

63-2649

TATE, Elizabeth Coppedge, 1920-  
A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE FACTORS THAT  
INFLUENCE THE DROP OUTS IN THE INSTRU-  
MENTAL MUSIC PROGRAM IN SELECTED ELE-  
MENTARY SCHOOLS IN OMAHA, NEBRASKA.

The University of Nebraska Teachers College  
Ed.D., 1962  
Education, administration

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan

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SELECTED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS  
IN OMAHA, NEBRASKA

by

Elizabeth C. Tate

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The University of Nebraska in the Teachers College

in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Department of School Administration

Under the Supervision of Professor Leslie L. Chisholm

Lincoln, Nebraska

1962

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA  
TEACHERS COLLEGE  
ADVANCED PROFESSIONAL DIVISION

TITLE

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BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION DEGREE

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to express her sincere appreciation to her advisor Dr. Leslie L. Chisholm, for his untiring guidance and constructive criticism throughout the writing of this study;

To the members of her supervisory committee, Dr. Merle Stoneman, Dr. Rosalie Farley, Dr. Russell McCreight, and especially, Dr. Wesley Meierhenry, for their faith and encouragement;

To her husband and four sons whose willingness to alter their pattern of living greatly made the completion of this degree an actuality.

PREVIEW

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

During the past fifty years American education has seen many changes take place in the curriculum of the elementary school. Economic pressures, public opinions and educational leadership have added, deleted, and changed the curriculum content in both rural and metropolitan areas. Changing philosophies have also developed relative to such subjects as were once considered "frills". Music, both vocal and instrumental, has felt the brunt of public opinion, which, during wartime efforts, all but eliminated the program entirely in many sections of the country. As these pressures were removed the entire nation felt the difference and music began to find a more secure position in the total curriculum. As the philosophy of mass education reflected itself throughout the nation, music presented problems that were unique because it was a subject that involved content matter, as well as skill of performance.

The history of the development of instrumental music as distinguished from vocal music is treated extensively in Chapter II. It is sufficient to note here that its development seemed disproportionately slow as compared with vocal music. The history of the development of the instrumental

music program in the elementary schools in Omaha is treated in Chapter III. It is an interesting parallel in that the development of the program in Omaha reflects much of the same slow evolution as that reflected in the history of instrumental music throughout the last 2,000 years.

The elementary instrumental music program in the Omaha schools today is still in its adolescent stages. Since its emergence was slow, and rather without direction, it has become even more necessary to nurture its growth carefully. The experience of the schools during the past shows that through an intensified program of supervision and administration the music program can develop and produce a maximum participation.

The elementary principal in the Omaha schools serves in a dual capacity as administrator and supervisor. She is supervisor of all areas of the curriculum regardless of whether they are categorized as basic subject matter, or a special area such as music, art, and physical education. The degree of student participation in such specialized areas as music, may be greatly dependent on the interest and the careful supervision of the principal. The early history of the elementary instrumental program in Omaha reflected the tremendous responsibility of the principal since she alone had the authority to include or exclude music from her building. So, today, it has evolved into a continuing responsibility for

keeping a close appraisal of the progress of the program and assisting in its supervision. Establishing music as a part of the curriculum is the responsibility of the Omaha School Board, and there is a General Supervisor of Music who is directly responsible for the instruction. But the local supervision of the program rests with the building principal.

The instrumental music program in the elementary schools in Omaha is begun at the fourth grade. During the first half of the year all fourth graders, who wish, may learn to play the Song Flute.<sup>1</sup> This is taught by a specialized, traveling instrumental music teacher who comes into the self-contained classroom one-half to one day per week. The song flute was chosen by experimentation among early music teachers to be the instrument for beginning instrumental instruction. It was interesting in this respect to learn recently that the American Music Conference<sup>2</sup> in a study of instrumental music in 322 school systems found that 64 per cent of the 306 school respondents used the song flute as their musical readiness instrument. The Omaha system therefore compared favorably with

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<sup>1</sup>The term "Song Flute" is a trade name for a small instrument similar to the clarinet, but quite short. The term is also commonly used as the name of the instrument just as trumpet and drum. In the later sections of this study it will be written with lower case initial letters.

<sup>2</sup>American Music Conference, A Study of Instrumental Music in 322 School Systems. (A study prepared by American Music Conference, Chicago: American Music Conference, 1957), p. 1.

other cities of a similar size in their program of beginning song flutes in the fourth grade.

The song flute is monetarily within the economic reach of most students. It is a small instrument, light weight, and easy to handle by fourth grade students. Many students at this age are still developing hand and arm coordination, and finger dexterity is difficult. The actual fingering is simple and moves in an up and down motion similar to the fingering of other instruments that will be studied later.

The tone quality, though somewhat shrill, is penetrating and true. This experience helps to establish pitch discrimination and tonal memory patterns for scales, as well as melodies.

It is necessary for the student to read music from a printed page in order to play the song flute. This aids in the development of skill in reading music. It also helps to correlate vocal and instrumental music as the skill in reading is necessary for both. Rhythmic and harmonic understandings are easily developed through this medium.

Success in mastering the song flute comes early. This is believed to be an important factor in setting attitudes and developing interest in playing another instrument. The instrumental music teacher finds it easy to locate talent early in the flute classes. This is invaluable in his later counseling with parents and students for choice of further instruments for study. He can also ascertain certain practice

and work habit patterns of the students that may indicate that this is not an area in which they will want to do further study.

By the second half of the school year, the instrumental music teacher is ready to talk with parents and students relative to the study of the more serious instruments that follow. The elementary school Christmas programs provide an excellent opportunity for public demonstration of the achievement of the song flutist and enables his parents to be more enthusiastic about the selection of instruments to be made at this time.

During the second half of the fourth grade beginning classes in wind, brass and stringed instruments are organized. Band and orchestra groups are developed as early as possible and are identified as "Beginning Band and Orchestra". The students may then move on to the advanced band and/or orchestra by the end of the fifth and sixth grades.

#### THE PROBLEM

The chief purpose of this study was to determine the primary factors that influence children to drop out of the instrumental music program in the elementary school before the completion of the sixth grade.

Along with the chief purpose, three sub-purposes were included. They are as follows:

1. To develop a written history of the elementary

instrumental music program in the Omaha Public Schools.

2. To identify improvements, if any, needed for the present program and to specifically point out implications that the improvements present to the teacher and principal in the schools studied for retaining the students in the program for a longer period of time.

3. To make a follow-up study to see what, if anything, happens to these drop out students in the junior high school when they are able, by choice, to enroll again in instrumental music classes.

#### PROCEDURE

The procedure used in this study consists of eight related parts, or steps, which are as follows:

1. A review of the literature in the area was made and the results organized, analyzed and presented.

2. Interviews were conducted with instrumental music teachers in order to determine additional discernable factors, if any, which experienced teachers would note in determining drop outs in the instrumental program.

3. Data, such as: Intelligence Scores, Reading Comprehension Scores from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, attendance records, and occupations of the parents were collected and recorded for pupils in the two selected schools. Criteria for determining what data were used were the factors gleaned from the review of the literature and the interviews with

the music teachers.

4. An information blank was developed to be used in determining the amount and degree of interest in music on the part of parents; a copy of which may be found in the appendix.

5. Personal interviews were conducted with all of the drop outs who are now completing the sixth grade in the two elementary schools. Personal interviews were conducted with those drop outs who are now attending the junior high school.

6. The information blank, used to determine interest in music in the home, was also given to each child in the study and the responses were recorded and tallied.

7. Research concerning the history of the instrumental music program in the Omaha Schools was carried on with oral interviews with the Supervisor of Music, and other instrumental music teachers, and by studying copies of programs from early music concerts. From this was written the history of the instrumental music program in Omaha.

8. Recommendations and conclusions were made.

#### THE SAMPLE USED

##### The Selection of Schools

In order to limit the teacher-pupil personal factors that might influence or exert pressures on the student it was decided to select two schools that had the same instrumental

music teacher. It was considered irrelevant that the principals were different since the direct contact with the student in the teaching situation was only made by the teacher. Each instrumental music teacher is assigned to approximately five elementary schools. Five schools in the north end of the community were taught by a man new to the system. Since he was in the same schools for a period of three years it seemed wise to select from these five. The changing element of teacher-pupil personality then would not seem to affect the attitude of the students.

Three of the five schools were eliminated for these reasons:

1. School "C" had a disproportionate number of parents engaged in the professions. It was believed that this produced conditions that were economically higher than the average, and above any of the other schools with which it might be paired in this study. A sampling of the permanent record cards in school "C" indicated that 35 per cent of the parents engaged in a profession for an occupation.

2. School "D" was eliminated because the enrollment was largely composed of transient military personnel which made any kind of follow-up study difficult. A naval base was located within a few blocks of the school.

3. School "E" was eliminated because the school was located in a neighborhood that was undergoing extreme economical and

social readjustments due to a rapid change in the race composition of the area.

Schools "A" and "B" were chosen because of their similarities:

1. Similar race composition
2. Relatively similar middle-income families
3. Equal and easy accessability of information
4. Both schools fed the same junior high school so that relatively comparable conditions existed in the follow-up interviews
5. Fourth grade song flute classes compared favorably in size as viewed with the other three schools.
6. Both schools compared favorably in number of boys and girls involved in the study
7. These two, of the original five, had the greatest total participation in the instrumental music in the fourth grade

The foregoing information lists in somewhat of a step by step sequence the general procedure used in this study. Additional light is shed on the procedure used by the following comments, the collection of data, and the development of the information blank.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE INFORMATION BLANK

An important part of the procedure was the development of the information blank to use as a basis for the personal

interviews with the pupils. The development of this tool of research seemed sufficiently significant to deserve an explanation. Two steps were taken in developing the information blank. Each is explained in the following paragraphs.

Determining the areas of information. Interviews were conducted with experienced teachers to establish a basis for discernable factors that could be used as criteria for collecting data. These factors were identified as:

1. Economic
2. Health
3. Lack of interest generally
4. Lack of drive and/or interest on the part of the student
5. Social mores
6. Personal attitude of pupil toward teacher
7. Pressure from peer group
8. Lack of interest on the part of the parents
9. Intellectual ability
10. Ability of music teacher.

Economic factors were considered sufficiently important as an influence in the acquisition of an instrument that data were collected, at least to the extent of job classifications of the parents.

Health factors were considered as a dual factor in the study. Certain physical deficiencies would make it impossible

to play particular instruments. A check on health records would reveal this. Attendance at school is also a factor in the level of performance in any subject. Data therefore were collected to show the number of days the student had been absent from school in a given year.

Factors three, four, and nine given by the teachers indicated that intelligence scores might be a basis for evaluation or comparison in the final analysis of the drop outs. The I.Q. scores were collected and tabulated. These were test scores resulting from a Kuhlman-Anderson test given in the third grade to the students involved in the study.

Holowinsky suggested in his study that "a high and positive relationship exists between mental potential and educational achievement in reading as measured by standardized educational tests."<sup>1</sup> Data were collected then to show reading comprehension test scores from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for a two year period. It was thought that this would serve as the academic score that was most representative of the student's over-all academic performance.

These data were tabulated and recorded in a file for each student involved in the study. There were 345 students in the two schools.

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<sup>1</sup>Ivan Zenovi Holowinsky, The Relationship Between Intelligence (80-110 I.Q.) and Achievement in Basic Educational Skills for a Selected Sample in Camden, N. J. An unpublished Doctor's dissertation. Philadelphia, Temple University, 1961.

Preparation of the information blank. An information blank was developed on the basis of the foregoing areas in order to indicate the degree of interest in the home in music. It was also felt that information relative to the musical ability and participation in musical activities by the parents would be a guide to family interest. It seemed desirable to determine if there were any group participation in music by the family as a unit. Questions directed toward these ends were prepared.

Originally the information blank was developed as a questionnaire intended to be answered in written form by the parents. It was decided, however, that the students would respond more freely and honestly with a friendly interviewer than parents would in a correspondence situation. The children also might reflect the atmosphere of the home more accurately.

The interview was held with each pupil who had dropped out of the instrumental music program at any time during the three years. The same information blank was used with pupils who are now in junior high school in the follow-up study to determine to what extent, if any, the drop outs had returned to instrumental music at a later date. The non-directive interview sought to elicit from the child the most candid and personal reasons for dropping his study of instrumental music.

## NEED FOR THE STUDY

A review of the related studies that have been made in this area show that almost none are concerned with instrumental music at its basic beginnings in the elementary school. Since the philosophy of American education in general today is that every child is entitled to an opportunity to explore and study in all areas, and since the philosophy of the Omaha schools, in particular, is that every child should be given an opportunity to engage in all phases of study for as long a period of time as possible, the number of drop outs in the elementary instrumental music program presents a problem of real concern to the supervisory and teaching staff in the elementary schools. It was felt that the opinions of teachers and principals which were formulated from observation alone might be implemented or altered if the children themselves could be led to reveal their reasons for dropping out of the study. It was also felt that a more accurate picture might be gained by interviewing pupils after a period of time had elapsed.

The principals involved in the two schools chosen to be studied expressed a desire to pursue the discovery of the factors that influenced the drop outs and verbalized a feeling that information gained from such a study could be useful in the actual supervision of the program. It was on this premise that the study was begun. There was no hypothesis to be proved or disproved. It was to be an exploratory study.

### DELIMITATIONS

Since this type of study seemed desirable at the elementary level in the Omaha schools the study is limited to the Omaha school system only. The findings are applicable to the two schools, A and B, involved in the study. They may or may not apply to other schools. It does reveal the factors that were influential in the choices of the students. It possesses implications for the teacher and principals involved to help in strengthening the program within the two schools.

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purposes of this study it is necessary to identify the "elementary instrumental music program" as that period of musical instruction in the kindergarten through sixth grade schools that begins with song flute in the first half of the fourth grade and continues with instruction on other instruments for the next two and one-half years. A student who continues through the entire program has three years of instrumental music instruction.

The term "drop out" refers to those students who stop studying in the instrumental music program at any point prior to the completion of the sixth grade although they may, and usually do, remain in school.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of the literature is divided into two major parts. The first is the historical development of instrumental music, and the second is the research dealing specifically with instrumental music programs in the schools.

#### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Music, as found in the schools today, has a long history of development and struggle before it became a recognized part of an acceptable program of education. Various phases of that development are related to the study being undertaken in this research.

The early beginning of instrumental music. The various recorded histories of music consistently indicate that during the early years of recorded history man expressed himself musically, but it was primarily through the use of his voice. Man was furnished with two natural instruments - his voice and his hands.<sup>1</sup> The first use of musical instruments as such, was almost by accident. The lag between the development of vocal music and instrumental music seems disproportionately

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<sup>1</sup>Howard D. McKinney and W. R. Anderson, Music in History, (New York: American Book Company, 1940), p. 3.

great. Flutes and reed instruments were used simply as a "prolongation" of the voice. They provided a means to increase the natural force and quality of the voice. As primitive man sang he used his hands to clap rhythms or he beat his chest to accent the singing. This was the forerunner of percussion instruments such as drums, castanets and rhythm sticks.

Historians believe that stringed instruments could have come from the hunter's bow. There are tribes of savages in Central Africa today who speak of the bow as the source of all music.<sup>1</sup>

Fossil remains of primitive life are the only way for researchers to know today the actual origins of music. There is no recorded verbal history, and only scattered drawings can indicate what part instrumental music played. Modern archaeological research has unearthed in Mesopotamia what is supposed to be the oldest musical instrument known to man. It is a double pipe made of bone. This was probably human bone.<sup>2</sup> Experts figure this was made during the Chalcolithic Age - between the Bronze Age and the Stone Age. This was about 3000 B.C.

Such archaeological research also bears out the error of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

the mythological beliefs that music was the merciful gift of the gods and heroes. Also in error are those theories that man wanted to imitate the birds, or attract a mate.

The Sumerian era. Primitive man was cognizant of the peculiar capacity of music for stirring the emotions.<sup>1</sup> Accurate records are available concerning the music of the Sumerian Era from 4000 B.C. to 2300 B.C. to such an extent that this has become known as the "synthesis of beginnings". Music at that time was used primarily in connection with religion. The Sumerians worshipped many gods. McKinney stated that the Sumerians recognized "the exorcising power of music, later exemplified by the playing of the Hebrew shepherd David before King Saul; the attribution of some of man's powers to animals, an idea which persisted in the Orpheus legend and which is to be found as late as Gothic times, when the sculptors and wood carvers loved to depict animals playing instruments."<sup>2</sup>

Music was a fully established art in the Sumerian Era and played an important part in the lives of the people. It was definitely believed to possess certain magical powers. Even though it was recognized by the state and religious authorities, there were also evidences of its being pursued for pleasure's

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

sake. Music was both vocal and instrumental with the Sumerians.

Many instruments were developed by the Sumerians. There were harps, lyres, flutes, drums, reed pipes, double as well as single, and later in the more decadent phases - the trumpet, timbrels, and rattles (sistra). It passed through various stages of development, finally reaching a "Golden Period" after which music became more sensual.<sup>1</sup>

The Greek Era. This was a very similar pattern to the development of instrumental music in other of the near Eastern civilizations such as Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, and Hebrew. It was not until the civilization of Greece evolved that instrumental or vocal music became of such importance that people provided a means of making it a part of their education. Primitive tribes had educated simply by passing on their elaborate ceremonial traditions.<sup>2</sup> The Greeks brought a new force into being. They cast off the dead weight of the superstitions of the past and developed an insatiable curiosity for penetrating the unknown future. They achieved a cultural supremacy that has remained as one of man's greatest heritages.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Loenhard and Robert House, Foundations and Principles of Music Education (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), p. 42.

<sup>3</sup>McKinney, op. cit., p. 59.