical, & Gender Issues*
Module 8 *(Jan 26-Feb 1)* Group-Generated Resources	*What trauma-informed resources resonate with our group?*	*Reading/Listening* - *Choice: 1-2 Resources from Discussion 7* *Writing/Reflecting* - *Discussion 8: Final Questions* - *Reflection 8: Course Experiences* - *Survey 3*	*N/A - Closing*

Individual Reflection Journal Prompts

REFLECTION JOURNAL 1

In each module, you will have an opportunity to reflect privately. Only Amy will be able to see these individual reflections.

You may submit your reflection as a written response and/or an audio or video recording.

Reflection Prompts:

- *What brings you to this PD experience? Why do you want to learn more about trauma-informed approaches and/or what do you want to learn more about?*
- *If you have a specific goal in mind, how will you know if/when you've achieved your goal?*
- *What else is on your mind? What questions do you have?*

REFLECTION JOURNAL 2

In each module, you will have an opportunity to reflect privately. Only Amy will be able to see these individual reflections. You may submit your reflection as a written response and/or an audio or video recording.

Reflection Prompts

*This week's materials centered the trauma-informed principle of **safety** and introduced the other 5 SAMHSA principles. Thinking specifically about your current elementary general music teaching setting, complete the following sentence starters (please write as much as you would like to!)*

First, reflect on this week's **readings/materials**:

- *While exploring this week's materials, **I noticed...***
- *While exploring this week's materials, **I wondered...***

Then, reflect on **safety** related to your current school setting.

- *When I think about safety in my current work with students, **I notice...***
- *When I think about safety in my current work with students, **I wonder...***

REFLECTION JOURNAL 3

In each module, you will have an opportunity to reflect privately. Only Amy will be able to see these individual reflections. You may submit your reflection as a written response and/or an audio or video recording.

Reflection Prompts

*This week's materials centered the trauma-informed principle of **trustworthiness and transparency,** and reviewed the other 5 SAMHSA principles using two different sources. Thinking specifically about your current elementary general music teaching setting, complete the following sentence starters (please write as much as you would like to!)*

First, reflect on this week's **readings/materials**:

- *While exploring this week's materials, **I noticed...***
- *While exploring this week's materials, **I wondered...***

Then, reflect on **trustworthiness and transparency** related to your current school setting.

- *When I think about trustworthiness and transparency in my current work with students, **I notice...***
- *When I think about trustworthiness and transparency in my current work with students, **I wonder...***

REFLECTION JOURNAL 4

In each module, you will have an opportunity to reflect privately. Only Amy will be able to see these individual reflections. You may submit your reflection as a written response and/or an audio or video recording.

Reflection Prompts
*This week's materials introduced the trauma-informed principle of **peer support** and continued the discussion about **trustworthiness and transparency.** Thinking specifically about your current elementary general music teaching setting, complete the following sentence starters (please write as much as you would like!):*

First, reflect on this week's **readings/materials**:

- *While exploring this week's materials, **I noticed...***
- *While exploring this week's materials, **I wondered...***

Then, reflect on **peer support** related to your current school setting.

- *When I think about peer support in my current work with students, **I notice...***
- *When I think about peer support in my current work with students, **I wonder...***

REFLECTION JOURNAL 5

In each module, you will have an opportunity to reflect privately. Only Amy will be able to see these individual reflections. You may submit your reflection as a written response and/or an audio or video recording.

Reflection Prompts
*This week's materials introduced the trauma-informed principle of **collaboration & mutuality.** Thinking specifically about your current elementary general music teaching setting, complete the following sentence starters (please write as much as you would like!):*

First, reflect on this week's **readings/materials**:

- *While exploring this week's materials, **I noticed...***
- *While exploring this week's materials, **I wondered...***

Then, reflect on **collaboration & mutuality** related to your current school setting.

- *When I consider collaboration & mutuality in my current work with students, **I notice...***
- *When I consider collaboration & mutuality in my current work with students, **I wonder...***

REFLECTION JOURNAL 6

In each module, you will have an opportunity to reflect privately. Only Amy will be able to see these individual reflections. You may submit your reflection as a written response and/or an audio or video recording.

Reflection Prompts

This week's materials introduced the trauma-informed principle of ***empowerment, voice, and choice.*** *Thinking specifically about your current elementary general music teaching setting, complete the following sentence starters (please write as much as you would like!):*

First, reflect on this week's **readings/materials**:

- *While exploring this week's materials,* ***I noticed...***
- *While exploring this week's materials,* ***I wondered...***

Then, reflect on **empowerment, voice, and choice** related to your current school setting.

- *When I consider empowerment, voice, and choice in my current work with students,* ***I notice...***
- *When I consider empowerment, voice, and choice in my current work with students,* ***I wonder...***

REFLECTION JOURNAL 7

This week's materials introduced the trauma-informed principle related to **cultural, historical, & gender issues.** *Thinking specifically about your current elementary general music teaching setting, complete the following sentence starters (please write as much as you would like!):*

First, reflect on this week's **readings/materials**:

While exploring this week's materials, ***I noticed...***
While exploring this week's materials, ***I wondered...***

Then, reflect **cultural, historical, & gender issues** related to your current school setting.

When I consider cultural, historical, & gender issues in my current work with students, ***I notice...***

When I consider cultural, historical, & gender issues in my current work with students, ***I wonder..***

REFLECTION JOURNAL 8

Complete the following sentence starters (please write as much as you would like!):

First**, reflect on this course as a whole:**

- *As I reflect on my experience in this course,* ***I notice…***
- *As I reflect on my experience in this course,* ***I wonder...***

Then, reflect on your **experiences in this course as they relate to your current elementary general music setting.**

- *When I consider this course and my current work with students,* ***I notice…***
- *When I consider this course and my current work with students,* ***I wonder...***

Finally, imagine you are responsible for **designing and facilitating a professional development experience** for music teachers about trauma-informed approaches.

- **How would this experience look/sound/feel?**
- **What might you include or exclude and why?**

Group Discussion Board Prompts

DISCUSSION 1: Introductions

This week's topic: **Introductions!**

You may upload an audio recording, video recording, and/or respond in writing. In your response please include the following:

- Your name & pronouns
- One way you like to engage with music/musicking
- One boring fact about yourself

I am looking forward to building this online community with you over the next few months!

DISCUSSION 2: Norms

For this discussion, we will co-construct our group **norms**. To learn more about norms, check out this link: https://ascd.org/blogs/designing-meaningful-norms-for-professional-learning

For our teacher study group, we'll define norms as "standards" or "ways of being" that we individually and collectively agree to in this professional learning setting. As the linked article says,

"We believe that everything we do in this space is about learning and growing together in service of our teachers and in service of our [students]. To live into this belief, we have the following norms."

To start us off, here are some of my suggestions for group norms:

- **Diverse perspectives help us grow** (borrowed from the linked article)
- **Speaking from our own lived experiences *and* listening to others' experiences helps us to share our diverse perspectives.**

What are your thoughts on these suggestions? What norms would you add? Change? Alter?

DISCUSSION 3: Supporting Teachers & Students

This week's reading materials are from chapter 3 of a book about supporting preservice and practicing teachers to cultivate trauma-informed approaches in their classrooms. As you reflect on supporting teachers and students, consider what supports you as a learner.

As a learner, when do you feel safe and supported?

In the context of this study group, what might help you feel safe & supported?

DISCUSSION 4: Check-in

As partners in this teacher study group, we have opportunities to support each other as we read, listen, reflect, and make connections to our classroom practices and work with students.

So, let's check-in! How's it going so far? *Remember: this research study is about your experiences in this group. There are no right or wrong answers. You can choose to post your name or post anonymously.*

DISCUSSION 5: Happy New Year!

Welcome back, all, and Happy New Year! I hope you've been able to carve out some space to rest during your winter break.

As you consider implementing trauma-informed approaches in your work with students, **what opportunities and/or challenges do you anticipate? How might you approach and/or move through those situations?**

DISCUSSION 6: Strategies

During our optional Zoom meeting on Tuesday, one member of our group suggested sharing strategies that work for us. In that spirit, this week's discussion post is focused on **your favorite strategies for helping your students express their empowerment, voice, and choice!**

We'll have another optional Zoom meeting to close our course in early February - stay warm and hope to see you then!

DISCUSSION 7: Resources

Throughout Modules 1-7, we have encountered a variety of materials and resources about trauma-informed approaches. This week, use our discussion board to **share at least one trauma-informed resource that we have not yet explored** as part of this course. Your resource(s) may include written, graphic, audio, and/or video elements.

Note: Please ensure that what you share is open access, meaning that a) you don't need to purchase the materials or join a subscription in order to view them, and b) you have permission to share the materials and/or sharing of the materials aligns with Copyright law pertaining to fair use in education. Reach out to Amy if you have any questions!

DISCUSSION 8

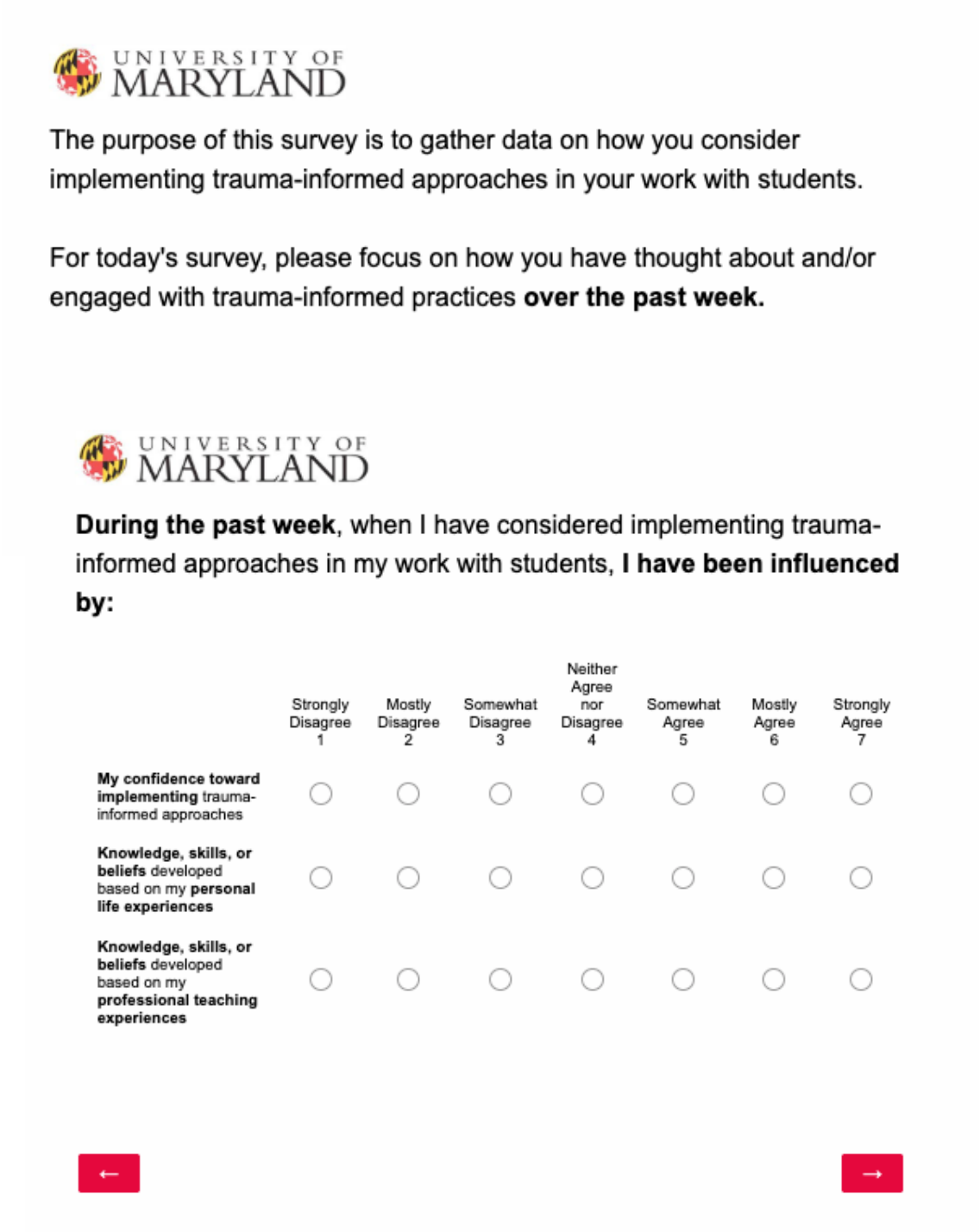
As we close this course with Module 8, what thoughts or questions are on your mind? Moving forward, how might we support one another in our continued professional development?

What recommendations do you have for future courses about trauma-formed approaches in music education?

Appendix F

Survey Materials

Complete Version of the Trauma-Informed Agency Scale for Teachers (TIAST)



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The purpose of this survey is to gather data on how you consider implementing trauma-informed approaches in your work with students.

For today's survey, please focus on how you have thought about and/or engaged with trauma-informed practices **over the past week.**

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During the past week, when I have considered implementing trauma-informed approaches in my work with students, **I have been influenced by:**

	Strongly Disagree 1	Mostly Disagree 2	Somewhat Disagree 3	Neither Agree nor Disagree 4	Somewhat Agree 5	Mostly Agree 6	Strongly Agree 7
My confidence toward implementing trauma-informed approaches	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Knowledge, skills, or beliefs developed based on my **personal life experiences**	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Knowledge, skills, or beliefs developed based on my **professional teaching experiences**	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

During the past week, when I have considered implementing trauma-informed approaches in my work with students, **I have been influenced by:**

	Strongly Disagree 1	Mostly Disagree 2	Somewhat Disagree 3	Neither Agree nor Disagree 4	Somewhat Agree 5	Mostly Agree 6	Strongly Agree 7
Short-term goals related to learners' acquisition of **content knowledge**	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Short-term goals related to supporting learners' **motivation**	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Short-term goals related to *learners'* **development & well-being**	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Short-term goals related to *my personal* **development & well-being**	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

During the past week, when I have considered implementing trauma-informed approaches in my work with students, **I have been influenced by:**

	Strongly Disagree 1	Mostly Disagree 2	Somewhat Disagree 3	Neither Agree nor Disagree 4	Somewhat Agree 5	Mostly Agree 6	Strongly Agree 7
Long-term goals related to learners' acquisition of **content knowledge**	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Long-term goals related to supporting **learners' motivation**	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Long-term goals related to *learners'* **development & well-being**	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Long-term goals related to *my personal* **development & well-being**	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

During the past week, when I have considered implementing trauma-informed approaches in my work with students, **I have been influenced by:**

	Strongly Disagree 1	Mostly Disagree 2	Somewhat Disagree 3	Neither Agree nor Disagree 4	Somewhat Agree 5	Mostly Agree 6	Strongly Agree 7
Class/student group structure (e.g., group size, percentages related to student demographics)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Physical teaching environment (e.g., school building, classroom setup, physical materials/supplies)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
School organizational culture (e.g., collaborative orientation, professional learning)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Administrators at school (e.g., mentoring, scheduling/workload, intervention support)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Colleagues at school (e.g., other teachers, specialists, and/or staff)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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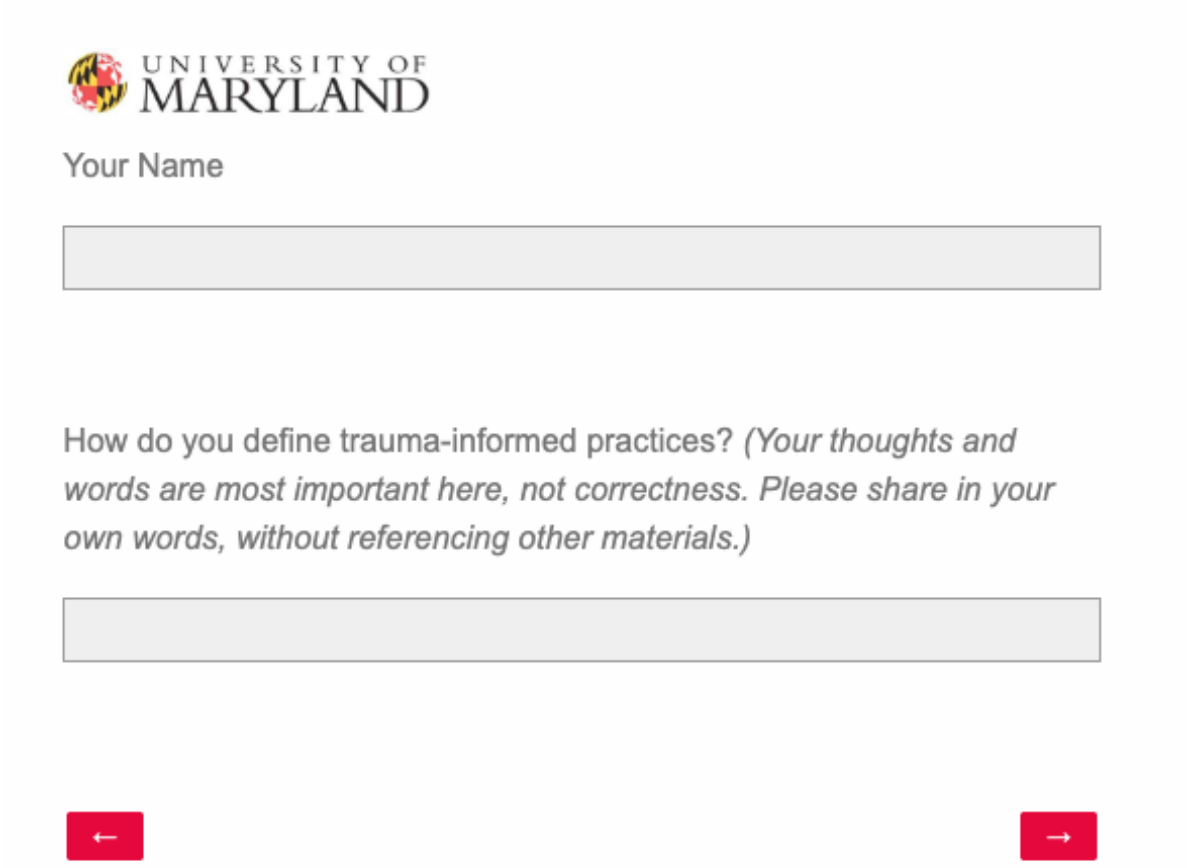
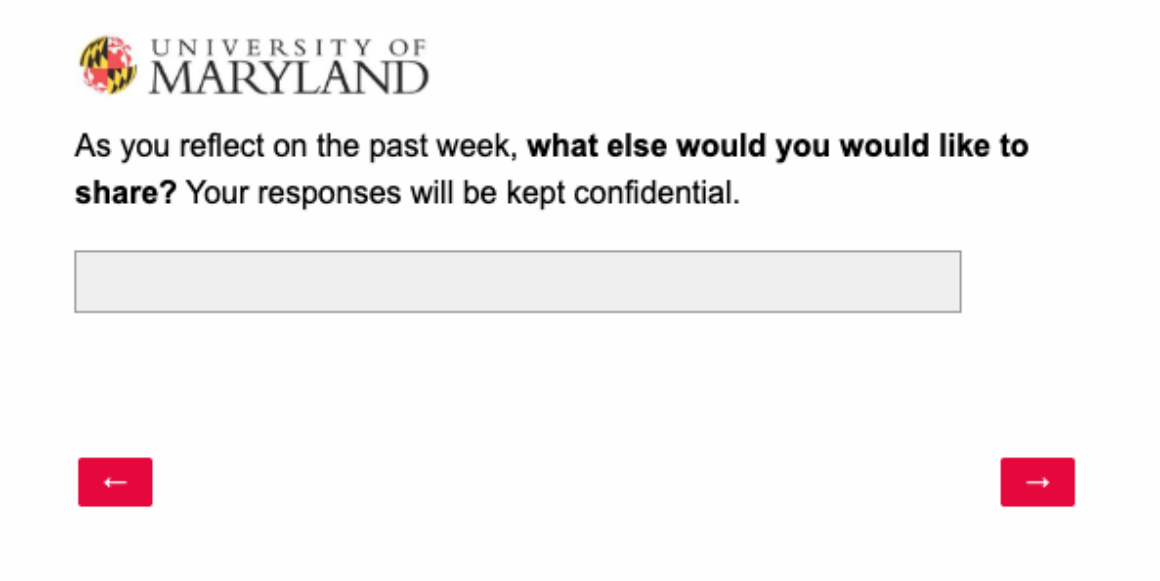
Additional Survey Questions





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To better understand your experiences in our online teacher study group, please complete the following identity-related questions:

What is your primary instrument/voice?

What are your **pronouns**? (ex: she/her, he/they)

How do you describe your **gender**?

How do you describe your **race/ethnicity**?

What is your **age** in years?

In the write-up of this research*, what **first name** would you like Amy to use as your **pseudonym**? *(A pseudonym is a fictitious name used in place of your real name to keep your identity anonymous to readers. Please pick a name that you feel represents you but is different from your real name.)*

Note: You will have a chance to read a draft of the manuscript to make sure your identity is described/represented as you would like it to be. Amy will reach out for member checks (reviews of the written work) at a later date.

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