

## **A Descriptive Study of Cooperating Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Student Teacher Preparation**

By: [Rebecca B. MacLeod](#) and Jennifer S. Walter

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### **Abstract:**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of cooperating teachers regarding the level of preparedness of specific student teachers at the beginning of the student-teaching experience. Fifty-three secondary ensemble teachers (orchestra, band, and choir) completed a survey rating how prepared their most recent student teacher was in the areas of personal skills, teaching skills, and musical skills and provided feedback regarding the skill that needed the most attention from the university to improve music teacher preparation. Cooperating teachers rated student teachers similarly in all three categories. Differences were found between orchestra, band, and choir teachers relative to the skill that was selected in each category as needing the most attention. Orchestra and band teachers selected effective rehearsal pace, knowledge of subject matter, and secondary instrument skills as needing additional focus from university programs, while choral teachers selected piano skills and teaching and learning strategies as important areas to develop. Additional trends were noted between orchestra, band, and choral teachers and implications for music teacher education were discussed.

**Keywords:** preparedness | music teacher education

### **Article:**

Effective music teacher education generally involves preparation in musicianship, teaching, and social skills. Common curricular and co-curricular activities required by teacher preparatory programs include coursework, field experience, peer teaching labs, and a culminating capstone experience in the form of student teaching. Three groups of people are primarily responsible for effective music teacher education: (a) the university students, who are responsible for acquiring content knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Duling, 2000; Haston & Leon-Guerrero, 2008; Hourigan & Scheib, 2009; Stegman, 2001); (b) university faculty, who are

responsible for teaching content knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Conway, 2002); and (c) cooperating teachers, who are responsible for mentoring preservice teachers through field and student-teaching experiences with the assistance of university faculty (Draves, 2008; Zemek, 2008).

The present study focused on the perceptions of the cooperating teachers regarding student teacher preparation. The cooperating teacher has been identified as the most influential component of the undergraduate teacher education program (Brand, 1993; Conway, 2002; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Krueger, 1997). However, the expectations of the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor sometimes vary (Abrahams, 2009) and student teacher supervision has been described as inconsistent (Svengalis, 1992). Incongruence between the goals and expectations of the cooperating teacher and university supervisor can cause frustration for the student teacher and prevent the effective application of techniques and content knowledge learned during coursework from taking place during the student-teaching experience.

## **Related research**

Researchers have investigated the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs (Abrahams, 2009; Ballantyne & Packer, 2004; Conway, 2002), the perceptions of graduates and novice music teachers regarding their undergraduate education (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004; Brophy, 2002; Conway, 2002; Hourigan & Scheib, 2009), and student teachers' perceptions of their mentors (Duling, 2000). One common complaint from experienced teachers regarding their undergraduate education was that field experiences were too few and occurred too late in the program curriculum (Brophy, 2002). Early career teachers reflected that more time should be spent preparing undergraduates with specific pedagogical content knowledge and skills as well as information regarding the administration of music programs (i.e., budgeting, legal issues, co-curricular activities) (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004).

Further investigation of public school teachers' perceptions of university music educators' effectiveness revealed that the majority of public school music teachers perceived university music teachers as having unrealistic expectations of and being out of touch with the teaching environments, characteristics, and interests of current public school music classrooms (Legette, 1999). Teachers felt that university music teacher educators would benefit from increased involvement in public school music classrooms (Hamann & Lawrence, 1994; Legette, 1999). Activities such as teaching a semester in the public schools, guest teaching, observing public school music classes, serving on joint committees with public school teachers, and supervising student teachers were ranked by public school teachers as important in maintaining the skills and awareness necessary to be an effective teacher educator (Hamann & Lawrence, 1994). University faculty can benefit from developing a partnership with the cooperating teachers and public school programs in their area in order to strengthen undergraduate students' learning of content knowledge as well as the application of that knowledge during field experience and co-curricular activities (Morin, 2000; Scheib & Burrack, 2006).

Three additional studies compared the opinions and perceptions of university music education students (preservice teachers), experienced teachers, and university teacher educators with regard to the characteristics necessary to be a successful music teacher (Miksza, Roeder, & Biggs, 2010; Rohwer & Henry, 2004; Teachout, 1997). Teachout (1997) compared experienced and preservice teachers' opinions of the skills necessary for a music teacher to be successful

during the first 3 years of teaching and found agreement on 7 of the top 10 items between the two groups (“be mature and have self-control,” “be able to motivate students,” “possess strong leadership skills,” “involve students in the learning process,” “display confidence,” “be organized,” “employ a positive approach”). Overall, mean ratings showed that both experienced and preservice teachers thought that teaching skills and personal skills were more important than musical skills in order to be a successful music teacher. Likewise, university music educators rated teaching skills and personal skills as more important to effective teaching than musical skills (Rohwer & Henry, 2004), as did band directors (Miksza, Roeder, & Biggs, 2010).

Although considerable research has explored the perceptions and opinions of experienced, novice, and preservice teachers, little research has investigated the perceptions and opinions of cooperating teachers regarding the effectiveness of university supervisors and how well undergraduate music education programs prepare student teachers. Given the importance of the cooperating teacher’s contribution to the development of the student teacher, it seems prudent to investigate cooperating teachers’ perceptions of student teachers’ preparation to teach. Based on previous research, there appears to be agreement that personal skills, teaching skills, and musical skills are important to successful teaching (Miksza, Roeder, & Biggs, 2010; Rohwer & Henry, 2004; Teachout, 1997). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of cooperating teachers regarding the level of preparedness of specific student teachers at the beginning of the student-teaching experience related to personal skills, teaching skills, and musical skills and to obtain general feedback regarding areas that need additional attention from the university.

Specific research questions included: (a) How do cooperating teachers rate student teachers relative to the three areas: personal, teaching, and musical skills? (b) What areas do cooperating teachers identify as needing the most attention from university programs to better prepare student teachers? (c) Are there differences between band, orchestra, and choir cooperating teachers in regard to the item they selected as needing the most attention to improve student teacher preparation?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants in this study included 53 secondary school music ensemble teachers ( $n = 20$  band teachers,  $n = 18$  orchestra teachers,  $n = 15$  choir teachers) from the northeastern, southeastern, and midwestern United States. Teachers were eligible to participate in the study if they had supervised a student teacher within the last 5 years. Potential subjects were identified through university teacher education programs and were invited to participate in the study ( $N = 60$ ). Individual teachers were emailed the survey and invited to participate. The response rate was 100%. Six of the surveys were excluded from the study because the teacher taught orchestra and band, or choir and band, and therefore could not be categorized exclusively as an orchestra teacher, band teacher, or choir teacher. One additional survey was excluded because the cooperating teacher had not supervised a student teacher within the past 5 years.

Participants were asked to consider their most recent student teacher and complete a survey based on their knowledge of that person. In addition, at the end of the survey teachers were asked to include general feedback regarding teacher preparation. The study included only middle- and high-school ensemble directors (and not general music teachers) because they have

older students (abstract thinkers), they operate in similar environments (large-ensemble setting, elective student participation), and they have similar goals (vocal/instrumental pedagogy) than do general music teachers.

### Survey Instrument

The survey was devised to measure respondents' perceptions of specific student teachers' skills and ability in three areas: personal, teaching, and music. The survey design was based on the 40-item questionnaire developed by Teachout (1997), which included behaviors and skills that both preservice and experienced teachers believed were needed for teachers to be successful (see Table 1). For each of the items, respondents were asked to rate their most recent student teacher on a 7-point Likert-type scale with regard to that student teacher's level of preparation at the start of the student-teaching experience. The scale indicated their level of agreement ranging from "poor" (1) to "excellent" (7), with an additional choice of "don't know."

**Table 1.** Mean Ratings for Orchestra, Band, and Choir Student Teacher Preparedness in Personal, Teaching, and Musical Skills

Personal Skills	Orchestra	Band	Choir
Enthusiasm	5.39	5.75	5.87
Humor	5.11	5.30	5.53
Goal-oriented	5.83	5.75	5.67
Professionalism	6.73	5.85	5.53
Confidence	5.28	5.10	5.73
Patience	5.22	5.55	5.33
Organized	5.39	5.50	5.47
Speaking	5.33	4.75	5.47
Positive rapport	5.06	5.45	5.40
Creativity	4.78	4.75	5.13
Leadership	5.06	4.60	5.07
Flexible and adaptable	5.06	5.30	5.53
Finances	5.29	6.20	5.86
Stress	4.28	5.20	4.93

Mature	5.83	5.80	5.47
Teaching Skills	Orchestra	Band	Choir
On task	4.94	4.85	5.4
Involves students	5.33	5.15	5.4
Maintains student behavior	4.50	4.35	4.8
Lesson planning	4.67	5.30	4.8
Rehearsal pace	4.39	4.60	4.93
Eye contact	4.89	4.65	5.73
Proximity	4.39	4.20	4.6
Positive approach	5.17	5.40	5.47
Body language	4.56	4.75	5.27
Classroom management	4.67	4.70	4.73
Motivation	4.67	4.90	5.33
Clarity	5.06	5.25	5.27
Teaching/learning strategies	4.94	5.45	4.67
Ages and abilities	5.00	5.44	5.13
Variety of activities	4.72	5.20	4.47
Musical Skills	Orchestra	Band	Choir
Conducting	5.00	5.45	6.00
Subject matter	5.56	5.50	6.33
Singing skills	5.31	4.56	6.53
Theory	5.89	5.60	6.00
Musical standards	5.67	5.60	6.40
Ear-training	5.35	4.94	5.53
Secondary instruments	4.88	4.65	4.73

Piano skills	4.89	5.00	4.53
Musicianship	5.67	5.75	6.27
Sight-reading	5.71	4.88	5.87

In addition to rating the level of preparation of specific student teachers, participants were instructed to circle the one item in each of the three categories (personal skills, teaching skills, music skills) that they felt needed the most attention by university music teacher preparation programs in order for the preservice teacher to be successful. Finally, via an open-ended survey question, participants were asked to share general skills or traits that they felt needed additional attention by university faculty before preservice teachers began their student-teaching experience.

## Results

Overall mean ratings were calculated for personal skills ( $M = 5.2$ ,  $SD = 1.9$ ), teaching skills ( $M = 5.05$ ,  $SD = 1.6$ ), and musical skills ( $M = 5.0$ ,  $SD = 2.1$ ) and results were similar for each of the three categories. To determine if there were differences in student teacher preparedness between band, orchestra, and choral student teachers, means were calculated for each of the 40 items between the three groups and compared. Teachers' responses to the survey items regarding the most important trait for student teacher preparation in each category (personal skills, teaching skills, musical skills) were totaled and rank ordered for comparison.

### Personal Skills

Mean ratings for the level of preparedness relative to student teachers' personal skills were similar for the orchestra ( $M = 5.65$ ,  $SD = 2.04$ ), choir ( $M = 5.59$ ,  $SD = 1.95$ ), and band cooperating teachers ( $M = 5.08$ ,  $SD = 1.85$ ). Mean ratings in each of the 15 items related to personal skills revealed that many cooperating teachers were not informed about the student teacher's ability to manage finances. Orchestra student teachers were rated higher for professionalism ( $M = 6.73$ ,  $SD = 1.65$ ) than both band student teachers ( $M = 5.85$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ) and choir student teachers ( $M = 5.53$ ,  $SD = 1.99$ ). No other differences greater than 1.0 in rating were found for any of the other items.

Responses to the most important personal skill for university programs to improve were compared between orchestra, band, and choir teachers. Flexible and adaptable was selected by both choir (5 respondents) and orchestra teachers (5 respondents) as the most important personal skill to develop in student teachers, while band teachers chose Leadership with the greatest frequency (5 respondents). Orchestra teachers selected Flexible and adaptable (5), Organized (4), Positive rapport (3), and Confidence (3) as important personal skills to develop. Band teachers selected Leadership (5), Creativity (4), and Confidence (3). Choir teachers predominantly chose Flexible and adaptable (5) (see Table 2).

### Teaching Skills

Mean ratings for teaching skills were similar for the band ( $M = 4.91$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ),

orchestra ( $M = 4.5$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ), and choir student teachers ( $M = 5.56$ ,  $SD = 1.64$ ). Choir student teachers were rated higher ( $M = 5.73$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ) for eye contact than both orchestra ( $M = 4.89$ ,  $SD = 1.94$ ) and band student teachers ( $M = 4.65$ ,  $SD = 1.61$ ). Both orchestra (6) and band teachers (7) selected Rehearsal pace as the most important teaching skill to develop in student teachers, while choral teachers chose Teaching and learning strategies (4) followed by Rehearsal pace (3). Four band directors also selected Motivation as important to develop while none of the choral teachers chose Motivation.

**Table 2.** Most Important Skill Selected by Band, Orchestra, and Choir Teachers to Improve Student Teacher Preparation

Personal Skills	Orchestra	Band	Choir
Enthusiasm	0	2	0
Humor	0	0	0
Goal-oriented	2	0	0
Professionalism	0	0	2
Confidence	3	3	1
Patience	0	1	1
Organized	4	0	0
Speaking	0	2	1
Positive rapport	3	1	1
Creativity	0	4	2
Leadership	0	5	2
Flexible and adaptable	5	2	5
Finances	0	0	0
Stress	0	0	0
Mature	0	0	0
Teaching Skills	Orchestra	Band	Choir
On task	2	3	1
Involves students	0	2	2

Maintains student behavior	0	0	0
Lesson planning	2	0	1
Rehearsal pace	6	7	3
Eye contact	0	0	0
Proximity	0	0	0
Positive approach	0	0	0
Body language	0	0	0
Classroom management	2	3	1
Motivation	2	4	0
Clarity	0	0	0
Teaching/learning strategies	2	0	4
Ages and abilities	1	1	2
Variety of activities	0	0	1
Musical Skills	Orchestra	Band	Choir
Conducting	2	1	2
Subject matter	6	5	1
Singing skills	0	2	0
Theory	0	0	0
Musical standards	0	1	2
Ear-training	0	2	2
Secondary instruments	7	6	0
Piano skills	0	1	5
Musicianship	2	1	3
Sign-reading	0	0	0

## Musical Skills

Mean ratings were calculated for cooperating teachers' opinions of level of preparation in musical skills (orchestra  $M = 4.82$ ,  $SD = 2.24$ ; band  $M = 4.66$ ,  $SD = 2.12$ ; choir  $M = 5.31$ ,  $SD = 1.9$ ). Mean ratings ranged from 4.25 to 6.1. Singing skills received lower ratings for band student teachers ( $M = 4.6$ ,  $SD = 2.39$ ) compared to orchestra student teachers ( $M = 5.3$ ,  $SD = 2.85$ ) and choral student teachers ( $M = 6.53$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ). However, singing, piano skills, sight-reading, and secondary instrument skills received the highest number of "don't know" responses from the cooperating teachers: Singing skills (5 orchestra teachers, 4 band teachers), Piano skills (9 orchestra teachers, 9 band teachers), Sight-reading (4 orchestra teachers, 4 band teachers), and Secondary instruments skills (1 orchestra teacher, 3 band teachers, 4 choir teachers).

Both orchestra and band cooperating teachers selected Secondary instrument skills with the greatest frequency as the most important skill for student teachers to improve (7 orchestra teachers, 6 band teachers). Choir teachers chose Piano skills (5) and Musicianship (3) as the most important skills on which universities should focus. Orchestra and band teachers also selected Knowledge of subject matter (6 orchestra teachers, 5 band teachers) with the greatest frequency (see Table 2).

### Open Ended Responses

The final question on the survey invited participants to elaborate on any skills or traits, in general, that they felt needed additional attention prior to student teaching. Of the 53 teachers, 34 responded to the final question. Responses were grouped according to topic and four main categories emerged: Increased field experience, Developing positive rapport, Effective rehearsal pacing, and Improved error-detection skills.

### Increased Field Experience

A number of teachers responded with recommendations regarding field experience including recommendations to increase internship opportunities and cautioned against the use of peer teaching labs. "I think students need more field experience before entering student teaching. Too often, they don't have nearly enough classroom time before becoming a student teacher" (band teacher). Another teacher agreed, noting, "The more practice students have with actually teaching children the better. Student teaching should not be the first time college students have ever worked or taught children" (orchestra teacher). This sentiment was echoed by a band teacher, "Pre-student teaching practical experiences—more frequency."

The following band teacher was very specific regarding the limitations of peer teaching labs in university settings:

Preservice teachers come musically competent with a strong foundation in lesson planning based upon standards (state and national). They are used to teaching their peers and therefore lack the awareness to analyze the success of a lesson while it is in progress and flexibility to adapt if they are not being successful. Most importantly, they lack a global view of their role: How does the student feel during/after this lesson? Does he/she want to return to learn again tomorrow? Will he/ she be involved in music next year?

### Developing Positive Rapport

The importance of developing a positive rapport with the students was another skill mentioned by cooperating teachers. A band teacher noted the importance of developing “personal relations with students—rapport.” Another band teacher reflected on honesty, and noted that student teachers should be aware of “the importance of honesty about situations and the importance of building relations with students.” He further explained that student teachers should know that it is appropriate to admit to making mistakes and should not attempt to hide or deny making an error. Honesty can help build a positive relationship with students.

A choral teacher expressed, “Student teachers need to get students involved and know their audience!” An orchestra teacher pointed out that good rapport is not exclusive to working with the students, but also extends to the staff, colleagues, and the community. “Not only should a student teacher possess extensive knowledge of the subject being taught, great rapport with the students, the staff and the learning community is an absolute must.”

### Effective Rehearsal Pacing

Effective rehearsal pacing was frequently cited as needing additional attention. Specific comments regarding rehearsal pacing provided additional insight as to the reasons that teachers selected this item. More than one respondent indicated that student teachers talk too much. One band teacher noted:

Without a doubt, rehearsal/class pacing is crucial to developing a strong relationship with the students. Virtually every student teacher talks too much and is redundant with feedback, which slows pacing down and can stagnate the learning process. I stress to prospective teachers, less talk, be direct and allow them to participate as much as possible.

One orchestra teacher reflected specifically on her most recent student teacher,

I think the main issue we are having is pacing—not knowing when to stay on a topic or section of music and when to move on. Also, being able to break down the music for beginners has been a major issue. Don’t tell beginners to “go home and practice it.” They (interns) have to have a goal in mind for the class period (are we trying to “make it through” or “work up parts” or “fine tune” or “speed up tempo,” etc.) and then have several methods in mind of how to accomplish that goal. My intern gets “stuck” if the students don’t get it right immediately, but doesn’t have ideas of how to get what he wants to happen.

### Error Detection Skills

A few cooperating teachers stated the need for improved error detection skills. One band teacher suggested:

In working on “excellent ear-training skills,” I really mean to work on error detection skills. Students often have such a tough time finding mistakes when standing in front of an ensemble. An error detection program would be a great addition to their studies.

Individual cooperating teachers also noted that band and orchestra interns needed increased secondary instrument skills and that choral interns needed improved piano skills. Additional comments were given that were unique for that individual student teacher or cooperating teacher.

## **Discussion**

Teacher educator programs rely on student teaching to give future teachers an important capstone experience during the final semester(s) of their licensure program. Furthermore, student teaching has been identified as the most important component of an undergraduate music education degree (Brand, 1993; Conway, 2002; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Krueger, 1997). Therefore, the role of the cooperating teacher as mentor, collaborator, and role model during the student-teaching semester (Draves, 2008; Duling, 2000; Zemek, 2008) is critical to the successful preparation of preservice music teachers. Thus, it seems prudent to consider the perspective of the cooperating teacher relative to teacher preparation.

Overall mean ratings in each of the three categories—personal skills, teaching skills, and musical skills—were similar. Consistent with previous research regarding the perceived importance of personal skills, teaching skills, and musical skills (Teachout, 1997), the cooperating teachers in this study assigned overall ratings of 5.2 for personal skills, 5.05 for teaching skills, and 5.0 for musical skills. Personal finances, piano skills, secondary instrument skills, sight-reading skills, and singing skills contained more “don’t know” responses than any of the other categories. This may have been due to the fact that teachers were reflecting on the level of preparation at the start of the student-teaching experience and had not yet had the opportunity to observe these skills, or the skills may not have been utilized in that particular classroom setting.

Cooperating teachers were asked to select the area that they felt needed the most attention from the university during teacher preparation in the areas of personal skills, teaching skills, and musical skills. Responses differed according to the area of instruction (orchestra, band, choir). In the area of personal skills, orchestra and choir teachers both selected Flexible and adaptable with the greatest frequency. Being flexible and adaptable speaks to the idea of adaptive expertise—the ability to apply knowledge, skills, and/ or dispositions effectively or innovatively in familiar or unfamiliar situations. Teaching environments provide novel situations daily and student teachers must think quickly on their feet in order to effectively deal with situations as they arise. Furthermore, band teachers selected Leadership with the greatest frequency. Orchestra teachers selected additional traits: Organized, Positive rapport, and Confidence as being important. Band

teachers selected Creativity and Confidence as important skills. Choral teachers selected no other personal skill as overwhelmingly important.

In the area of teaching skills, both orchestra and band teachers selected Rehearsal pace while choral teachers selected Teaching and learning strategies followed by Rehearsal pace. It appears that having an effective rehearsal pace was important to the cooperating teachers who participated in this study and that the student teachers needed the most attention in this area. Surprisingly, orchestra, band, and choir teachers did not select Classroom management with great frequency. It may be that having an effective rehearsal pace impacts many other areas and that teachers felt that additional instruction in this area would make student teachers more effective.

Musical skills had the greatest number of “don’t know” responses from the cooperating teachers. It appears that several musical skills (singing, piano skills, sight reading, and secondary instrument skills) were not observed in various classroom settings. Orchestra and band teachers overwhelmingly selected Secondary instruments (13) and Knowledge of subject matter (11) as the two areas that needed the most attention from university programs. Choir teachers chose Piano skills (5) as the most important.

Consistent with previous research (Brophy, 2002), cooperating teachers noted that field experience prior to student teaching is extremely important and several teachers suggested that additional field experience and teaching labs would be beneficial. Cooperating teachers also expressed interest in more effective rehearsal pace, recommending that young teachers talk less and engage the students more. Developing a strong rapport with students was considered very important. Increased secondary instrument skills for band and orchestra interns and increased piano proficiency for choral interns were recommended, along with additional error-detection skills for all interns.

## **Conclusions**

The feedback from the cooperating teachers who participated in this study is valuable when considering how to improve music teacher preparation. However, before increasing coursework or requirements in the areas identified as needing additional attention, university programs should consider why student teachers lack skills in specific areas such as secondary instruments, piano skills, flexibility and adaptability, leadership, motivation, error detection, and effective rehearsal pacing. Previous research has found a general disconnect between coursework and the student-teaching experience (Abrahams, 2009; Conway, 2002). It is possible that student teachers gain the necessary information and skills during the degree program, but are not required to apply the skills until the student-teaching experience, perhaps leaving a gap of many months or years between acquisition and application. This time gap may cause students to lose the skill sets that have been acquired.

Furthermore, based on the results of this study it appears that different classroom environments require skill sets specific to that environment. Increased field experience early in

the degree program may improve the connection between coursework and field experience. Explicit connections between coursework and field experience made by university faculty at the time of skill-set acquisition and thereafter may also increase student teachers' retention and application of those skill sets.

Music education majors frequently enroll in secondary instrument courses and piano classes early in their degree program. Early field experiences would facilitate an immediate application of the skills learned at the university and may improve retention of that information. Furthermore, cooperating teachers recommend that field experience be increased to create additional opportunities for young teachers to practice building rapport, motivate students, react to student responses, and adjust the lesson accordingly. Additional opportunities to teach students in authentic settings (band, choir, or orchestra) will provide student teachers with an environment that encourages or even requires them to use the skills specific to that classroom setting.

Caution should be taken when considering the results of this study. The number of participants ( $N = 53$ ) was relatively small and while it appeared that there were trends in the type of responses between orchestra, band, and choir teachers, it is possible that these trends would change with additional participants. Cooperating teachers were asked to rate the student teacher based on his or her performance at the start of the student-teaching experience. It may have been difficult to reflect back to the beginning of the experience and cooperating teachers' ratings may have been influenced by progress made during student teaching.

This study also did not take into account the variable of educational institution. Some music teacher education programs include additional field experience prior to student teaching, specific pedagogy courses, and a variety of co-curricular activities. Feedback from the cooperating teachers in this study may have been more applicable to the specific institution where each student teacher was prepared than to all university education programs. Additional research is needed that controls for these variables.

Future research should also include general music teachers and music teachers who teach outside their area of specialty. The skills needed to be an effective general music teacher may be very different from the skills needed to be a secondary school orchestra, band, or choir teacher. It also seems important to consider possible differences in cooperating teachers' perceptions of student teacher competencies based on the ages and maturity levels of the students they teach (i.e., cooperating teachers who teach high school students may perceive that student teachers need vastly different skill sets than do cooperating teachers who teach elementary school students).

Cooperating teachers are an integral part of the preservice teachers' music education program and additional research is needed to investigate the opinions and perceptions of this population. Cooperating teachers have a valuable perspective and important information that can aid in developing more effective teacher education programs.

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