ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore high school music students’ musical participation both in- and outside of school, their primary influences for participating and their plans for musical participation after graduation. Participants (N=605) in this study were high school music students, grades 9-12, at seven high schools located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Results indicated that the music enrollment at participating schools was 19.9% of the total student population. A cross-sectional survey design was used to represent a divergent sample of high school students’ opinions of their current music participation. Students cited themselves as their primary influence for participating in music both in- and outside of school. School was cited to be least influential on students’ outside of school music participation. Students were unclear about their future participation in traditional forms of music; however, they plan to increase their participation in non-traditional/vernacular forms of music post graduation. Students’ in-school music participation had little relationship to their musicking outside of school, and in-school music offerings were not connected to students’ plans for future music participation. Music education in its current state does not best suit the needs of today’s learners. Music educators should step beyond their comfort level with traditional music programming to be inclusive, relevant, and encouraging to a wider range of students.