

# **A STUDY OF THE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC PROGRAMS IN THE SECONDARY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OF THE UNITED STATES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to determine the current status of instrumental music programs in the secondary Catholic schools of the United States through information gathered from a national survey. From the 1,203 secondary Catholic schools in the United States, 400 were randomly selected to participate in an online survey with 117 responding. Data were collected and analyzed for demographic information and program characteristics. Comparisons were made between the characteristics of programs and the schools' size and location to determine trends found in the Catholic secondary instrumental programs.

Results showed that 88.9% of the schools have instrumental music programs with 47% located in urban, 41% in suburban, and 12% in rural areas. Many secondary school enrollments were small with 48.7% with less than 500 students of which 49.1% located in urban, 41.7% in suburban and 71.4% in rural areas. Many schools had small instrumental programs ( $P = 49\%$ ) with 50 or less students participating in instrumental music. Factors of administrative and parental support, school scheduling, and feeder school instrumental programs affected the strength and security of the programs. Recommendations derived from the results included the development of stronger feeder school programs, designing better school schedules, promoting supportive parent booster groups, and increasing

administrative support through providing proper rehearsal facilities and necessary equipment.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The percentage of secondary Catholic schools that have instrumental music programs is high ( $P = 88.9\%$ ). This is an increase from the 1983 NCEA data stating that 76% of secondary schools offer instrumental or vocal music, showing an improvement in status of the Catholic instrumental music programs.
2. Of the schools that offer instrumental music 47% are located in urban settings, 41% in suburban locations, and 12% in rural areas. Most schools have small enrollment sizes with 48.7% with less than 500 students, 31.6% with 500 to 999 students, 17.1% with 1000 to 1500 students, and only 2.6% with over 1500 students. Overall the study revealed a growth in school enrollment from schools with instrumental music programs with the average increase of 4 to 6% replacing the average decrease of 1 to 3%.
3. Most schools offer separate music rehearsal rooms with half of the schools providing practice rooms. However, the majority of the respondents find storage for equipment and instruments inadequate. A large number of schools require a fine arts credit for graduation but the increase in other graduation requirements is a concern of the respondents. More schools offer band but less schools offer orchestra compared to previous years. Slightly over half of the schools offer

instrumental music during individual class periods and 44% supplement the schedule with before/after school rehearsals. A large majority of schools instrumental groups perform regularly with slightly over half performing with feeder schools. Over half of the directors have 16 or more years of experience with advanced degrees. Collectively, the average instrumental music programs growth rate of 4 to 6% overshadows the average drop-out rate of 1 to 3%, with programs of 100 to 150 students showing the most growth. Weak feeder school programs are the greatest concern that undermines the growth of the secondary school instrumental music programs. Secondary school administrative and parent support is strong but booster organizations are lacking in the majority of schools.

4. There are several notable differences of school instrumental programs with respect to school location and size. The majority of all schools have small instrumental music programs of 50 or less students even though some have large school sizes. Drop-out rates remain low although many teachers report that too few students in their programs are a result of an over-emphasis on athletics. The majority of all sizes of rural schools have strong and secure programs while small suburban school programs are more insecure. Most schools are dissatisfied with their facilities showing slightly more dissatisfaction in suburban schools. Small urban and rural schools show higher administrative support than the suburban schools. Parent booster organizations are more active and supportive in the larger schools and lacking in the smaller schools. Small rural schools have the highest percentage of teachers with 16 or more years of experience.

5. A large majority of instrumental music teachers report that the primary reason their students drop-out of their instrumental music programs is due to scheduling conflicts. Scheduling problems due to increased graduation requirements and strong emphasis on athletic or extra-curricular participation contribute to the drop-out rate.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the results and conclusions, several recommendations to improve the instrumental music programs in the secondary Catholic schools are offered below:

1. Develop stronger feeder school instrumental music programs with support from elementary and secondary school administration through additional funding, scheduling, and staffing. Secondary teachers should be more involved with the feeder programs.
2. Design creative school scheduling that accommodates the higher academic requirements, the athletic program, and extra-curricular participation but allows for students to participate fully in the instrumental music programs.
3. Provide support with strong parent booster organizations in all secondary schools to serve to help and fund the additional costs associated with active instrumental music programs.
4. Improve the programs by the administration providing proper rehearsal facilities, storage areas, and necessary equipment exclusively for the needs of the instrumental music programs.

5. Develop non-traditional music ministry ensembles that promote the mission of the Catholic Church and better highlight the musical abilities often found in smaller instrumental music programs.