



NORTHWESTERN  
UNIVERSITY

**N** Center for the  
Study of  
Education and the  
Musical  
Experience

# Developing Independent Musicianship in the Ensemble Classroom

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## Guiding question

- What are the characteristics of a music ensemble when its director is focused upon developing student musical independence?

# Defining musical independence

Ability to  
select  
literature

Participatory  
music-making

Music literacy

Problem  
solving

Musical  
Independence

Lifelong  
musicianship

Critical  
thinking

Independent  
decision  
making

Effective  
practice

Berg, 2008, Duke, 2012, Kindall-Smith, 2010, Morrison & Demorest, 2012, Regelski, 1969

# Theoretical frameworks

## Teacher process

Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance (WMEA, 1977; Sindberg, 2012)

- Analysis
- Outcomes
- Strategies
- Assessment
- Music selection

## Student process

Constructivist practice (Scott, 2011)

- Teacher-directed instruction
- Student-led problem solving

# Qualitative Case Study

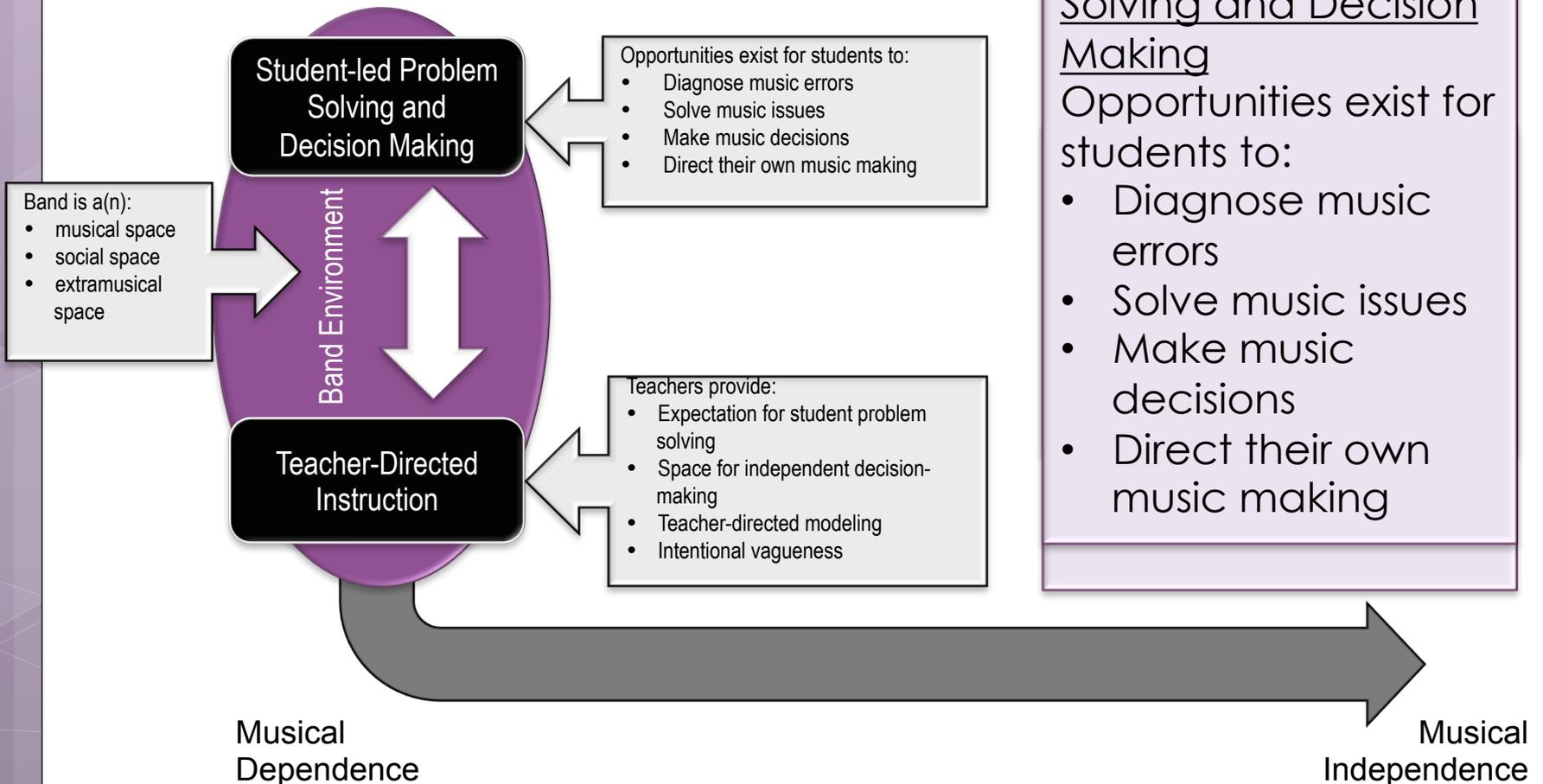
- Study site (Lakefield High School & Pete Guss)
  - Affluent suburban high school with highly competitive program
    - Band studied is the third band of 4
  - 17 year veteran teacher (2<sup>nd</sup> year at school)
    - Focused on musical independence and musical excellence
- Method
  - Observations of large and chamber ensembles over 8 weeks
  - Semi-structured interviews of 27 students and 3 teachers
  - Collection of artifacts (website, syllabus, assessments)

# Director's definition of musical independence

- Ability to:
  - “Make independent decisions”
  - Encounter music “technically, musically, and academically”
  - Automate practice by “going to execute subroutine M”
  - Find post-high school music experiences

“Learn to make a choice. You need to do that every day, all the time so that it develops long term”

# Visualizing the development of musical independence



# Implications for pre-service and continuing teacher education

- Mindset shift
  - Rehearsal models
  - Student role in music making
- Teacher development
  - Questioning strategies
  - Project-based assessment
  - Constructivist teaching practices

# Implications for further research

- Continuing investigation of the processes of musical independence in various settings for commonalities and differences
- Defining musical independence in different settings
- Longitudinal study of efficacy of various instructional practices on the development of student independence

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