

Breaking Barriers for American Band Directors and Bassoonists

Part 3: Band director survey and conclusions

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The article appearing below is a modified version of the third and final part of the author's 2023 University of Minnesota doctoral thesis. The first and second parts of this important work were published in IDRS journals 47/2 and 47/3.

What band directors tell us

While the Bassoon Origins Survey detailed in the previous article (*The Double Reed*, 47/3) was intended to identify trends in access issues for students, the Band Director Survey described here was created to identify trends in bassoon access issues for both band directors and their schools, and to better understand how band directors recruit, retain, and nurture their bassoonists. The survey was distributed electronically in April 2021 via email and social media with only one qualification: the band director taking the survey must have taught in the United States in public schools at some point. Responses were accepted regardless of whether or not a teacher's school had access to a bassoon or had bassoon students in their program and did not restrict participation based on band directors' age, experience, or retirement status. Band directors who consider themselves "bassoon specialists," defined as a musician who considers the bassoon to be either their primary instrument or a strong secondary, were also offered the opportunity to participate in the Bassoon Origins survey. Filtering out unfinished or duplicate surveys from the final data, the survey yielded responses from 56 band directors in 24 states. Their times as teachers ranged from 3 to 33 years, with an average of 13 years of experience.

Band director survey results

Q1.

What State did/do you teach in primarily?

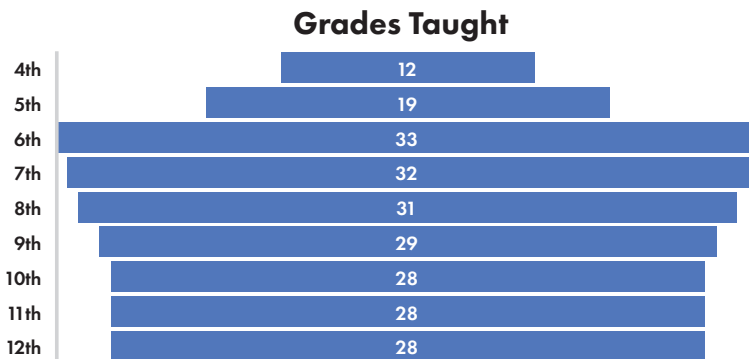
AZ: 2	HI: 1	MD: 1	NM: 1	TX: 6
CA: 3	IL: 7	MI: 2	NY: 2	VA: 1
CO: 3	IN: 1	MN: 9	OH: 1	WA: 1
FL: 1	KS: 1	NE: 1	PA: 3	WI: 2
GA: 2	KY: 1	NJ: 1	TN: 2	

Note:

- 24 of 50 states were represented, with the most representation from Minnesota, Illinois, and Texas.

Q2.

What grades did/do you teach primarily? (check all that apply)



Notes:

- 11 band directors have taught at least 6th–12th grades at some point, if not more grades.
- There is no real differentiating data for this question—only three people answered that they only teach 4th and 5th, but the most common answer was “6th, 7th, and 8th,” probably because so many people doubled up here, but it wasn’t significant enough to make a difference.

Q3.

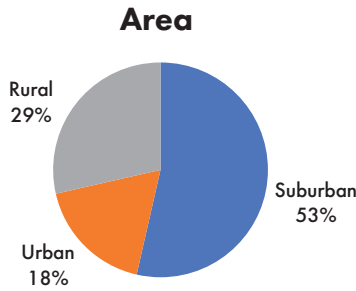
How many years have you been teaching (or did you teach) band?

- Out of 56 answers, the average time anyone taught band was 13 years.
- 13 people said they had been teaching for 20 years or more.

Q4.

How would you classify the area you teach in?

- Suburban..... 30
- Rural 16
- Urban..... 10



Q5.

How many total bassoons (instruments) does your school own? (Functional or not; If you no longer teach band, give the number of instruments you had on average.)

- Total bassoons reported by participants: 166 bassoons

Notes:

- With 56 schools represented, this averages to about 3 bassoons per school.
- However, there were 13 schools with 0 bassoons.
- The number of bassoons was somewhat random when compared to school environment, band director experience, or state. There appears to be no direct connection.

Comparing question 4 with 5:

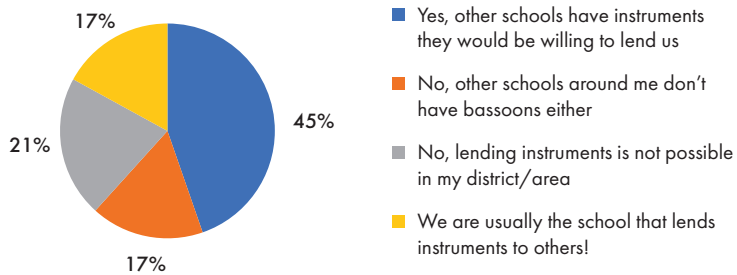
- Suburban schools had an average of 3.5 bassoons per school
 - 8 out of 30 suburban schools (26%) had 0 bassoons
- Rural schools had an average of 2.75 bassoons per school
 - 5 out of 16 rural schools (31%) had 0 bassoons
- Urban schools had an average of 3.5 bassoons per school
 - 0 out of 10 urban schools (0%) had 0 bassoons

Q6.

If your school doesn't own bassoons or doesn't have enough instruments for the amount of interested students, do you have the option of borrowing a bassoon within your district from other schools if you have an interested student?

Yes, other schools have instruments they would be willing to lend us	21
No, lending instruments is not possible in my district/area	10
No, other schools around me don't have bassoons either	8
We are usually the school that lends instruments to others!	8

Instrument Lending



Notes:

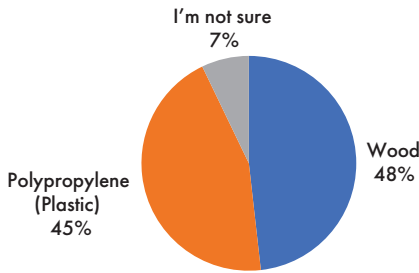
- 9 schools did not answer. Perhaps this means they do not have the issue of not owning bassoons or having enough bassoons for interested students.
- Lending instruments within the district is allowed in at least 50% of schools, though not all schools have instruments to loan.

Q7.

Think about the best bassoon your school owns that you reserve for top players because of its great sound. What kind of bassoon is it?

- Wooden..... 27
- Polypropylene (Plastic)..... 25
- I’m not sure..... 4
- We don’t own any bassoons but if I had to choose one of these options, it would be: (choose one) Wooden, Polypropylene (Plastic), or I’m not sure.

Best Bassoon Type



Note:

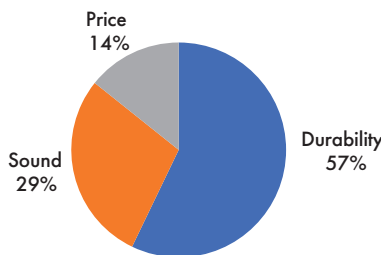
- Responses for the option beginning with “We don’t own any bassoons but...” were tallied with the first three options.

Q8.

If you were to buy a new bassoon for your program, what is the most important factor to you personally?

- Durability..... 32
- Sound..... 16
- Price..... 8

Most important feature of bassoons



Note:

- Durability is prized above price and sound in preference when buying an instrument.

Q9.

How many bassoonists (people) have you had in your program, on average per year, in the last 5 years? (If you've been teaching less than 5 years, give me the average anyway. If you're retired, summarize your last 5 years of teaching)

The average of responses to this question was 2 students per program in the last 5 years.

Q10.

How many TOTAL students per year, on average has your band program had in the last 5 years? (This is to measure the proportion of bassoon students to total students)

On average, teachers had about 1 bassoon player per 75 students in their program.

Note:

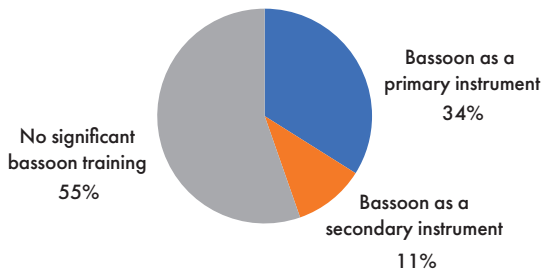
- It appears that this question was often misunderstood. Many answers were 1 or 2, instead of the anticipated average of about 300. The average stated above was taken from about 20 legitimate numbers.

Q11.

Which of the following describes your experience with the bassoon?

- I tinkered with bassoon in techniques classes or in masterclasses but never pursued it 31
- Bassoon was/is my primary instrument, and I consider myself a bassoon specialist 19
- Bassoon was/is my secondary instrument or a regular double 6

Bassoon Background



Note:

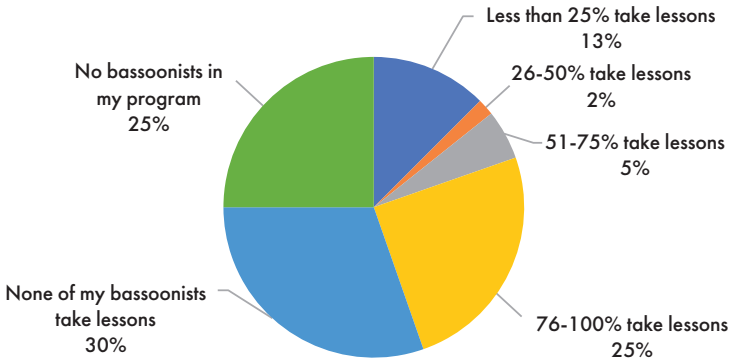
- This data pool is too small to believably indicate that a significant proportion of band directors are also bassoonists.

Q12.

Approximately what percentage of your bassoonists take private lessons with a bassoon specialist consistently each year?

- I have at least one bassoonist in my program, but they do not take private lessons with a specialist 17
- I don't have bassoonists in my program 14
- 76-100%..... 14
- Less than 25%..... 7
- 51-75% 3
- 26-50%..... 1

Lessons for bassoonists



Notes:

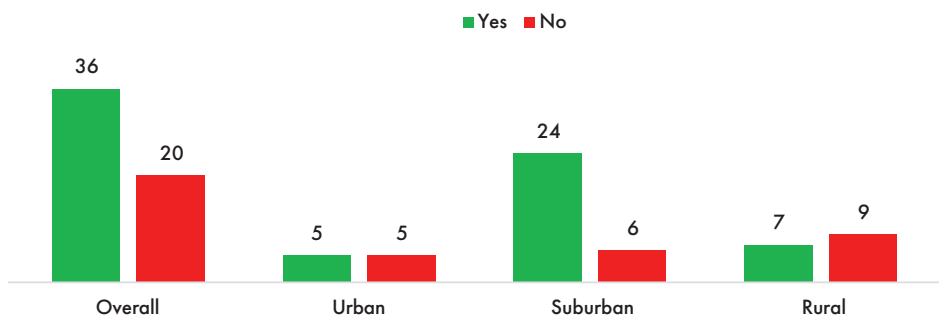
- 25 programs have bassoonists who take lessons.
- 25% of programs do not have bassoonists.
- 17 programs have at least 1 bassoon, but that student doesn't take lessons.
- Counting only those programs with bassoonists, 60% of school bassoonists take private lessons.
- The most popular answers were having bassoonists and not taking private lessons (30%), then "76-100%" (25%)
- This data pool is not large enough to properly assess the country's level of access to lessons.

Q13.

Do you have access to a bassoon specialist other than yourself in your area, should you need one? (a “bassoon specialist” should be defined as: a person who is primarily a bassoonist or for whom bassoon is a strong secondary instrument, who has many years of experience in playing and teaching the bassoon.)

- Yes – 36 (64%)
 - 24 Suburban 67%
 - 7 rural 20%
 - 5 urban 14%
- No – 20 (36%)
 - 6 Suburban 30%
 - 9 Rural 45%
 - 5 urban 25%

Access to bassoon specialists by area

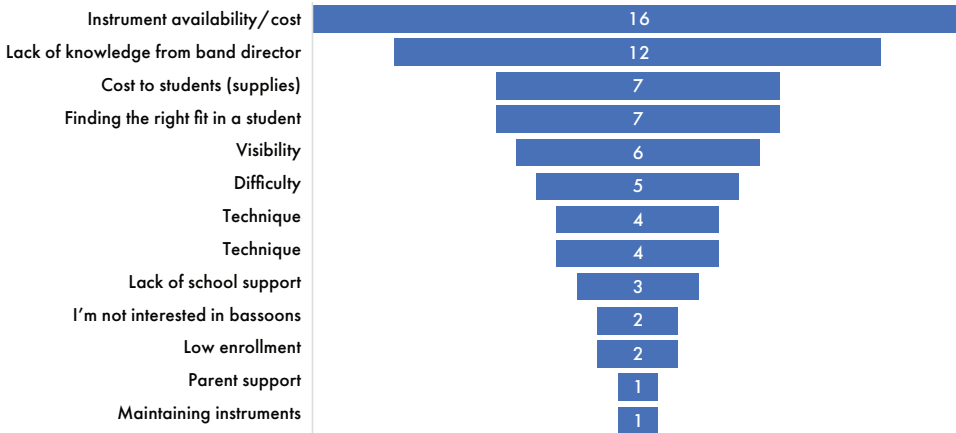


Notes:

- 36% of programs do not have a bassoon specialist in the area other than the band director, if applicable.
- Of the programs that HAVE access to other bassoon specialists, 67% were classified as suburban. The lowest access to other bassoon specialists was in urban schools at 14%.
- This data pool is not large enough to support an accurate representation of level of access throughout the country, though overall results are consistent with responses provided in the Bassoon Origins Survey.

Q14.

What is the most difficult barrier to overcome when trying to recruit and retain bassoonists in your program?

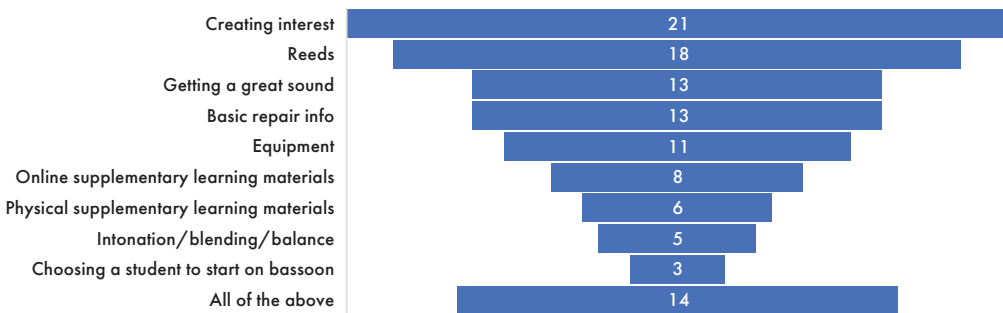


Notes:

- The two most common answers were “Instrument availability/cost” and “Lack of knowledge from band director.”

Q15.

Which of the following would you be most interested in learning about in order to help further the success of bassoonists (or potential bassoonists) in your program? (choose all that apply)



Q16.

Tell me a story about a student you have started on the bassoon and how you did so, if applicable.

Out of 56 surveys, 32 participants submitted responses to this question. Many answers use the terms “switched” or “started” in their stories; for example, “I switched a clarinetist to the bassoon once,” or “I typically try to start one bassoon a year.” The use of the term may imply an introduction to the bassoon, giving instruction on the bassoon, or both, but it is unclear which of these is true without further inquiry. Of the 32 participants who provided stories, 23 specifically mentioned introducing the bassoon to a student, and 12 specifically mentioned personally teaching the bassoon to a student without the inclusion of a specialist private teacher. In the next section, I present a number of responses band directors provided to question 16 of the survey.

Band directors’ “starting a student” stories

Band directors are often a major influence on their students and are vital to the beginning, switching, and ultimate success of bassoonists. Many of them shared a unique story of starting or switching a bassoonist in the survey, usually involving a student who was motivated to learn the instrument either before they started band or once they learned about the instrument from their band director. These stories are vital to helping us as bassoon teachers move forward in nurturing bassoonists who start in band programs. They can also supply band directors with new ways of encouraging more new bassoonists. Below are some of those stories. Responses have not been edited for grammar or spelling.

I had specialists that would come in to do a short presentation on oboe, bassoon, horn and tuba. I would propose the idea of switching to students who were doing exceptionally well on flute or clarinet and invite them to meet with the oboist or bassoon specialist that I brought in for an introductory lesson. I would write a personal email to the parents before the introductory lesson. It was a very individualized, successful process. Most of those students continued into high school and college.

I had a student who wanted to play bassoon but had no way to obtain an instrument. As part of a community band, I asked if the student could use the one I borrow from them to learn on. They gave me permission. I taught him to play.

I usually wait until the student has played another woodwind instrument successfully for a year. I have had way better success in this model.

I switched a bass clarinetist to bassoon. He has high musical aptitude, is a leader in the classroom, and always works hard. This student is proud to play the bassoon and enjoys it much more than bass clarinet. I have bought most of his supplies out of my own pocket. I went to one masterclass about starting bassoons at my state music conference before switching him, and I was the example student. I struggle with helping him with

technique and changing fingerings quickly but have successfully taught him to produce quality tone and play in tune.

Analysis of survey results

Both the Bassoon Origins Survey (published in *The Double Reed*, 47/3) and the Band Director Survey presented here were designed using my personal experience as a teacher and student, as well as having personal and professional relationships with band directors and other bassoonists. Collecting this information helped me identify trends that may or may not have been anticipated. Comparing information from both the teacher and student perspectives of beginning bassoon provides a fuller picture of the experience and allows us to apply what we have learned to the research in secondary materials that I presented in the first article in this series (*The Double Reed*, 47/2). In this section, I will connect data from those surveys to point out trends in when, how, and why bassoonists come to learn their instrument and also to highlight common barriers or gaps in access for bassoonists and band directors alike.

The Bassoon Origins survey presents us with a few clear trends that represent the majority of bassoonists and their stories. From Question 3, one third of bassoonists start taking lessons immediately after acquiring the instrument, while the other two thirds of bassoonists learn the instrument on their own for a time. As a private teacher, I frequently encounter bassoonists who have successfully learned the bassoon on their own to an intermediate level, but after about a year of learning, they hit a wall and can't figure out how to continue growing as a bassoonist. Every one of these students has different self-taught habits, a slightly different set of incorrect fingerings, and little to no knowledge of where to find good reeds. This concept of a "wall" in learning may be pointed to by the most popular answer to "When did you start taking lessons?": 39% of bassoonists took lessons at least one year or more after acquiring the instrument.

It is also important to note how many bassoonists claimed that they were "self-taught" or "started on their own." Not all of these claims were specifically noted as positive or negative experiences. While some bassoonists feel held back by the fact that they didn't have access to a teacher in the beginning, others feel that it was a good challenge for them. Many of the stories provided by band directors mention students being "self-directed" or "a leader," which leads them to being more successful on the instrument, but in those stories there is no mention of struggle on the student's part after the initial switching period. This missing data could be due to the fact that those who struggled quit playing and therefore did not take the survey.

The question of lessons in the Bassoon Origins Survey (Q3) shows that 91% of bassoon students successfully take private lessons for at least three months at some point. In the Band Director Survey (Q12), counting only the answers from band directors who reported having at least one bassoonist in their program, 40% of programs reported that their students don't take lessons at all. Another 40% of programs reported that more than half of their bassoonists take lessons, while the remaining 20% reported less than half of their bassoonists take lessons. By combining these results, it appears that an average of 75% of bassoonists seek private lessons, showing their determination to learn more about the instrument, and to seek community in the world of bassoon. Thus the continuing need for great private bassoon teachers.

The term “access to a bassoon specialist” is a very broad statement. Though bassoon professionals may be accessible in certain areas, it does not mean that schools or students have the means to afford them, that they are a perfect fit for every student, or that they are fine teachers. Assessing issues of access in general starts with a basic survey of availability. The Bassoon Origins Survey (Q2) and the Band Director survey (Q13) showed consistent data regarding general access to bassoon specialists in any given area. Sixty-four percent of band directors reported that their programs have access to a bassoon specialist other than themselves, while 63% of bassoonists reported having access to a bassoon teacher other than their band director when they started playing the bassoon.

Results of the surveys are also consistent in identifying levels of access by location. Both the Bassoon Origins and Band Director surveys show that suburban environments have the highest access to bassoon specialists compared to rural and urban environments. Of the results that confirmed access to a bassoon teacher in their area, 68% of bassoonists (Bassoon Origins Q1) and 67% of band directors (Band Director Q4) were from suburban areas. The lowest level of access was consistently in rural environments. Of the results that reported no access to a bassoon teacher in their area, 50% of bassoonists and 45% of band directors were from rural areas. The levels of access to bassoon specialists shown in these surveys are consistent with findings in studies of general instrumental education programs and their issues of access based on location.

The Bassoon Origin survey shows significant trends when it comes to how bassoonists get started on the instrument. In question Q4 (“What instrument was the first one you ever learned?”), it is important to note that the responses do not represent all bassoonists who start playing in United States public schools. Instead, it represents those who stuck with the instrument for a significant amount of time. The results of the survey could be interpreted to show the most effective course of study for creating *lifelong* bassoonists. Ninety-three percent of bassoonists who still play today started on a different instrument, which indicates some musical background and knowledge of how to read music before starting the instrument. The survey shows a wide range of starting instruments in general, but the most commonly effective foundations for bassoonists are clearly clarinet (28%) and piano, organ, or keyboard (27%).

The most popular reason for choosing the bassoon was “Band Director Suggestion” at 39%, with the second most popular reason being “Sound” at 23%. The prevalence of people selecting the answer “Sound” (which included the description, “you saw a demonstration, watched a video, or heard a soloist play”) points to the efficacy of (and need for) demonstrations by bassoon experts in schools, as well as the benefits of increasing visibility of the instrument through educational opportunities, chamber or solo recitals, and soloist features in classical concerts. There is a fair number of videos online intended to introduce students to the bassoon, but to highlight a point made in a few comments in the Band Director Survey, general visibility of the instrument in mainstream media and even large professional music organizations is low compared to other instruments like the violin, piano, or clarinet.

Generally, the argument for holding the bassoon back from younger students is one of physical size to be able to reach the holes of the instrument, but there were very few physical issues mentioned in bassoonists’ stories related to starting on the instrument, showing that some band directors are already doing a great job of encouraging the instrument at the

right time in a student's musical journey. The most common starting age for bassoonists is 7th grade—26% of bassoonists start or switch to bassoon at that age (Bassoon Origins Q7). There is a significant concentration of beginning bassoonists between 6th and 10th grade—a total of 74% of students begin the bassoon in this range of ages, probably because most band programs begin in 5th or 6th grade, allowing the aforementioned 93% of bassoonists to start their musical education on a different instrument. This data can help band directors and bassoonists begin to target specific age groups, specifically 7th and 9th grades, in order to cultivate more lifelong bassoonists.

To further understand a practical target for recruitment, Questions 6 and 7 of the Band Director Survey imply that band directors recruit an average of 2 bassoon students per year, with an average ratio of one bassoonist per every 75 students in band. These numbers of course would be variable based on enrollment, need, interest, and availability of instruments, but it provides a practical expectation for band directors aspiring to have a realistic goal in recruiting and retaining bassoonists in their program.

When I wrote the Bassoon Origins Survey, I was interested in finding trends in how quickly bassoonists start playing in an ensemble after they start learning the instrument (Q6), as well as if they continued playing a secondary instrument (Q9), either by choice or by program requirement (for example, through marching or pep band). My expectation was that starting in an ensemble too quickly would cause bassoonists to become discouraged, or that a requirement to continue with a secondary instrument would hinder progress on the bassoon. Keeping in mind that the Bassoon Origins Survey was taken by bassoonists who still play today, it is obvious to me that the results of the survey, combined with the written comments from Questions 10 and 11 suggest that these two factors did not hold bassoonists back from continuing to learn the instrument, but instead fueled their interest. Eighty percent of bassoonists recall starting to play the bassoon in an ensemble within three months of acquiring an instrument, with 56% beginning to play bassoon in an ensemble within less than a month. Only a few comments in origin stories mentioned feeling held back by starting the instrument later than their peers. It would have been an interesting addition to the survey to see how many bassoonists had that feeling.

The most common questions I get as a bassoon specialist from band directors and bassoonists alike are issues related to technique or reeds. Question 8 of the Bassoon Origins Survey (“Which of the following techniques have you struggled with the most throughout your time as a bassoonist?”) relates directly to Band Director Survey Question 15 (“Which of the following would you be most interested in learning about in order to help further the success of bassoonists in your program?”). The top three answers to the former were “Articulation/Double Tonguing (26%),” “Reed Issues (25%),” and “Intonation/Stability (17%).” The three most popular answers to the latter were “Creating Interest,” “Reeds in general,” and “Getting a great sound.” These closely related answers suggest that both technique and reeds should be a focus for both young bassoonists and band directors when helping them solve problems and when we create new content for them to learn more about the bassoon. I was surprised to find that fingerings, which are commonly a difficulty for band directors to understand and coach, were never mentioned as a point of difficulty for band directors, and they ranked fourth on the list of techniques with which bassoonists struggle.

Both surveys included an open-ended question related to barriers or challenges encountered when pursuing the teaching or learning of the bassoon. In my experience, the biggest barrier perceived by both bassoonists and band directors always comes down to funding. Sure enough, both surveys reflected the most common challenge being cost. From the data, we can assume that an average of 45% of band directors and bassoonists consider cost to be their greatest barrier to pursuing or acquiring a bassoon. Reeds were the second most commonly mentioned challenge for both bassoonists and band directors.

A common answer from Question 14 of the Band Director Survey on barriers to recruiting and retaining students was “Lack of knowledge from band director.” The prevalence of this answer lines up with previous research on the need for more focus on woodwinds, specifically bassoon, in pre-service techniques classes for music educators.

The barrier of cost for band directors relates directly to the availability of instruments at their schools. Questions 2 through 5 of the Band Director Survey assess each program’s availability of instruments as well as what aspects of bassoons are most important to band directors in the pursuit of purchasing instruments for their program. Question 2 asked about the number of instruments owned by schools. Though numbers of bassoons owned varied greatly between participants, an average of 3.5 bassoons are owned by suburban and urban schools, while rural schools enjoyed a smaller average of 2.75 bassoons per school. The numbers provided in this question imply that access issues regarding affording instruments don’t necessarily discriminate based on location. Every district and every school has a different budget regardless of location. A perfect example is that we find the highest level of access to teachers and the highest number of bassoons owned in suburban areas, and at the same time there were also eight schools reporting that they own no bassoons at all.

When trying to find immediate solutions for the problem of not having enough instruments, I asked in Question 6 if borrowing instruments was a possibility. 45% reported that borrowing bassoons would be a possibility, while 21% said lending is not possible, and 17% said that no one in their area had any bassoons to lend them regardless of the possibility to do so. It was refreshing to see that 17% of participants are already lending instruments to other schools and trying to solve the barrier of access.

When asked what type of bassoon gets the best sound (Band Director Q7), the results were almost equally split between wooden and polypropylene (plastic) bassoons. When asked in Question 8 which factor was most important to each band director when choosing a bassoon to buy, 57% responded that “Durability” was the most important, 29% answered “Sound,” and 14% answered “Price.” These results suggest that band directors are looking for instruments that will last a long time first and foremost, which is understandable since good bassoons are not cheap. Also keeping in mind that cost was a concern to most participants, it is surprising to note that price was the least popular focus when acquiring a new instrument.

One surprise in the open-ended answers of the Bassoon Origins Survey was the number of bassoonists who took private bassoon lessons from someone who was not a bassoon specialist. While online lessons may now be able to introduce more beginning players to bassoon-specific teachers, the ideal would be to have more bassoon specialists available to teach in more areas.

Another surprising answer from the open-ended answers of both surveys was just how many band directors give their money and/or personal time to help their students learn. It is

important to understand how much support some band directors provide just to help their students pursue an interest. While discounts on reeds and lessons can be seen as giving a service away for free, perhaps private teachers, reed makers, and other vendors who are in a position to do so can also view such discounts as an investment in a musician's future, taking a page from the band directors who work so hard to help their students realize their dreams, sometimes at a personal cost. Based on anecdotal evidence, I would guess that many of us are already doing this.

Conclusion

In my time as a private bassoon teacher I've taught many bassoonists, but I'm sure there are a number of students in my community I've never had a chance to meet, simply because of the barriers keeping them from the services I provide. I created these surveys, in part, to tell me what I might be missing. Three specific barriers stand out to me after comparing the research with the surveys. First, the issue of equity keeps rural schools from reaching the level of assistance they need to nurture bassoonists. Second, there is significant room for improvement when it comes to bassoon education materials for both band directors and bassoonists. Third, the issue of finances keeps band programs and musicians of all ages from feeling comfortable starting or pursuing the bassoon. In this section, I will discuss how these barriers are represented in both my research and the surveys, how they relate to my personal experience, and how we as bassoonists can start to remove these barriers to make the bassoon accessible to more students.

Rural communities have the biggest challenge when it comes to equity and access. They do not have the same level of access to in-person bassoon teachers or performers as suburban or urban communities do, nor do they have the same level of finances allocated to the arts in schools. Performers and teachers are models of the instrument, and though online resources are a wonderful way to spread knowledge and inspiration, seeing videos of a performer online simply isn't the same as witnessing a performance in person.

I have taught in rural communities through long commutes from suburban areas, and from personal experience I know it is extremely difficult to establish a presence in an area where you do not live. While there are barriers in front of band programs and students, there are also barriers in front of professional commuting bassoonists trying to make a living. I have been told multiple times that the hourly rates for other private teachers were much lower compared to mine, yet no mileage compensation is provided for long drives unless your trip is combined with a college-funded visit or a performance with an orchestra. In some regions, there is still only a small chance that any given school will even have a working bassoon readily available for a student—a student who may not stick with the instrument without a consistent connection to a teacher. This makes it difficult to make such travel economically viable.

All of this leads back to the thought that perhaps our constantly evolving online capabilities can help alleviate that stress. However, even if I was able to set up an online lesson with a rural student, their internet connection often wouldn't be strong enough to sustain a Zoom call without pausing every few minutes. It is therefore essential that we do not wait for internet connections to magically improve, but instead start creating online and print

resources that do not require a strong internet connection. Band directors Chandran Daniel and Stan Johnson's stories (from the first article in this series) on fostering a strong community connection in order to create a thriving music community in rural schools should prompt us to remember that even if we can't be there in person, we can create new, more detailed resources that help band directors guide their students to success without a direct connection to a bassoon specialist. After all, many of the responses in the comments of my surveys mentioned students learning on their own, and Dr. Shannon Lowe's 2022 study shows that only 17.7% of rural band directors reported students taking lessons with a private teacher. We can support students who learn on their own with materials that show the student how to problem solve, so they can teach themselves more effectively.

Band directors' largest barrier to the bassoon is knowledge. They often face a lack of time to learn the bassoon in techniques classes and are often concerned with their budget when it comes to purchasing and maintaining bassoons, both of which do not foster a high level of positive connection to the bassoon. There is room for improvement in creating resources for band directors to continue learning about the bassoon after their bachelor's degree is finished. If the general instrumental education research shows us that woodwinds are more difficult to effectively teach than any other instrument, and that there is no way to regulate music education techniques classes to allow students more time to learn the woodwinds, we must create resources for band directors as supplemental information.

In Texas, double reed specialty store Bocal Majority has for many years run a "Band Director Boot Camp," a three-day workshop where band directors are invited to learn more about the bassoon and/or oboe and how to teach their students more effectively. These workshops are held in three locations around the state and have high enrollment rates. Lowe's survey showed that 85.2% of band directors are, to varying degrees, interested in this kind of educational opportunity. Bocal Majority has started a trend in music educator post-degree bassoon education that should be echoed around the country. Band directors are the number one reason the bassoon gets any attention in their classrooms. If we create interest to learn more—and provide support where needed—we can surely boost the student bassoon population by helping their band directors.

Regardless of age, location, or employment, the biggest barrier to the bassoon for all bassoonists and band directors is finances. Predictably, this is the most difficult barrier to overcome. In my experience, the cost of reeds and instruments usually has a lot to do with quality, which is directly connected to band directors not being able to find a good instrument for the best price from a trusted source. The best way forward that I can see is to seek better funding for school band programs, which in turn can support their students. Trying to find a way to increase a school's financial support for bassoonists brings me back to band director Chandran Daniel's feature in *Teaching Music* and Elpus and Abril's suggestions to help band programs financially: to fundraise directly for the program with the help of grants, donors, and corporate sponsors. Abril and Bannerman even suggest rallying for more funding by putting on district-wide events to show how music impacts the surrounding community in a positive way. A motivated and unified school music department can make a huge difference in addressing its financial needs, and in turn those of its bassoonists. It is also important for local professional and avocational bassoonists to rally around our local

band and orchestra directors to create solutions that help everyone financially and create sustainable environments in which young bassoon students can thrive.

Call for further research

Though issues of access are widely understood in the bassoon community, there is a stark lack of research on how to go about understanding, teaching about, and beginning to help lift the shroud of mystery (and perhaps negativity) surrounding learning the bassoon. There is also a lack of research (though no lack of opinion) on teaching beginning bassoonists and what is most effective from the perspective of private teachers and/or band directors. If creating interest is one of the biggest issues band directors face as concerns the bassoon, it is implied that bassoonists and band directors haven't done a great job of creating a positive environment or a high level of visibility for students to become interested in the instrument in the first place. While we do need to keep our expectations realistic regarding the very real costs of the instrument as well as the perceived difficulty of bassoon technique compared to other band instruments, we also need to find a way forward in creating wider, more inclusive access. Further research is needed to find trends in how students are able to afford instruments and where there might be funding available to help students and teachers in need. While professional bassoon teachers need to make a living, it is unacceptable to simply turn away students because they cannot afford lessons, reeds, or instruments. A wider pool of survey participants (or a more concentrated area of participants) could greatly increase the efficiency of this research, pointing to needs in specific areas to which I may not have been able to call attention.

Call for action

Though small, the bassoon community is strong, unique, and welcoming. Let's continue to offer help in any form to students, band directors, and amateur adult musicians alike, welcoming them to the expansive and fascinating world of the bassoon. Let's create new resources to bring more students to the instrument and help band directors recruit, retain, and nurture their bassoon students. Let's make it possible for the less fortunate in our community to obtain equal opportunity to learn the bassoon, regardless of personal finances or distance from an in-person teacher. We as professional bassoonists have the means of making this happen if we come together; let's make a joyful honky noise and create a solid foundation in bassoon education for future bassoonists to carry on our legacy, no matter where they start.



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