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## Incorporating Musical Composition Into Secondary Instrument Techniques Courses

Musical composition is widely considered to be a fundamental component of good musicianship. Recent state and national standards make it clear that preservice music teachers will be expected to include the teaching of musical composition in their curricula when they enter the field. The purpose of this study was to investigate the integration of musical composition into secondary instrument techniques courses. Twelve ( $N = 12$ ) music education majors in two secondary brass techniques courses composed music for beginning brass ensemble, using an assignment designed by music education faculty in collaboration with a music composition faculty member. This study supports five suggestions for practice in secondary instrumental techniques classes, namely that musical composition: (a) can be a valuable component of a secondary instrument techniques courses, (b) served as an effective final assessment, (c) provided insight into beginning instrumentalists' perspectives and practicalities, (d) developed pedagogical knowledge, and (e) was a meaningful creative project. The students suggested that more specific parameters were needed, that composing multiple duos and trios might be more effective than composing one large piece, and that it was important for the compositions to be performed, although endurance could be an issue.

*Keywords: secondary instruments, instrument techniques, music education, composition, music teacher education, preservice*

## Introduction

Secondary instrument techniques courses have been a consistent subject of research within music teacher education in recent years (Austin, 2006; Conway, Eros, Hourigan, & Stanley, 2007; Powell, Weaver, & Henson, 2018; Wagoner & Juchniewicz, 2017). Study of the performance on and pedagogy of the various orchestral instruments is a required element in many university curricula, as well as a requirement for national and state program accreditation. In addition to secondary instruments, some state standards require training in composition and/or arranging for preservice music teachers. With curricular space at a premium, music teacher educators must find innovative ways to meet this requirement in an authentic manner. Furthermore, recent calls for curricular examination in music teacher education have suggested instrumental techniques music education courses as good candidates for the inclusion of composition experience. Stringham, Thornton, and Shevock (2016) suggested that “the university instrumental methods course could be an opportunity to support instrumental [composition/improvisation] teaching” (p. 8).

Similarly, Deemer (2016) suggested that “instrumental technique courses could allow for simple composing assignments for each instrument at a beginning level as well as help to consider basic instrumentation and orchestration concepts for the various instrumental families” (p. 44). The primary purpose of this research was to investigate the integration of musical composition into two secondary brass techniques courses, via the inclusion of an assignment to compose for elementary brass ensemble. Research questions were: (a) In what ways is music composition valuable for the students as preservice music teachers?, and (b) What modifications do students suggest for structuring music composition activities in secondary instrument techniques courses?

## Review of Literature

Secondary instrument techniques courses are a common requirement in music teacher preparation programs, although there is some variance in the formats that they take (Austin, 2006). Earlier research has focused on teacher preferences and curriculum instruction in secondary techniques courses (i.e., Conway, Eros, Hourigan, & Stanley, 2007). Researchers have indicated that the subject matter of these courses has remained fairly consistent over the years (Austin, 2006; Wagoner & Juchniewicz, 2017), although the scope of activities is expanding to include problem-based learning (Blackwell & Roseth, 2018) and composition/improvisation (Pellegrino, Beavers, & Dill, 2018). Secondary instrument courses

are required by both the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) and the state in which this study was conducted. Wagoner and Juchniewicz (2017) surveyed 211 wind techniques course instructors regarding their curricula. Their results indicated that the most-frequently included topic was “performance skill’ or ‘pedagogical techniques” (p. 1).

Musical composition has been identified as an integral part of K-12 music education, as evidenced in both national and state standards. Musical composition has a robust body of research literature in music education, at times as the sole topic and at other times within wider discussions of creativity (i.e., Hickey & Schmidt, 2019). Viig (2015) provided a substantial review of recent national and international literature on research into composition within music education, noting that “through experiencing and mastering composition projects, the teacher establishes confidence and motivation to continue working with composing practices” and “Through experiencing creative processes, preconceptions of creativity are changed and student teachers gain confidence to teach creative activities” (p. 247). Although the focus is commonly on the compositional process at the K-12 level (Burnard & Younker, 2004; Hickey, 1999; Kaschub & Smith, 2009), research has been conducted at the university level (Hopkins, 2014) as well.

Researchers have also studied musical composition as related to music teacher education (Kaschub & Smith, 2012; Stringham, Thornton, & Shevock, 2016). Wagoner and Juchniewicz (2017) surveyed 211 teachers of instrumental (brass and woodwinds) techniques from NASM-accredited programs and found that, of the various topics covered by instructors, “composition/arranging were used the least of all assignments” (p. 9). A possible factor in the lack of instruction in composition might simply be a lack of a curricular space. Stringham, Thornton, and Shevock (2016) completed a mixed-methods study of 321 instrumental techniques instructors and found that, in the view of their participants, there was no space for the teaching of composition and improvisation: “There’s absolutely no room in the curriculum unless we want to go over 130 hours” (p. 17). Deemer (2016) also suggested that a “major challenge that stands in the way of effective incorporation of composition into the music teacher education curriculum [is]... the lack of strong relationships between music education faculty and composition faculty in higher education” (p. 44). Recent research suggests that relationships among faculty are strengthening, as music education faculty have collaborated with music theory colleagues to include composition and improvisation in their curricula (Pellegrino, Beavers, & Dill, 2018; Thornton, Murphy, & Hamilton, 2004).

## Rationale for the Study

According to the National Association of Schools of Music (2019), “The prospective music teacher must be able to arrange and adapt music from a variety of sources to meet the needs and ability levels of individuals, school performing groups, and in classroom situations” (p. 119). Moreover, the standards for the state in which this research was conducted require teacher preparation programs to demonstrate how “prospective teachers in the program understand and apply compositional techniques and textures” (p. 15). I (Eros) have given arranging assignments as part of previous offerings of secondary brass methods courses. The parameters were expanded for the most recent offering, and a pilot study was conducted during Fall quarter 2014. Between having conducted the pilot study, state teacher preparation requirements, and recent calls within music education for increased inclusion of, the Fall Quarter 2016 class was the opportune moment to modify the arranging assignment and to conduct research.

## Method

### *Setting*

This research took place at a mid-sized state university on the West Coast (WCU). Located within a large metropolitan area, WCU is both a Hispanic Serving-Institution (HSI) and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI). Many WCU students would be considered non-traditional students. The music unit at WCU offers a Bachelor of Arts in Music and an undergraduate subject matter preparation program in music, which leads to post-baccalaureate certification in K-12 music. The music education curriculum at WCU does not have separate tracks for instrumental and vocal music education. All music education students therefore take courses in both areas.

### *Sampling*

Convenience sampling (Patton, 2002) was utilized for this study. Initially, the courses had 16 students, 14 of whom were following the music education sequence. One student left school before the conclusion of the study and another student declined to participate, resulting in a sample size of  $N = 12$ . All 12 students were taking both classes. Eleven were undergraduate music education majors and one was a graduate student in voice and music education. Only two of the participants were brass instrument majors, and six of the 12 had no prior brass performance experience. The participants were enrolled in two simultaneous one-

quarter (10 week) required brass methods courses co-taught by music education faculty members Eros and Harrington. One course, taught by Eros, focused on high brass instruments (trumpet and horn) while the other, taught by Harrington, focused on low brass instruments (trombone, baritone, and tuba).

### *Research Design*

This study was a replication of a pilot study that was completed during the previous offering of these same courses, although the pilot study focused on arranging whereas this assignment focused on original composition. This study used a qualitative case study design (Merriam, 2009). Data sets included student compositions, a survey, individual semi-structured student interviews (Patton, 2002), and a researcher focus group interview. Interviews and the focus group were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Compositions were collected in hard copy. We analyzed the data using a constant-comparative model as described by Merriam (2009), as well as the qualitative data analysis software NVIVO. Trustworthiness was established by data collection triangulation, data analysis triangulation, and attention to researcher expertise. Given the sample size and the single research site, this research is not intended to be generalizable to other settings.

Table 1

### *Participants*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Primary Instrument</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Anthony	jazz guitar	White	M
Andrew	trombone	Hispanic	M
Arthur	classical guitar	Hispanic	M
Bill	jazz piano	White	M
James	voice	Hispanic	M
Jasmine	voice	White	F
Julie	classical guitar	Hispanic	F
Paul	jazz trumpet	White	M
Robert	composition	White	M
Ryan	bassoon/jazz piano	Hispanic	M
Thomas	voice	White	M
Tim	percussion	White	M

### *Data Collection*

**Composition Assignment.** As the final assignment in each class, students were asked to create a composition for elementary brass ensemble. The instructors (Eros and Harrington), in collaboration with a composition faculty member (Miller), designed both the assignment and its accompanying rubric. Assignment parameters called for the students to write for both high and low brass instruments, so as to be applicable to both courses. Further input was obtained from several experienced elementary/middle school band directors, who reviewed the rubric and provided feedback. Although opinion is mixed on the use of rubrics for the assessment of musical composition (Deemer, 2016; Deutsch, 2016; Hickey, 1999), we felt that a rubric was appropriate for assessing such level-specific practicalities as choice of key, playable range, and any other technical demands. Students were given the assignment including the rubric, asked to submit a rough draft to the composition faculty member (Miller) for individualized feedback, and then required to complete a final version. Some students scheduled individual meetings, as well. Although the assignment called for the students to write original music, several students chose to create arrangements. They were given the option of using “pop-style” material as well as folk songs or original material. Finished compositions represented a variety of forms such as a chorale (Ryan), a march (Tim), and a Christmas carol arrangement (Paul). Finally, the students formed a brass ensemble, based on instructor-determined instrument assignment, and read each other’s music during the final class meeting.

**Survey.** Students were given a researcher-designed survey, using SurveyMonkey, which asked questions regarding their backgrounds with composition and their level of performance experience on brass instruments. The surveys were distributed at the beginning of the following academic term, by which point grades for the courses had been recorded. In addition to asking about the participants’ background experience with brass instruments, other questions included, “What overall comments do you have regarding the ensemble performance component of the assignment?”, “Did you find your finished project musically satisfying? Please elaborate.”, and “Would you recommend that this assignment be retained as part of the course? Please explain the reason(s) for your answer.”

**Student Interviews.** The students were interviewed individually, in a semi-structured format, using a researcher-developed protocol based on the earlier pilot study. Eros and Harrington each interviewed six students. Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and the researchers both reviewed all transcripts. One student declined to be recorded. Notes were taken during that student’s interview. Interviews were conducted during the following academic term, by which point grades had been recorded.

**Researcher Focus Groups.** Immediately after the performance session, attended by the Miller as well as the instructors, a focus group discussion was held in which we discussed the assignment, analyzed the performances, and discussed general thoughts on composition in music teacher education. A second focus group, at which the researchers discussed the preliminary findings, as well as impressions of the final reading session, was conducted at the conclusion of other data collection. Focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

## Findings

We divided the findings into two sections, corresponding to the research questions. Within each section findings are addressed separately according to themes that emerged from the data coding processes.

### **In what ways is composition valuable for the students as preservice music teachers?**

Findings for this research question were coded into the following themes: (a) insight, (b) pedagogy, and (c) creativity. At times, regardless of question phrasing, students used “arranging” and “composition” interchangeably in their answers.

**Insight.** Students felt that they gained insight into school instrumental music education as it might be perceived by both teachers and as students. Arthur, a classical guitarist, noted: “What I found to be the most valuable was learning how to arrange for a brass group, and [how] to try to capture the mindset of how a teacher would actually go about composing a tune for young students” (Survey). Bill, a jazz pianist, characterized the assignment in terms of learning about the “real world” of music education: “For me this project made me realize what I will have to do in the real world when I have my own class. Plus, it helped me with my arrangement techniques by forcing me out of my comfort zone” (Survey). Bill also discussed the overall value of the assignment for music educators:

*I think it is a valuable thing, because for one, we don't want to play the same boring songs all the time we are teaching, and just studying composition, even if you don't want to become a professional composer, can give you some insight into terms of arranging them and other tunes that are more enjoyable to play at an easy level for kids to play. (Interview)*

The participants also discussed how they gained insight into what it might be like to be a beginning brass student. Andrew, a trombonist, remarked:

*It really does put you in the shoes of the students as a beginner. It's important to remember that, you know? ... You've practiced on your instrument for a real long time, and you forget what it's like to be a beginner. How to struggle with*

*something that you don't remember struggling with before. I think it is very important. It teaches you how to be a teacher, but you have to remember how to be a student first.* (Interview)

Paul, a jazz trumpeter, discussed gaining further appreciation for the different mechanics of specific brass instruments, such as breath and endurance:

*Euphonium requires a lot more air than trumpet. And so it was good to understand that. I was trying to keep that in mind for the composition as well. I can play for maybe eight measures in one breath, whereas the tubas and euphoniums and especially the younger kids who are playing may be one or two bars. So that's something that I learned from playing, "Wow! That takes a lot more air!" I have to breathe more often. That influenced my composition and my general knowledge on the brass instruments.* (Interview)

The difference in comments is particularly interesting given the students' different primary instruments: the brass majors (Andrew and Paul) focusing on practical considerations from a student's point of view, while the jazz piano major (Bill) focusing more on aesthetic and creative elements.

Often, students characterized their experiences as discovering "what works," referring to how the various elements of their compositions did or did not prove practical: "when we performed the pieces as a group for the first time you get to see what does and does not work in writing for this type of group musically and practically" (Paul, Interview). The importance of practicality was echoed by Robert, a composition major, who said that the "most valuable part about this assignment ... was getting to gauge what a beginning brass ensemble is capable of; my arrangement was too difficult for that group, and now I know a little better how to go about it" (Survey).

Miller (composition faculty) also discussed how the participants could gain insight into what their future students might experience, through:

*Having to write for the kind of ensemble they are going to be directing, the level of the students. Writing for it gives them more insight into what the students have to do, and the learning process from the student point of view.* (Focus Group)

Finally, Miller connected the composition assignment to the overall course objectives:

*Students got a lot out of it and actually more to the point of the class learned about what works for these instruments and what works for players of that level in a way that they wouldn't if they were just doing it from [method book]*

*... actually having to do it is something that really teaches you [what] you can do, and what they can do. In that sense it is useful for the class, not just a compositional exercise. (Focus Group)*

**Pedagogy.** The students discussed the ways in which composition could be used in their overall pedagogy, such as through crafting appropriate instructional material for their future students. Andrew, a trombonist, observed:

*We look at these method books sometimes and we think, "This isn't what I'm looking for!" You know you can't always find the right piece, so if you just had the ability to sit down and, "Well, I'm just going to write a short piece for my band or my small ensemble or whatever." It kind of made me do that and showed me that it was something that I could do. I could definitely get better at it! (Interview)*

Thomas, a vocalist, discussed how the assignment rounded out his practical knowledge of brass instruments as his familiarity with brass instruments was, prior to the assignment, primarily that of an audience member:

*It got me to a sense of like how each instrument sounds with another brass instrument. Like how they sound together. I'm only use to hearing them in like an orchestra setting where there are only a couple of brass instruments with mostly strings. And also understanding like the French horn and how its line moves, and the trumpets with their transposed parts. (Thomas, Interview)*

Paul discussed how the assignment helped to build skill in transposition:

*As future educators, transposition of instruments can be a challenge particularly if you are not familiar with that, if you are a singer, for example or something. That was something that a lot of my peers and also with myself, struggled with, trying to figure out the transpositions, keeping several keys in your head at the same time. (Interview)*

It is further noteworthy that many students were simultaneously enrolled in a basic conducting course, in which they would be studying transposition in the process of score study. That might explain an even stronger awareness of transposition than would otherwise be present.

Both students and faculty discussed composing music for elementary performers in terms of use for pedagogy. Miller discussed how, having completed this assignment, students would get ideas for how they might compose music for their specific pedagogical needs when they enter the field: "What do I have to write to help somebody learn piano? Do I write progressive pieces? How do I write pieces

for brass players at this stage?” (Focus Group). Miller also proposed that experience writing for elementary students, as in this assignment, might also benefit the music education majors in working with more advanced students or larger ensembles: “What would be the next thing if I wrote for seventh or eighth grade brass players? You know? ‘Or for band?’” (Focus Group).

**Creativity.** Other students focused on how the creative process was a valuable part of the assignment. One student (Andrew) discussed how the specifics of the medium, including the performers’ skill level, impacted his composing: “Being forced to distill my big complicated ideas into effective and playable arrangements for the age and skill level required” (Survey).

Thomas compared arranging to composing, and how the assignment might differ:

*[I] feel like arranging would be a little bit easier in a sense, because like “There’s the melody, and here is what I can do with the melody.” But composition adds that creativity boost. It’s like what do I want to do? I have complete freedom. I mean, it can seem a little bit challenging at first, like, “What do I do?” But once you start playing around, “OK this is what I want to do!” Then you get the ball rolling and it’s not that much different than the arranging assignment. (Interview)*

Arthur, a classical guitarist, focused some of his comments on the aesthetic components of the assignment, rather than the instrumental mechanics or the issues of pedagogy:

*I got to hear how the instruments are different. A trumpet and a French horn probably don’t have the same mezzo-forte. Hearing it performed made me think, “Oh, now I have to keep in mind the range of these instruments in the volume. So, there’s that. And also I felt with other people’s pieces, some instruments should have had more musicians on them to like, bring out the colors in the chord. (Interview)*

Finally, students found the experience musically satisfying. Tim, a percussionist, stated, “I thought my project was musically satisfying. I enjoyed arranging the pieces and there was a great sense of pride when my piece was played well” (Interview).

### What suggestions do students have for structuring musical composition activities in secondary instrument methods courses?

The students felt that it was important to include musical composition within their secondary instrument techniques courses, as well as in the overall music education curriculum at WCU. Findings fell into the categories of (a) composition as assessment, (b) assignment parameters and (c) performance.

**Composition as Assessment.** The composition assignment served as the final assignment for the course, in lieu of a final performance test or other form of assessment. Only one student, Bill, a jazz pianist, felt that the composition assignment was too much work for a one-unit course, and that he would have rather just taken one more playing test. Conversely, Ryan, who was studying both bassoon and jazz piano, observed that it was a welcome change from traditional performance-based assessments: “I think that it was a good assignment to do to break the monotony of playing as well as coming to understand the instruments better and the challenges that beginning musicians face” (Survey). These findings suggest that there is a range of students’ views on the assignment within the whole course, even amongst students with the same primary performance area. Finally, Paul, a trumpet player, suggested that composition could be a good final assignment in this as well as other music education courses:

*Just in general, for a music education course, basic composition is a good culminating experience that everything can lead to because you have to consider everything an educator has to consider: range, the keys, and the transposing instruments, breathing, skill levels, and also writing music is just going to make you a better musician. It was an interesting final. It also makes sense as a final for an education course. (Interview)*

**Assignment Parameters.** Students had a number of comments related to the parameters of the assignment. The instructors were not sure, initially, if the parameters might be too limiting: “Last time ... I gave them specific rhythmic figures to use. I got very ... mechanically specific so far as the vocabulary to use” (Eros, Focus Group). As it turned out, the students found the parameters helpful: “It was good to be forced to write music with technical limitations” (Anthony, Survey). Two elements discussed were length and key. Although the assignment specified the keys of B-flat, E-flat, or F concert, students still wrote in other keys, such as a classical guitar primary who wrote in D major, a key that is typically challenging for newer brass players, despite instructor feedback. Bill identified key choice as a possible difficulty: “Playing other people’s arrangements who used sharp keys and/or composed more or more advanced ensembles” (Survey). Miller said:

*In the future I would write probably slightly more specific guidelines for their compositions. ... You know there's nothing wrong with that in composing assignments, saying "The rhythms you are allowed to use [are these]," "Be creative in putting them together." (Focus Group)*

Several students discussed, specifically, the length of the compositions. Although previous assignments provided a length guideline, this specific assignment did not. Students suggested requiring shorter pieces or, perhaps, writing multiple short pieces: "Perhaps giving short eight or twelve measure assignments with duos and trios with less instruments before moving to greater ensembles as the only project" (Thomas, Survey). Jasmine, a vocalist, felt that the length of some student compositions made them difficult to play: "[I] felt the length of the pieces were too long to perform that many at this level of experience" (Survey). Other students related the length of pieces to the performance component of the assignment, saying the pieces might have "shorter requirements, so more work can be done on less quantities of music. I felt we could barely fumble through one arrangement before we had to go to the next" (Ryan, Survey). Similarly, another student observed, "I think it is a good assignment that could be used in a course well but I do think the pieces should be a bit shorter and have a longer time set aside to play through all of them" (Julie, Interview).

**Performance.** At the conclusion of the course, during the final exam period, the class read all of the compositions. Students were clear that they found the performance component of the assignment important. Thomas, a vocalist, observed that:

*You got to understand how each piece sounded and what were the flaws of some pieces and what were the goods about some pieces. Like what stuff could you do better and adjust it for that age range and stuff that was really good and you could expand more on. ... We could have just turned it in, that would have been it, but actually hearing what it sounded like in something other than a MIDI file that sounds like crap! (Interview)*

Another student discussed how the performance made the playable ranges clear in a more concrete manner than through just giving parameters. Julie, a classical guitarist, had thought that she had an understanding of playable range until she heard her piece performed:

*When we did that, my melody line was out of range, for sure. I know you guys had told us parameters. I felt like I followed them, but when I got in there and I got to listen to everyone else's pieces, and started experiencing playing pieces, I knew that my piece was out of range. (Interview)*

Endurance was another issue, with students suggesting that it was difficult to play all of the pieces in one sitting: “Perhaps the least valuable thing about this assignment was not being able to have more time to perform and discuss the pieces, although I do understand that the beginning musicians can only play for so long” (Ryan, Survey). James, a vocalist, suggested extending the performance component further, and perhaps performing the music in a different setting: “I would like a chance to rehearse the piece and not just do a run through. Possibly have the best pieces performed by the brass choir for a recital” (Survey). Bill, a jazz pianist, connected endurance to the idea of writing multiple shorter compositions:

*Yeah! That’s a good idea for a couple of reasons. One, it’s less stressful for us as student composers. Two, it’s less stressful for the student in the class playing because if you only have three people playing the rest can rest their chops.*  
(Interview)

Bill’s enthusiasm for this scenario is particularly noteworthy as he was the sole participant who said that he would have preferred a playing test to the composition assignment, with his primary concern being length of the assignment. Similarly, the other students who suggested giving a shorter length requirement were also non-winds performers, including guitarists (Julie and Ryan) and vocalists (Thomas and Jasmine), suggesting that students without backgrounds in instrumental music might be more sensitive to the length of individual pieces.

## Discussion, Implications, and Suggestions for Research

The results indicate that these participants found musical composition valuable as a final assignment in a secondary instrument methods course and that, additionally, there were concrete ways that it could be adjusted so as to make it more meaningful in future course offerings. Specifically, the participants found musical composition valuable for the insight that it provided into music teachers’ and K-12 students’ experience, as well as for the direct experience that it provided them with issues of pedagogy. Although the students had already performed in class and during individual performance assessments, composing and performing music seemed to make those points even more strongly.

Students’ comments, at times, suggested a possible connection between their primary performing areas and their experiences with the composition assignment. Brass, and to an extent all wind, players often focused more on pedagogy and on specific brass instrument issues. Non-wind players, such as the guitarists and pianists in the class, focused somewhat more on the creative process and the aesthetic elements of composing music, such as through connecting instruments to

“tone colors” within chords. Previous research has examined the potential impact of music education majors’ specific musical backgrounds on their experiences in music education coursework, such as choral majors studying instrumental music education (Parker & Powell, 2014), as well as the impact of music education majors’ primary instruments on students’ teaching effectiveness in instrumental techniques classes (Powell, Weaver, & Henson, 2018). Although not intended to be generalizable, this specific finding suggests the potential for this study to extend that body of research through the lens of one specific capstone assignment to compose elementary-level music for a brass ensemble.

Results also suggest that giving students the option of either creating an arrangement or composing original material might be considered. Frequently, music teacher education curricula do not have enough space for stand-alone courses in composition or arranging. Music teacher educators must balance national and state requirements for music education with the realities of university unit limits on degrees and programs, as well as practicalities of how many courses students are able to schedule (Stringham, Thornton, & Shevock, 2016). Others have proposed the inclusion of composition/arranging within other music education courses, as was done here, as one solution (Deemer, 2016).

Time was an element that was frequently identified as an obstacle in completing this assignment. Previous research has indicated that music education majors are highly conscious of demands on their time, particularly as related to completing music education requirements (Conway, Eros, Pellegrino, & West, 2010). It should be noted that, since this offering, WCU has moved from a 10-week quarter-based system to a 15-week semester-based system. Several students suggested that they wanted more time for the assignment. The assignment, although outlined on the course syllabus, was presented in full during week seven, allowing the students approximately five weeks to prepare the final version for the final exam week. Similar timing during a 15-week semester would allow much more time for revision and rehearsal. Students proposed writing multiple shorter pieces, such as duets and trios, rather than writing for an entire ensemble, as well as spreading composition activities throughout the duration of the course. They suggested that shorter pieces would address issues of endurance, as well as allowing students to gain experience with both writing and performing original music.

The participants identified the opportunity to perform the compositions as particularly important. In addition to finding the experience to be musically meaningful, the performances clarified the students’ understanding of what was and was not practical for beginning brass players. The students discussed a desire to further refine their music through additional drafts and rehearsal, and to perhaps coordinate a concert. The students also identified endurance, specifically,

as an issue during the reading session. The instructors would therefore need to plan accordingly, so as to meet students' musical and pedagogical objectives while allowing for the practicalities of how long beginning brass players are able to play before becoming fatigued.

Previous research has investigated comfort level in teaching composition, as experienced by both faculty and students (Pellegrino, Beavers, & Dill, 2018), as well as inservice teachers (Hickey & Schmidt, 2019; Hopkins, 2014; Stringham, Thornton, & Shevock, 2016). As an extension of their coursework in music education, further research might be conducted into how students in this course go on to include composition in their later K–12 teaching practice. Do the students go on to compose and arrange music for their own ensembles, whether for pedagogical or performance purposes? Do they include instruction on composition, whether in ensemble-based situations or in other settings? What level of confidence do they feel in their ability to teach composition?

Finally, research into collaboration between music education faculty and other musical faculty is an emerging area. Pellegrino, Beavers, and Dill (2018) researched collaboration between music education and music theory faculty, discovering that their collaboration yielded numerous positive results for their students, as well as for themselves as faculty members. Deemer (2016) suggested that music education and composition faculty should explore collaboration within music education curricula. Although not a primary area of findings in the present research, the data do indicate that music education and music composition faculty can collaborate productively in designing curricular content in music education. As Miller pointed out, music education and composition have overlapped for centuries, placing our music education majors in good company, saying, “it wasn't too good for Bartók or Bach to write easy pieces. To write for learners. So why should it be too good for any of them?” (Focus Group).

## Conclusion

Although the assignment in this study was not intended to supplant entire courses in composition/arranging, or individual applied study of composition, it was intended to provide an authentic compositional experience, as well as to demonstrate the potential for composition as a pedagogical device within music teacher education coursework. Indeed, interest in including composition in music education curricula is robust, although challenges persist in finding ways to incorporate musical composition into music teacher education and, by extension, preparing our preservice music teachers to address state and national standards for the teaching of musical composition. Challenges might include, among other

things, curricular space in the form of hour limits, as well as a lack of examples for how composition can be included in curricula.

This case study provided us with insight into how we might address national and state requirements for instruction in musical composition while both (a) providing meaningful learning experiences for our music education majors, and (b) not increasing the number of units in our already-full curriculum. Furthermore, this research provided an excellent opportunity for music education and music composition faculty to explore the possibilities for collaboration in crafting music teacher education curricula. Through the incorporation of musical composition into secondary instrumental courses, this research provided us with a detailed view into how we might better serve our music education majors as they prepare for careers as K–12 music teachers.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Protocol

1. What was your overall impression of the composition assignment?
2. How effective was the project at meeting its stated goals?
3. Briefly describe the process that you used to compose your music.
4. In what ways did this assignment contribute to your knowledge of brass instruments?
5. How did this assignment fit into the course as a whole?
6. How valuable is it to include a performance component along with the composition assignment?
7. How valuable is it to include composition as part of a basic instrumental techniques class?
8. How important is it to include ensemble performance in a basic instrumental techniques class?
9. How important is it to include musical composition as a part of learning to become a music educator?
10. What did you like best and least about the composition project?
11. What suggestions do you have for improving the assignment?

Secondary Instrument Techniques Composition

Appendix B

Composition Assignment Rubric

Category/Points	4	3	2	1
<b>Rhythm</b> (including time signature)	X	X	Rhythmic figures through the end of the text.	More than 1-2 rhythms beyond the scope of the text
<b>Key</b>	X	X	1, 2, or 3 flats concert	Anything else
<b>Instrument Ranges</b> (note that these criteria must be met for ALL instruments)	X	Concert pitch: Bb major scale, with A below low Bb through upper C; Accidentals: B, E, Ab	A few notes are too high/low and/or accidentals other than B, E, Ab	A substantial amount is outside the practical range of the instruments and/or lots of accidentals
<b>Individual instrument parts</b>	X	All have interesting melody and/or accompanying parts	One or two have interesting parts; others will quickly become bored	Very little interest for any parts

Secondary Instrument Techniques Composition

**Appendix B Continued**

<b>Playability</b>	X	X	Playable with moderate rehearsal time	Not reasonably playable by most 1 <sup>st</sup> – 2 <sup>nd</sup> year players
<b>Originality</b>	Evidence of a high degree of originality	Evidence of originality	Evidence of some originality	Very little musical originality, highly predictable
<b>Overall Musicality</b>	Evidence of excellent treatment of musical elements, creating a musically appealing piece	Evidence of a knowledge of musical elements to create a musical piece	Some treatment of musical elements for musical/expressive objectives	Predictable, Little evidence of musical interest for performers or listeners

**Additional feedback will be provided during the process. Criteria and guidelines may be modified as necessary.**