

ENGAGING UPPER ELEMENTARY STUDENTS IN SINGING:
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF RELATED RESEARCH AND PUBLISHED CURRICULA

By

Rachel Edmaiston

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Thesis Committee:

Dr. Eric Branscome

Dr. Michael Chandler

Dr. Ann Silverberg

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Rachel Edmaiston

Approved:

Eric Branscome

Dr. Eric Branscome, Committee Chair

Michael D. Chandler

Dr. Michael Chandler, Committee Member

Ann Silverberg

Dr. Ann Silverberg, Committee Member

Chad Brooks

Dr. Chad Brooks, Associate Provost and Dean, College of Graduate Studies

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Rachel Edmaiston

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Abstract

Research findings indicate that upper elementary students have decreased interest in singing than younger elementary students. However, prior research has identified strategies that may help to engage upper elementary students in singing lessons. The purpose of this study was to identify research-based strategies that engage upper elementary students in singing and the extent to which these strategies are utilized in published curricula. The research questions for this study were: 1) What have music researchers determined about the level of interest in singing in upper elementary grades?; 2) What research-based strategies might impact interest in singing among upper elementary students?; and, 3) To what extent do published elementary curricula align with research-based practices pertaining to singing in the upper elementary grades? I conducted the first phase of the research through a review of literature to determine the level of interest in singing among upper elementary students and what research strategies might impact their interest. The second phase of the research comprised a content analysis of four published elementary school curricula. Findings suggest that, although there are some research-based strategies that are only minimally used in published curricula, on the whole, many of the research-based strategies from related research are included in the analyzed curricula. Since the published curricula largely include these research-based strategies, the final conclusion of this study indicates a need for more research in this area to determine other possible causes for the disengagement from singing among upper elementary students.

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Engaging Upper Elementary Students in Singing:

A Content Analysis of Related Research and Published Curricula

Research findings have indicated a decrease in positive attitudes towards singing among upper elementary students, which has contributed to a decline in choir participation in middle and high school. Upper elementary students are less engaged in singing activities and may take longer to build an interest in singing (Mizener, 1993; Roberts, 2015; Brown & Murphy, 1986; Bowles, 1998; Taylor, 2009). As an elementary music teacher, I have experienced a similar decline in interest in singing as my students have progressed through elementary school. Elementary music teachers need research-based tools and strategies to identify the reasons that upper elementary students seem less engaged in singing and innovative teaching methods to sustain the excitement and engagement with singing in the upper elementary grades that is more common among younger children. The purpose of this study is to identify research-based strategies that engage upper elementary students in singing and the extent to which these strategies are utilized in published curricula.

Research Questions

1. What have music researchers determined about the level of interest in singing in upper elementary grades?
2. What research-based strategies might impact interest in singing among upper elementary students?
3. To what extent do published elementary curricula align with research-based practices pertaining to singing in the upper elementary grades?

Delimitations

1. The sample was limited to four published elementary music curricula.

- a. Game Plan*
 - b. Making Music*
 - c. Purposeful Pathways*
 - d. Spotlight on Music*
2. I collected data from the fourth and fifth grade volumes of each published curriculum. I chose to analyze these two grades based on the data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). According to NCES from 2017-2018, 38% of elementary schools in the United States included kindergarten through fifth grade, 7% of elementary schools are kindergarten through fourth grade, and 14% of elementary schools are kindergarten through sixth grade (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017-2018). The remaining 31% of elementary schools are middle schools or labeled as other grade spans (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017-2018).
3. For this study, I analyzed only songs which did not include chants or spoken rhymes.

Limitations

Limitations of the study include:

1. Analysis of only four published elementary music curricula.
2. Analysis of only the fourth and fifth grade curriculum.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions apply to this research:

1. Number of Lessons: the number of different lessons or class periods in which the same song is used.
2. Number of Repetitions: the number of times a song is sung in whole by the students in each lesson or unit.

3. Popular songs: a song previously performed and/or recorded by a popular artist or someone within the music industry.
4. Supplemental Activities: additional activities to include in the singing lesson even though they are not the main focus of the lesson
5. Singing games: games in which the accompanying music is sung by the participants with the game played by adhering to the text of the song that often includes motion, actions, or competitive rules (Newlin, 2016).
6. Instrumental accompaniment: using common classroom or Orff mallet instruments to accompany a song.
7. Body percussion: having the students use any kind of body percussion to accompany a song that may include snapping, clapping, knee patting, or foot stamping, among other possibilities.
8. Movement: any lesson in which the students are engaged in choreographed or creative/interpretive movement that does not necessarily adhere to the text.
9. Partner or group work: any lesson activity in which the students are organized into pairs or groups to work on a task or to problem solve together.
10. Creativity: any activity in which students improvise or compose rhythms, movement, melodies, or use instruments in original ways to accompany a song, or using a song as a basis for creative activity.
11. Technology: a lesson for which the text provides instructions, visual images, and/or auditory examples for a teacher to use technology during a singing lesson.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Research has shown that upper elementary students are more likely to disengage from singing activities than younger elementary students. Findings from numerous studies have identified teaching strategies that may help engage upper elementary students in singing. The categories of teaching strategies are the inclusion of supplemental activities and song selection.

Supplemental Activities

Several research studies have shown that including supplemental activities to singing lessons in elementary music classes may increase students' interest levels. Supplemental activities are defined as additional activities to include in the singing lesson even when they are not the main focus of the lesson. Since "not all students relate strongly to singing" (Kenward, 1968, p. 8), these supplemental activities can engage more students than just those who are interested in singing. One of the most common supplemental activities suggested is the inclusion of playing instruments (Mizener, 1993; Kenward, 1968; Roberts, 2015; Taylor, 2009; Bowles, 1998; Brown & Murphy, 1986). Some other common supplemental activities found in the literature include singing games (Mizener, 1993; Roberts, 2015; Bowles, 1998), opportunities for creative expression (Kenward, 1968; Roberts, 2015; Hammer, 2020; Bowles, 1998; Brown & Murphy, 1986), movement (Kenward, 1968; Roberts, 2015; Bowles, 1998), body percussion (Kenward, 1968), partner work (Roberts, 2015; Bowles, 1998), and the use of technology (Taylor, 2009). The research suggests that all of these supplemental activities may encourage upper elementary students to engage in singing. Although there is ample research to describe the significance of supplemental activities to accompany singing, there is no research that examines the extent to which these supplemental activities are included in curricular basal series, particularly for upper elementary grades.

In *Singing the Worst Thing?* Kenward (1968) outlined the status of children's interest in music. He stated that most of the negative attitudes towards music are a result of emphasizing singing as the "sole creative outlet for the child" (Kenward, 1968, p. 8). This contributes to a decline in the level of enjoyment and engagement in the lesson, especially for older students since a majority of music lessons include singing activities. Kenward suggested adding instruments, body percussion, creative expression, and movement to singing activities to gain interest from older students. These supplemental activities may help students who are not interested in singing still enjoy music class. While Kenward did suggest certain supplemental activities to help engage students in singing, he did not examine the extent to which the published curricula included these types of supplemental activities for upper elementary students.

In a 1986 study, Murphy and Brown attempted to determine which learning objectives teachers and fifth-grade students preferred and whether their preferences had any similarities. Murphy and Brown administered a questionnaire to fourteen music teachers and 92 fifth-grade students, having them rank learning objectives on a Likert scale from one to seven with one representing no desire and seven representing great desire. Murphy and Brown found that the teacher and student preferences were occasionally similar. The students preferred playing instruments and being creative through improvisation. The teachers preferred the objectives covering musical knowledge, while these objectives were preferred less by the students. Murphy and Brown did find that when instruments or improvisation were used to demonstrate musical knowledge, students ranked these objectives more highly. Therefore, Murphy and Brown (1986) suggested teachers incorporate supplemental activities and objectives that their students prefer with lesser preferred objectives to engage more students. While this research does provide

insight into which objectives and activities upper elementary students prefer, it does not examine the extent to which the published curricula included these activities and objectives.

In a 1993 study, Mizener found that males and upper elementary students tended to have negative attitudes towards singing. Mizener attempted to discover whether students would have a more positive attitude towards singing if they were more skilled in singing. Therefore, Mizener administered a questionnaire and a singing assessment to 542 third through sixth-grade students to determine the correlation between the students' singing ability and the students' attitude towards singing. Among the participants in this study, there was "no significant relationship between liking to sing or wanting to sing in choir and assessed singing skill" (Mizener, p. 240, 1993, p.240). Therefore, a stronger focus on singing ability from the music teacher would likely have little impact on students' interest in singing. Mizener did have a few suggestions she believed would be helpful to music educators. She suggested incorporating "some of the activities preferred by students" (Mizener, 1993, p. 243) to engage all students, even the ones who do not like to sing. Some examples provided by Mizener included playing instruments and singing games. This research indicated that making students better singers does not necessarily make them enjoy and engage in singing lessons, though including preferred activities may help to engage students. Mizener's research did not examine the extent to which the published curricula includes preferred supplemental activities to engage upper elementary students.

A similar study was conducted by Bowles (1998) entitled *Music Activity Preferences of Elementary Students*. In this study, Bowles administered a survey to 2,251 kindergarten through fifth-grade students to determine what supplemental activities they preferred in music class. Bowles found several correlations between the students' grade level and the students' music activity preferences. As students progress through elementary school their interest in any music

activity decreases. All of the students preferred playing instruments and music games over any other activity no matter their grade level. Upper elementary students tended to have less of a preference for singing activities. The students ranked creative movement higher than the choreographed movement by 12% across all grade levels. The students preferred partner and group work over working alone. Overall, this study suggested that if students enjoy playing instruments, music games, movement, and partner work, then these supplemental activities should be used to teach less preferred activities or concepts (Bowles, 1998). While this study determined what supplemental activities upper elementary students prefer, it did not examine the extent to which published curricula include these activities.

Taylor (2009) conducted a research study entitled *The Relationship Between Music Attitude and Selected Factors in Elementary Music Students*. The purpose of this study was to identify any possible correlations between music attitude and grade level, gender, socioeconomic status, self-concept, academic achievement, and/or music aptitude. This study was conducted with 366 students in third, fourth, and fifth grade by using two questionnaires, analyzing the state test scores, and the Intermediate Measures of Music Audiation (Gordon, 1982) to measure music aptitude. Results from the study indicated a significant correlation between self-concept and music attitude meaning that teachers should plan successful experiences for the students to encourage positive self-concepts in music (Taylor, 2009). The results showed that upper elementary students preferred choosing and playing instruments over singing, especially male students. Taylor (2009) suggested teachers include songs and activities that students enjoy to help engage them in less desired tasks. Lastly, this study revealed that students enjoy the use of technology, especially the use of videos. Overall, Taylor's study outlines upper elementary

students' attitudes towards many types of music activities, though this research does not measure the extent to which these suggestions are utilized in the published curricula.

In a 2015 study, Roberts surveyed 24 fourth-grade students on several occasions to determine the music activities that best engaged the students. This study identified four main themes that increased interest among the students. These themes were novelty, kinesthetic activity, self-efficacy and challenge, and creativity. Kinesthetic activity was defined as any type of movement including singing games, movement songs, and playing instruments. Creativity was defined in that the students are getting to make musical decisions such as changing the lyrics to a song or creating movements. Roberts (2015) noted that not all students are interested in music class but with the addition of some of these supplemental activities, the students may eventually become more interested. While this research identified activities that are more likely to engage upper elementary students, it did not examine to what extent the published curricula use these types of activities.

Song Selection

The songs that music teachers select for their students and how they use them can greatly impact the interest level of the students. Kenward (1968) mentioned that the songs used in music classes are not particularly interesting to students. Similarly, Taylor (2009), found that upper elementary students typically do not enjoy singing and suggested that music teachers regularly include songs that are interesting to the students. Mizener (1993) suggested the occasional use of age-appropriate songs from the radio in music class to engage upper elementary students in singing. "By devising lessons around popular songs, elementary school teachers can pique students' interest in music" (DeVries, 2004).

Robin Evans conducted a research study in order to “examine popular music repertoire for use with fifth and sixth grade students” (Evans, 2013, p. 4). The popular songs were analyzed to determine the age appropriateness and curricular value. This study was conducted with two questionnaires, one for teachers and one for students. The teacher survey was administered to 17 elementary music teachers. The results from this survey revealed that there is a wide array of popular song definitions and popular songs are used mostly for listening. A majority of teachers rated popular songs somewhat valuable, but most of the teachers were not taught a methodology for teaching popular songs, and the teachers feel they do not have enough instructional time to include popular songs. Evans reported that the teachers received positive responses from the students when popular songs are being used, especially if the students were familiar with the song. The student survey was administered in five parts and the number of students changed between each survey ranging from 440 to 567 fifth and sixth-grade students. The students listened to a decade selection of songs from 1950 to 2000 and ranked their preference and recognition of each song. There was a significant correlation between the students’ recognition and preference for a song. The list of the most preferred songs was compiled for the use of elementary teachers. Evans concluded the study by creating materials for using the popular songs with fifth and sixth grade students. While Evans did find that upper elementary students can enjoy and learn from popular songs, this study did not measure the extent to which popular songs are included in published curricula.

In the research study by Roberts (2015), the themes found were novelty, self-efficacy, and challenge. Novelty is defined as the students doing something new, whether learning a new song, activity, or just simply doing something familiar in a new and different way. Self-efficacy and challenges are defined by the students’ need to feel both successful and challenged by the

music activities. If students feel a song is too easy, they are not likely to remain engaged, though if the song is too hard they will feel unsuccessful and no longer want to try (Roberts, 2015).

Although this research outlines the methods for selecting songs for upper elementary students, there is no research to examine the extent to which these types of songs are included in curricular basis series as a possible means of increasing singing engagement, particularly for upper elementary grades.

In a recent study by Megan Sheridan (2015), the researcher observed students and conducted interviews among three elementary music teachers to analyze the use of singing in Kodály music classrooms. The findings revealed that singing was the most used activity in all of the teachers' classrooms in the study. The teachers used singing both in a purposeful way, for the benefit of singing and vocal development, and in a secondary way, using singing as a method for learning another concept or skill. Sheridan (2015) discussed that using singing in both ways is beneficial to the students, but music educators should try to include more purposeful singing. While this research does outline two methods to use songs in the music classroom, it does not examine the extent to which the published curricula uses these methods.

Conclusion

The research reviewed for this study revealed many tactics and strategies that can be used to help engage upper elementary students in singing, though the research affirmed that none of the reviewed studies measured the extent to which these supplemental activities and song types are included in the published curricula for upper elementary students. This study seeks to analyze the use of research-based practices in singing lessons in the upper elementary editions of published music curricula.

Chapter III: Method

The purpose of this study was to identify research-based strategies that engage upper elementary students in singing and the extent to which these strategies are utilized in published curricula. The research questions for this study are: 1) What have music researchers determined about the level of interest in singing in upper elementary grades?; 2) What research-based strategies might increase interest in singing among upper elementary students?; and, 3) To what extent do published elementary curricula align with research-based practices pertaining to singing in the upper elementary grades? To answer these research questions I conducted a two-part content analysis. First, I conducted a review of literature to identify upper elementary students' level of interest in singing and research-based practices that may engage upper elementary students in singing activities, increasing the likelihood that upper elementary music students may engage in singing. Second, I conducted a content analysis of the upper elementary volumes (grades four and five) of four published elementary music curricula to determine the extent to which these curricula implemented the research-based strategies.

Sample

The purposeful sample used in this study included published elementary school music curricula that are widely used and accepted in the United States. The curricula analyzed in this study are *Game Plan* (Kriske & DeLelles, 2008-2009), *Making Music* (Pearson, 2002-2005), *Purposeful Pathways* (Sams & Hepburn, 2015-2019), and *Spotlight on Music* (Macmillan & McGraw-Hill, 2011). The *Making Music* (2008) and *Spotlight on Music* (2011) curricula are well-established curriculum names and are published by industry-standard general education publishers. *Game Plan* (2008/2009) and *Purposeful Pathways* (2015/2019) curricula are new to the music education curriculum and published by music education publishers. The intent behind

this purposive sample is to analyze a broad scope of all the curricula that music educators may use in their classrooms.

Game Plan was written by Jeff Kriske and Randy DeLelles and was published in 2008-2009 by Kid Sounds. This curriculum claims to be “an active music curriculum for children” (Kriske & DeLelles, 2008-2009). *Game Plan* has a total of 35 lessons in both the grade four and five volumes, all of which were all examined for this study. *Making Music* is published by Pearson with the latest print version arriving in 2008. When analyzing this curriculum, only the lessons labeled “core lessons” were examined, which amounted to 36 lessons for both fourth and fifth grade. The reason for this decision is because the other lessons are purely supplemental according to the editors and the music teacher would not be able to teach everything in the book in any given year. *Purposeful Pathways* is a newer curriculum published by Music is Elementary in 2015 and 2019, written by Roger Sams and BethAnn Hepburn. The books for this curriculum are not labeled for certain grade levels but instead by experience level. Books three and four are the most comparable to fourth and fifth grade based on the technical and musical levels of the included content. These two books each had approximately 38 lessons, and all were examined. *Spotlight on Music* is a publication by McGraw Hill, and I analyzed the 2011 print edition. When analyzing this curriculum, only the lessons identified as core lessons were examined, which amounted to 36 lessons.

Procedures

The first part of this study was a review of literature to identify upper elementary students' level of interest in singing and research-based practices that may engage upper elementary students in singing activities. Throughout the review process, I searched for research on the topic of upper elementary students and their attitudes toward singing. Overall, the findings

revealed that upper elementary students tend to have a negative attitude toward singing (Mizener, 1993; Roberts, 2015; Brown & Murphy, 1986; Bowles, 1998; Taylor, 2009). Upper elementary students seem more engaged when other types of songs or supplemental activities are included. For each source, the research-based strategies suggested were assigned and recorded. After each source was reviewed, I compiled a list of all the strategies researched and suggested by each study. The list of strategies included:

- Song Selection
 - The use of popular songs
 - The use of age-appropriate songs
 - The use of new songs
- Supplemental Activities
 - The use of instrumental accompaniment
 - The use of singing games
 - The use of body percussion
 - Encourage student creativity
 - Incorporate movement
 - Incorporate partner/group work
 - The use of technology

The first category of strategies in the research focused on song selection as seen in Table 1: Use of popular songs, age-appropriate songs, and new songs. Popular songs (Mizener, 1993) were defined as songs that were previously performed and/or recorded by a popular artist or someone within the music industry. The review of literature also revealed that age-appropriateness of song literature was a significant factor in upper-elementary students' enjoyment of the lesson and engagement with the singing activity (Kenward, 1968; Mizener, 1993; Taylor 2009). Defining and measuring the age-appropriateness of songs is difficult and can

be different for many students and teachers; therefore it was not included in the final code. New songs were split into three different criteria to determine if the song was a new song for the students: 1) how many lessons use a single song; 2) how many repetitions of the song occur within one lesson; and, 3) whether each song was taught in an earlier grade. Therefore, the final code for song selection included the number of lessons in the current grade level that use each song, the number of repetitions of the song that occur within one lesson, the possible occurrence of each song in a prior grade level, and the number of popular songs present.

The next category of strategies in the research focused on the inclusion of supplemental activities in singing lessons as seen in Table 1. Research suggests the inclusion of singing games (Mizener, 1993; Bowles, 1998; Roberts, 2015), instruments (Kenward, 1968; Brown & Murphy, 1986; Bowles, 1998; Taylor, 2009; Roberts, 2015), body percussion (Kenward, 1968), movement (Kenward, 1968; Bowles, 1998; Roberts, 2015), partner/group work (Bowles, 1998; Roberts, 2015), creativity (Kenward, 1968; Brown & Murphy, 1986; Roberts, 2015), and technology (Taylor, 2009) may help engage upper elementary students in singing lessons. Therefore all of these suggestions were included in the final coding for supplemental activities.

Table 1

Final Coding List

Codes	n	%
Total Number of Songs	X number of songs	-
Song Selection		
# of lessons	X number of lessons	-
# of repetitions	X number of repetitions	-
Used in a younger grade	X number of songs	percent of total songs
Popular	X number of songs	percent of total songs
Supplemental Activities		

Singing Game	X number of songs	percent of total songs
Instrumental Accompaniment	X number of songs	percent of total songs
Body Percussion	X number of songs	percent of total songs
Movement	X number of songs	percent of total songs
Partner/Group Work	X number of songs	percent of total songs
Creativity	X number of songs	percent of total songs
Technology	X number of songs	percent of total songs

The second part of this study was conducted through a content analysis of the upper elementary volumes (grades four and five) of the four published elementary music curricula to determine the extent to which the curricula implement the research-based strategies identified. Using the priori code in Table 1, I reviewed each book to determine how many occurrences of each code was present. Once the codes were counted in a curriculum book, I conducted frequency counts to determine the total number of songs in each book, the number of songs in each category, and the percent of each category compared to the overall number of songs.

To obtain the number of lessons that use a particular song, I analyzed each lesson in the curriculum to look for songs that were used in multiple lessons. The *Purposeful Pathways* curriculum was more difficult to analyze with this code because there are not segmented lessons throughout the curriculum. For this curriculum, I estimated how many thirty-five minute lessons it would take for a music class to complete the entire unit. The other three curricula were separated into clear lessons and therefore the count for these was much easier to obtain. These data were represented by a range of numbers to show the minimum number of lessons a song is used and the maximum number of lessons a song is used. I used a similar method to determine the number of repetitions for each song. I analyzed each lesson or song to determine how many times the curriculum called for the students to sing each song. If a song was used in more than

one lesson, a repetition was counted over however many lessons the song was used in to get the total number of repetitions for each song. These data represent a range of numbers since some songs were repeated only a few times while others were repeated many times. To determine if a song had been used in a younger grade, I analyzed the younger curricula to determine which songs from the grades four and five books may have also been used in a volume for the younger grades. I then counted the number of songs that were used in the younger grade. Popular songs were defined as a song previously performed and/or recorded by a popular artist or someone within the music industry. I kept a tally of the popular songs to get a single number and percentage of songs that fall into that category.

The supplemental activities categories included singing games, instrumental accompaniment, body percussion, movement, partner/group work, creativity, and technology. Songs liked with supplemental activities were counted as the number of songs in each book that included one or more of these supplemental activities. Instances of the supplemental activities that occurred in isolation, or where the activity was the primary focus instead of an accompaniment to singing were not counted. The number of occurrences of each activity was then compared to the total number of songs to get a percentage of songs that include each supplemental activity.

Singing games were defined as games in which the accompanying music is sung by the participants with the game played by adhering to the text of the song which often includes motion, actions, or competitive rules (Newlin, 2016). Instrumental accompaniment was defined as using common elementary or Orff instruments to accompany a song. Each song that used instruments was only counted one time even if instruments were used multiple times with the song. Body percussion was defined as having the students use any kind of body percussion with

a song which may include snapping, clapping, knee patting, or foot stamping, among other possibilities. This could include body percussion accompaniment or using body percussion to prepare instrument parts. Movement was defined as any lesson where the students are engaged in choreographed or creative/interpretive movement that does not necessarily adhere to the text. Partner or group work was defined as any lesson activity in which the students are organized into pairs or groups to work on a task or to problem solve. Creativity was defined as any activity in which students improvise or compose rhythms, movement, melodies, or use instruments to accompany a song, or use a song as a basis for creative activity. Technology was defined as a lesson where the text provides instructions, visual images, and/or auditory examples for a teacher to use technology during a singing lesson.

Validity

Content validity was established through basing the coding categories on the research in the literature review, verifying that the content being assessed is valid. The construct validity was established by defining the terms used in the coding to ensure the categories measure what they are meant to measure. These terms were then edited and validated by a music education faculty member with a terminal degree in music education and more than 15 years of teaching experience.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted with grade three of *Making Music*. There were adjustments made to the procedure based on the pilot study results. The results showed abnormally high numbers and percentages for the majority of the categories. This led to the realization that the categories needed to be defined more clearly to obtain meaningful data. The supplemental activities during the pilot study were counted every time they occurred even if it

was more than once with one song or without singing. This suggested that the data were not valid because they measured supplemental activities that did not include singing, which is not part of the research question.

Reliability

To establish the reliability of this procedure, one set of the curricula used was analyzed a second time to measure the interrater reliability. The researcher was the only rater but to ensure the ratings were consistently applied, the curricula were analyzed after the original analysis. The *Making Music* grade four curriculum was analyzed two weeks after the original analysis to determine the interrater reliability. The results from the second analysis were identical in nine of the 11 categories from the original analysis. The resulting interrater reliability showed an 87.5% correlation between the first and second analysis.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis was conducted by creating a priori code to identify the research-based practices that were implemented in singing activities in grades four and five of the curricular texts. Quantitative data included frequency counts of the singing activities in each book, and percentages of the types of supplemental activities compared to the total number of singing activities in each book. Higher percentage rates suggest that the published curricula align with the research-based strategies found. Lower percentage rates suggest that the published curricula may not align with the research-based strategies.

Chapter IV: Results

Research-Based Strategies

The findings from the research in the literature review aim to answer the research question: What research-based strategies might increase interest in singing among upper elementary students? The supplemental activities and song selection categories were then used to determine the extent to which these strategies are utilized in published curricula.

Published Curriculum

The next research question was: To what extent do published elementary curricula align with research-based practices pertaining to singing in the upper elementary grades? The findings are separated below by the curriculum title and then by grade level.

Game Plan includes 35 lessons for each grade level. All 35 lessons were analyzed and assigned to codes. *Making Music* included 138 lessons for each grade level, though only 36 of those lessons were core lessons that were analyzed for this research. *Purposeful Pathways* included 39 lessons in book three and 37 lessons in book four and all were analyzed. *Spotlight on Music* included 150 lessons for each grade level, though only 36 of them were labeled core lessons. Core lessons for both *Making Music* and *Spotlight on Music*, as identified by the publishers, are necessary lessons in order for the students to build upon prior knowledge to achieve the grade level standards.

Game Plan

Game Plan Grade Four included 35 lessons, 34 of which used a song. A single song was used in one to three lessons and was repeated six to 15 times during the lessons. Two (6%) of the songs used in the fourth-grade curriculum were used in a younger grade. There were zero (0%) popular songs used for singing. The number of occurrences for the supplemental activities was

six (18%) singing games, 22 (65%) instrument accompaniments, 25 (74%) body percussion accompaniments, eight (24%) movement opportunities, two (6 %) partner/group work instances, seven (21%) opportunities for creativity, and zero (0%) uses of technology. The data for *Game Plan* Grade Four are presented in table format in Table 2.

Game Plan Grade Five included 35 lessons, 32 of which used a song. A single song was used in one to three lessons and was repeated five to 17 times during the lessons. One (3%) of the songs used in the fifth-grade curriculum was used in a younger grade. There were zero (0%) popular songs used for singing. The number of occurrences for the supplemental activities was four (13%) singing games, 26 (81%) instrument accompaniments, 14 (44%) body percussion accompaniments, seven (22%) movement opportunities, three (9%) partner/group work instances, eight (25%) opportunities for creativity, and zero (0%) uses of technology. The data for *Game Plan* Grade Five are presented in table format in Table 2.

Table 2

Game Plan Results

Grade Level	Grade 4		Grade 5	
	n	%	n	%
Total Number of Songs	34	-	32	-
Song Selection				
# of lessons	1-2	-	1-3	-
# of repetitions	6-15	-	5-17	-
Used in a younger grade	2	6%	1	3%
Popular	0	0%	0	0%
Supplemental Activities				
Singing Game	6	18%	4	13%
Instrumental Accomp.	22	65%	26	81%
Body Percussion	25	74%	14	44%

Movement	8	24%	7	22%
Partner/Group Work	2	6%	3	9%
Creativity	7	21%	8	25%
Technology	0	0%	0	0%

Making Music

Making Music Grade Four included 36 lessons, 33 of which used a song. A single song was used in one lesson and was repeated one to six times during the lesson. Zero (0%) of the songs used in the fourth-grade curriculum were used in a younger grade. There were three (9%) popular songs used for singing. The number of occurrences for the supplemental activities was four (13%) singing games, 17 (53%) instrument accompaniments, five (16%) body percussion accompaniments, 12 (38%) movement opportunities, nine (28%) partner/group work instances, ten (31%) opportunities for creativity, and nine (28%) uses of technology. The data for *Making Music* Grade Four are presented in table format in Table 3.

Making Music Grade Five included 36 lessons, 34 of which used a song. A single song was used in one lesson and was repeated one to seven times during the lesson. Zero (0%) of the songs used in the fifth-grade curriculum were used in a younger grade. There were four (12%) popular songs used for singing. The number of occurrences for the supplemental activities was zero (0%) singing games, 20 (59%) instrument accompaniments, two (6%) body percussion accompaniments, 11 (32%) movement opportunities, seven (21%) partner/group work instances, ten (29%) opportunities for creativity, and three (9%) uses of technology. The data for *Making Music* Grade Five are presented in table format in Table 3.

Table 3*Making Music Results*

Grade Level	Grade 4		Grade 5	
	n	%	n	%
Total Number of Songs	32	-	34	-
Song Selection				
# of lessons	1	-	1	-
# of repetitions	1-6	-	1-7	-
Used in a younger grade	0	0%	0	0%
Popular	3	9%	4	12%
Supplemental Activities				
Singing Game	4	13%	0	0%
Instrumental Accomp.	17	53%	20	59%
Body Percussion	5	16%	2	6%
Movement	12	38%	11	32%
Partner/Group Work	9	28%	7	21%
Creativity	10	31%	10	29%
Technology	9	28%	3	9%

Purposeful Pathways

Purposeful Pathways Grade Four included 39 lessons, 32 of which used a song. A single song was used in one to three lessons and was repeated five to 19 times during the lessons. Zero (0%) of the songs used in the fourth-grade curriculum were used in a younger grade. There were zero (0%) popular songs used for singing. The number of occurrences for the supplemental activities was ten (31%) singing games, 23 (72%) instrument accompaniments, 20 (63%) body percussion accompaniments, 16 (50%) movement opportunities, 13 (41%) partner/group work instances, 24 (75%) opportunities for creativity, and 32 (100%) uses of technology. The data for *Purposeful Pathways* Grade Four are presented in table format in Table 4.

Purposeful Pathways Grade Five included 37 lessons, 31 of which used a song. A single song was used in one to four lessons and was repeated six to 30 times during the lessons. Zero (0%) of the songs used in the fifth-grade curriculum were used in a younger grade. There were zero (0%) popular songs used for singing. The number of occurrences for the supplemental activities was five (16%) singing games, 27 (87%) instrument accompaniments, 14 (45%) body percussion accompaniments, 13 (42%) movement opportunities, 15(48%) partner/group work instances, 23 (74%) opportunities for creativity, and 31 (100%) uses of technology. The data for *Purposeful Pathways* Grade Five are presented in table format in Table 4.

Table 4*Purposeful Pathways Results*

Grade Level	Book 3		Book 4	
	n	%	n	%
Total Number of Songs	32	-	31	-
Song Selection				
# of lessons	1-3	-	1-4	-
# of repetitions	5-19	-	6-30	-
Used in a younger grade	0	0%	0	0%
Popular	0	0%	0	0%
Supplemental Activities				
Singing Game	10	31%	5	16%
Instrumental Accomp.	23	72%	27	87%
Body Percussion	20	63%	14	45%
Movement	16	50%	13	42%
Partner/Group Work	13	41%	15	48%
Creativity	24	75%	23	74%
Technology	32	100%	31	100%

Spotlight on Music

Spotlight on Music Grade Four included 36 lessons, 31 of which used a song. A single song was used in one lesson and was repeated one to seven times during the lesson. Zero (0%) of the songs used in the fourth-grade curriculum were used in a younger grade. There were two (6%) popular songs used for singing. The number of occurrences for the supplemental activities was three (10%) singing games, 11 (35%) instrument accompaniments, five (16%) body percussion accompaniments, 16 (52%) movement opportunities, two (6%) partner/group work instances, two (6%) opportunities for creativity, and four (13%) uses of technology. The data for *Spotlight on Music* Grade Four are presented in table format in Table 5.

Spotlight on Music Grade Five included 36 lessons, 35 of which used a song. A single song was used in one lesson and was repeated one to nine times during the lesson. Zero (0%) of the songs used in the fifth-grade curriculum were used in a younger grade. There were eight (23%) popular songs used for singing. The number of occurrences for the supplemental activities was zero (0%) singing games, 14 (40%) instrument accompaniments, five (14%) body percussion accompaniments, nine (26%) movement opportunities, four (11%) partner/group work instances, seven (20%) opportunities for creativity, and six (17%) uses of technology. The data for *Spotlight on Music* Grade Five are presented in table format in Table 5.

Table 5***Spotlight on Music Results***

Grade Level	Grade 4		Grade 5	
	n	%	n	%
Total Number of Songs	31	-	35	-
Song Selection				
# of lessons	1	-	1-2	-
# of repetitions	1-7	-	1-9	-

Used in a younger grade	0	0%	0	0%
Popular	2	6%	8	23%
Supplemental Activities				
Singing Game	3	10%	0	0%
Instrumental Accomp.	11	35%	14	40%
Body Percussion	5	16%	5	14%
Movement	16	52%	9	26%
Partner/Group Work	2	6%	4	11%
Creativity	2	6%	7	20%
Technology	4	13%	6	17%

Chapter V: Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to identify research-based strategies that engage upper elementary students in singing and the extent to which these strategies are utilized in published curricula. The results from this research aim to answer three research questions: 1) What have music researchers determined about the level of interest in singing in upper elementary grades?; 2) What research-based strategies might increase interest in singing among upper elementary students?; and, 3) To what extent do published elementary curricula align with research-based practices pertaining to singing in the upper elementary grades?

Research-Based Strategies

The first phase of this study was focused on research-based strategies that might increase interest in singing among upper elementary students. The results from the literature review for this study show many research-based strategies that might increase interest among upper elementary students. Some of the strategies found were suggested by many researchers while others were only suggested by one or two. Playing instruments (Kenward, 1968; Mizener, 1993; Bowles, 1998; Taylor, 2009; Roberts, 2015) and singing games (Mizener, 1993; Bowles, 1998; Roberts, 2015) were both the most highly suggested supplemental activities to help engage upper elementary students in singing. Movement (Kenward, 1968; Roberts, 2015), creativity (Kenward, 1968; Roberts, 2015), and the use of popular songs the students will enjoy (Kenward, 1968; Mizener, 1993; Taylor, 2009) were the second most commonly suggested strategies and supplemental activities. The use of technology (Taylor, 2009), the use of new songs (Roberts, 2015), partner/group work (Roberts, 2015), and the use of body percussion (Kenward, 1968) were suggested by one researcher reviewed in this study.

Published Curriculum

The second phase of this study was to determine the extent to which four published curricula align with the research-based strategies from related research. Overall findings suggest that, although there are some research-based strategies that are only minimally used in published curriculum, on the whole, many of the research-based strategies are included in the analyzed curricula.

Song Selection

Number of Lessons. The number of lessons per song is defined as the number of different lessons or class periods in which the same song is used. The *Making Music* curriculum only uses each song for one lesson. The *Spotlight on Music* curriculum uses each song for one lesson with fourth grade and a maximum of two lessons for fifth grade. The *Game Plan* curriculum uses each song for one to two lessons for fourth grade and one to three lessons for fifth grade. The *Purposeful Pathways* uses each song for one to three lessons for fourth grade and one to four lessons for fifth grade. The majority of the curricula only use a song for one or two lessons, though there are a few instances of a song being used for three to four lessons, as seen in *Game Plan* and *Purposeful Pathways*. According to Roberts (2015), students are more engaged with new songs compared to songs they have previously learned and repeated many times. Therefore, upper elementary students will be more engaged in singing if the songs are used in fewer lessons. While it may be common to spread out the learning sequence of a new song over multiple lessons in early elementary grades, Roberts (2015) wrote that upper-elementary students tend to be less engaged if a song is spread over too many lessons.

Number of Repetitions. The number of repetitions of each song is defined as the number of times a song is sung in whole by the students in each lesson or unit. *Making Music* and

Spotlight on Music curricula repeated each song one to nine times per lesson. The *Game Plan* curriculum repeated a song five to 17 times per lesson. The *Purposeful Pathways* curriculum repeated a song five to 30 times per unit. The number of repetitions can change the level of engagement among upper elementary students. Roberts (2015) found that upper elementary students enjoy singing new songs which suggests that, with each repetition the level of engagement could lessen. This does not mean that the teacher should not repeat songs but instead means the teacher should be aware of how many repetitions the students have done in the same way. “If repertoire is repeated too often, students state that their interest begins to lag” (Roberts, 2015, p.188). The inclusion of supplemental activities could cause the students to remain engaged even through many repetitions.

Used in a Younger Grade. According to Roberts (2015), upper elementary students are more likely to engage if a song is new to them. Therefore upper elementary students would be more likely to disengage if a song from a previous grade is used because it is no longer new to them. *Making Music*, *Purposeful Pathways*, and *Spotlight on Music* did not use any songs in grades four or five that were used in a younger grade. The *Game Plan* curriculum used two songs in fourth grade and one song in fifth grade that were used in a younger grade. The songs used in multiple grades were from one grade prior and the activity used with the songs were different in the second instance. A potential reason for using a song in a younger grade level and then again in the next grade level could be to delve into more aspects of the song that were too advanced for the younger grade to scaffold the learning. For instance, a song that uses sixteenth notes may be introduced in third grade but the teacher may want the students to learn sixteenth notes in fourth grade. The teacher might have the students sing and experience the song in third grade without discussing the sixteenth note rhythm until fourth grade. Then, the question is, if the song is used

again but a new lesson accompanies it with new supplemental activities, could this song still keep the upper elementary students engaged? I believe that if some part of the lesson is new and different, using a song from a previous grade may still engage the upper elementary students.

Popular Songs. Mizener (1993) suggested using some popular songs for singing when appropriate. Taylor (2009) and Kenward (1968) suggested using songs that the students enjoy to engage them in singing lessons. The use of popular songs for singing could increase the engagement of upper elementary students in singing if implemented. *Spotlight on Music* and *Making Music* both use two to eight popular songs in fourth and fifth grade for singing but mostly use popular songs for listening activities. For example, in *Making Music* grade four the students listen to Tony Bennett's *The Beat of My Heart* to analyze the dynamics without singing the song (Pearson, 2002, p. 9). *Game Plan* and *Purposeful Pathways* use mostly authentic folk songs and age-appropriate materials and exclude popular songs. Since two of the curricula did not include any popular songs, the data suggest that some music curricula could incorporate the use of popular songs more often. Popular music is not commonly used for singing purposes in elementary music and curricula tend to focus on folk songs and world music. Popular music is thought of as "not the most artistically and/or educationally rich music" (Miksza, 2013, p. 48) perhaps causing curriculum developers to avoid including popular music in the curriculum. Mizener (1993), Taylor (2009), and Kenward (1968) suggest that students should sing popular songs they enjoy in order to engage them in singing lessons. This does not mean that popular songs should be the only music the students sing, but a few popular songs a year may help to engage more students in singing. "Teachers should not abandon or postpone their educational goals to appease or motivate students with popular music" (Woody, 2007, p. 34).

Supplemental Activities

Singing Games. All of the curricula use singing games sparingly with the upper elementary students. There are more included in the fourth grade curriculum than the fifth grade curriculum in *Making Music*, *Purposeful Pathways*, and *Spotlight on Music*. This suggests that some music curricula could include more singing games with the fifth grade students in order to better align with research-based strategies. According to Mizener (1993), Bowles (1998), and Roberts (2015), upper elementary students have a preference for singing games. Roberts gave an example of an observation of students disengaged while singing a song and then “when the lesson shifted into an active singing game the children threw themselves into the activity with vigor, singing strongly and excitedly while playing a rock-scissors-paper game with a partner” (Roberts, 2015, p. 189). The active nature of singing games is what engages the upper elementary students in singing. The selection of singing games should be considered for upper elementary students to ensure singing games are age appropriate and have not been used in a younger grade. *Purposeful Pathways* often starts a lesson with a singing game to teach the students the song through listening instead of echo imitation. For example in *Purposeful Pathways* book three, the students start with a singing game with the song “I’ve Been to Harlem” where the students move in two concentric circles (Sams & Hepburn, 2015, p. 74). The students have to try to find a partner at the end of the song. The students without a partner go to the center of the circle and try to steal a partner the next round. This way the students participate in the singing game and learn the song without being aware of it.

Instrumental Accompaniment. Out of all the supplemental activities, the use of instrumental accompaniment was the most commonly used in the four published curricula reviewed for this study. The use of instrumental accompaniment may help to engage upper

elementary students in singing (Kenward, 1968; Mizener, 1993; Bowles, 1998; Taylor, 2009; Roberts, 2015) because of novelty, kinesthetic movement, and interest instruments add to a lesson. For instance, if the students have not played the drum before and the song involves drum accompaniment, the students are very likely to engage in singing the song so they can play the instrument. Students also enjoy playing instruments because of the kinesthetic movement and interest they add to a song instead of singing the song without movement or instrumental accompaniment. In all of the curricula, generally, the students start by learning the song acapella and then instruments are added to the song to provide accompaniment. The use of instrumental accompaniment adds another layer of learning and engagement to the song and will also provide opportunity for engaged repetitions of the song since the students wait for their turn to play the instrumental parts. Engaged repetitions means that the students are engaged in playing the instruments while being able to perform more singing repetitions without the students losing interest with repetitions as suggested by Roberts (2015).

Body Percussion. The body percussion data from the four curricula had a very wide range: from 6% to 74% of songs included body percussion. This indicates that some of the curricula align with the research-based strategies more directly than others. *Game Plan* and *Purposeful Pathways* used body percussion the most out of the curricula analyzed. These curricula used body percussion for preparing instrumental and body percussion accompaniment. *Making Music* and *Spotlight on Music* used body percussion more sparingly, mostly for beat or rhythm accompaniment. Kenward (1968) suggested the inclusion of body percussion in order to gain interest and engagement from upper elementary students in singing lessons. The use of more body percussion activities can increase the upper elementary students' likelihood of engaging in singing because of the kinesthetic movement. This means that the addition of body

percussion or any kinesthetic movement may help keep students engaged in singing. *Game Plan* uses body percussion on many occasions to prepare instrumental parts by having the students pat and clap rhythm patterns. For instance, in *Game Plan* grade four, the students learn the song “I Want to Rise” and then the students learn the ostinato through words and body percussion (Kriske & DeLelles, 2008, p. 5). Once the students are successful with the body percussion, the students then transfer the pats to xylophones, the palm slides to cabasa, the claps to hand drum, and the snaps to metallophones. The use of body percussion in this instance is a way to keep the students engaged while they become comfortable with the song and instrument parts before attempting to sing and play the instruments at the same time. The body percussion increases engaged singing time so the teacher may evaluate the students’ success with both parts. *Game Plan* also used body percussion for accompaniment purposes or as a B section for the song. For instance, in *Game Plan* grade five, the students learn the song “Good Morning” and then add a body percussion B section with a partner (Kriske & DeLelles, 2009, p.1-2). The students switch partners after each repetition of the A Section to perform the body percussion with a new partner. This activity could help engage students in singing because of the challenging body percussion, movement, and partner work.

Movement. Movement was used fairly equally by all of the curricula analyzed for this study. The movement activities were both creative and choreographed. Students commonly enjoy moving around and creating their own movements while singing, according to Kenward (1968) and Roberts (2015). The inclusion of movement activities can increase the upper elementary students' likelihood of engaging in singing because of the kinesthetic engagement and creative opportunity. Upper elementary students enjoy being active instead of singing while sitting still (Roberts, 2015), therefore the inclusion of movement with singing can give students

the opportunity to be active while also singing. For example, *Making Music* used choreographed movement at the close of a lesson to engage the students in the song when they had already repeated the song six to seven times (Pearson, 2005, p. 161). The inclusion of movement may help keep the students engaged in singing no matter the number of repetitions of the song.

Partner and Group Work. The data show that partner/group work had a wide range. Between the different curricula, 6% to 48% of songs include partner/group work. *Making Music* and *Purposeful Pathways* both use partner/group work quite often, with 32% to 48% of songs including this strategy. *Game Plan* and *Spotlight on Music* use partner/group work occasionally with 6% to 11% of songs including this strategy. *Purposeful Pathways* and *Making Music* were both more likely to involve partner work while *Game Plan* and *Spotlight on Music* had hardly any. This finding suggests that some of the analyzed curricula could incorporate this strategy more often with the upper elementary students. Roberts (2015) wrote that upper elementary students have a preference for partner and group work activities. Therefore the inclusion of partner/group work in singing lessons for older students is suggested to encourage singing. In the partner/group work analyzed, the majority of the time the students were creating something with their partner/group. For instance, in *Purposeful Pathways* the students learn the song “Clementine” and are assigned into small groups and then asked to create their own B section for a song using rhythmic building blocks (Sams & Hepburn, 2019, p. 124-125). The rhythmic building blocks include combinations of quarter notes, dotted eighth sixteenth notes, paired eighth notes, and quarter rests. Then the students present their B section while the rest of the class sing the song. This can help to engage the students in singing because they get to perform their composition with their group for the class and get to hear other groups compositions. The

students end up singing the song without paying much attention to the number of repetitions because they are immersed in listening and preparing for their own performance.

Creativity. The use of creative activities was fairly equal across all of the curricula except for *Purposeful Pathways*, which included creativity-based lessons more frequently than the other curricula. Kenward (1968) and Roberts (2015) both suggested the inclusion of creative activities with singing lessons in order to engage upper elementary students in singing. The inclusion of creative activities in a lesson could increase the likelihood of engagement in singing among upper elementary students because they are involved in the decision making processes of the lesson. Upper elementary students enjoy getting more “choice than would be given often in music class” (Roberts, 2015, p. 192). With creative activities the students are given ownership and control over decisions that are made either as a class or in small groups. *Purposeful Pathways* ended most lessons with a creative activity by having the students create their own compositions using rhythmic building blocks. For instance, in *Purposeful Pathways* book three the students learned “Fishing Song” and then near the end of the lesson were given five rhythmic building blocks to compose an ostinato in small groups (Sams & Hepburn, 2015, p. 22). The rhythmic building blocks included different combinations of quarter notes, eighth notes, and quarter rests with accompanying words. Students then present their compositions as an ostinato while the rest of the class sings the song. The upper elementary students would likely enjoy this activity because of the creative liberties they are given, the partner work, and the chance to then share with the class.

Technology. The *Purposeful Pathways* curriculum used technology with every lesson through SmartBoard or PowerPoint presentations. With this technology, the students are able to visualize and manipulate the song through such activities as being able to manipulate certain

aspects of the presentation, for example, the lyrics, solfège, rhythms, or form labels. *Spotlight on Music* has digital technology in the newer curriculum, including presentations for SmartBoard or PowerPoint, digital recordings, and videos for instrument playing, movement, and music history (MH Education). The *Game Plan* curriculum has an option to include both hard copy visuals and digital supplemental materials. *Making Music* has a few digital resources, mostly videos, that can be used to accompany songs. Taylor suggested including “videos and other forms of technology to teach what students consider less desirable objectives” such as singing (Taylor, 2009, p.74). The use of technology includes instructions, visual images, and/or auditory examples for a teacher to use during a singing lesson and could impact the engagement of upper elementary students by increasing their participation. For example, *Purposeful Pathways* uses Smart Board presentations instead of print copies of visuals, which can engage students more by keeping their attention on the front of the room. The presentations are also interactive so certain parts can be manipulated by the teacher or students. Auditory examples can also help engage upper elementary students by giving them a sense of what the song in its entirety sounds like early in the lesson compared to not knowing how the accompaniment will fit with the song.

Connections

Across all four curricula there were observable connections among the teaching strategies. First, the number of repetitions was highly connected with the number of supplemental activities included with a song. The addition of supplemental activities can increase the number of repetitions of a song compared to the students singing a song without a supplemental activity. This point suggests that some of these strategies may counteract each other. While the students may be more likely to disengage because the song has been repeated too many times, the students are more likely to remain engaged with the addition of

supplemental activities. Therefore, the conclusion could be that more repetitions are acceptable as long as supplemental activities are included. If supplemental activities are not included repetitions may need to be kept to a minimum.

Another observed connection is that teachers would normally disperse a learning sequence of a song over several lessons in order to keep repetitions of the song in one class period low. This causes a song to be used in multiple sequential lessons, potentially causing upper elementary students to disengage from singing the song. This conundrum puts teachers in a difficult spot in trying to decide if the number of lessons or the number of repetitions should be a higher priority. Teachers could consider spreading out the song over a few lessons but then with each new lesson include a new supplemental activity. For instance, in the first lesson the students could learn the song and perhaps include one supplemental activity if any. The song may be repeated in the second lesson, but this time with a new and different supplemental activity. The upper elementary students use the same song but in a different way. This can also help the students remain engaged in a lesson because the pace is quicker, switching between songs and supplemental activities, compared to learning one song in its entirety for the whole lesson.

While all the curricula did largely align with the research-based strategies, the two most closely aligned curricula analyzed were *Making Music* and *Purposeful Pathways*. *Making Music* most closely aligns with the song selection strategies and *Purposeful Pathways* most closely aligns with the supplemental activities. *Purposeful Pathways* most closely aligns across all of the strategies and therefore I believe upper elementary students may be more likely to remain engaged in singing with this curriculum. *Purposeful Pathways* included the most supplemental activities across all the other curricula, though the number of lessons and repetitions was high. I

believe that since there are so many new and engaging supplemental activities included in the *Purposeful Pathways* lessons that upper elementary students will still be highly engaged even though a song is not new in each lesson.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings from the literature review and the content analysis, the analyzed curriculum largely aligns with the research-based strategies. However, even with the research-based strategies present in the curricula, upper elementary students tend to be less engaged in singing (Brown & Murphy, 1986; Mizener, 1993; Bowles, 1998; Taylor, 2009; Roberts, 2015). The next question, then, is what causes some upper elementary students to disengage in singing? Perhaps it is just the natural process of maturation where some students become more interested in other music activities or lose interest in music all together as they gain interest in nonmusical activities. This may suggest that students disengaging from singing is not necessarily a bad thing but instead the students are just more interested in playing instruments, creating, moving or some other form of artistic expression (Kenward, 1968). Future research is needed to determine what causes some upper elementary students to disengage from singing. Future research could identify elementary schools that use specific elementary music curricula, and survey students at these schools to determine their level of engagement in singing. This could detect possible connections between the curriculum and teaching strategies or the possible impact of curriculum or teaching strategies on singing engagement. Future researchers may also seek to identify schools that use *Purposeful Pathways* as the elementary curriculum and survey the students and teachers to determine the extent to which the upper elementary students may, in fact, engage in singing on a regular basis.

Conclusion

There is a vast amount of research on the topic of upper elementary students' interest in singing. The purpose of this study was to identify research-based strategies that engage upper elementary students in singing and the extent to which these strategies are utilized in published curricula. This study found that many of the research-based strategies have been implemented in the published curricula, though there are still some research-based strategies that are lacking in the upper elementary curricula. The music teacher could include these strategies on their own in order to better engage the upper elementary students in singing if the curriculum being used does not include enough of the research-based strategies found in this study. The goal is to engage upper elementary students in singing, similar to the interest seen in younger elementary students.

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