

Marching Mountains Needs Assessment

Report 2010

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I. Overview

The following report is based on online survey data provided by school band directors who registered with **Marching Mountains** from November 2009 to August 2010. The survey (Appendix A) was designed to evaluate and demonstrate needs among school band programs throughout distressed counties of Appalachia. The primary objective of this evaluation is to identify, from the stakeholder (band director) perspective, the prevailing barriers facing students who wish to participate in musical education. This information will be used by Marching Mountains to guide decisions about where to direct assistance and what types of assistance will have the most impact across representative school programs. Given the target demographic, it was anticipated that financial barriers at community, school, and family levels would affect the operations of band programs in several ways: (1) by decreasing instruments and resources available to band directors, (2) by restricting participation in band programs to only those students for whom instruments could be provided, (3) by constraining the scheduling of band practice due to limitations on practice space, (4) by reducing transportation to band practice and events outside of regular school hours, and finally, (5) by reducing community involvement in fundraising contributions and attendance of band events.

The survey was distributed to about 312 schools throughout designated distressed counties throughout the Appalachian region. Follow-up e-mails were sent to approximately 150 band directors whose emails could be found to confirm receipt of the invitation to participate. Of the programs we contacted, over 30 registered their program online at www.marchingmountains.org. This response rate met our projected year 1 goal of 10%. Of the programs registered, survey data was been received from band directors of 17 programs from November 2009 to August 2010.

II. Registrant Demographics

A. Location

The selection of band programs invited to participate in this survey was based on location within counties of Appalachia that have received Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) designation as regions of financial distress¹. A total of seventeen registrations were submitted by band directors serving programs in seventeen different counties within four states (Figure 1), with the highest number of registrations coming from Kentucky, followed by Tennessee, West Virginia, and Alabama.

Band Registrations by State

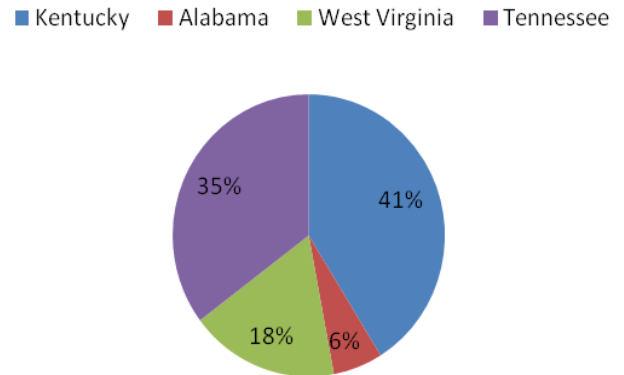


Figure 1. Registration by State

Of the 13-states encompassing the Appalachian region, the four states from which band director registrations were received contain some of the most concentrated areas of highly distressed counties (Figure 2). The surveyed band programs served communities of, on average, 10,020 (range 2,448 - 50,469) residents, of whom 8.8% (range 3.5 - 14%) had obtained college degrees, and earn an income of \$24,458 (range \$16,270 - \$41,039) annually². Of these 17 programs, 11 are from communities ranking at or below the 10th percentile for annual income of cities within the United States.

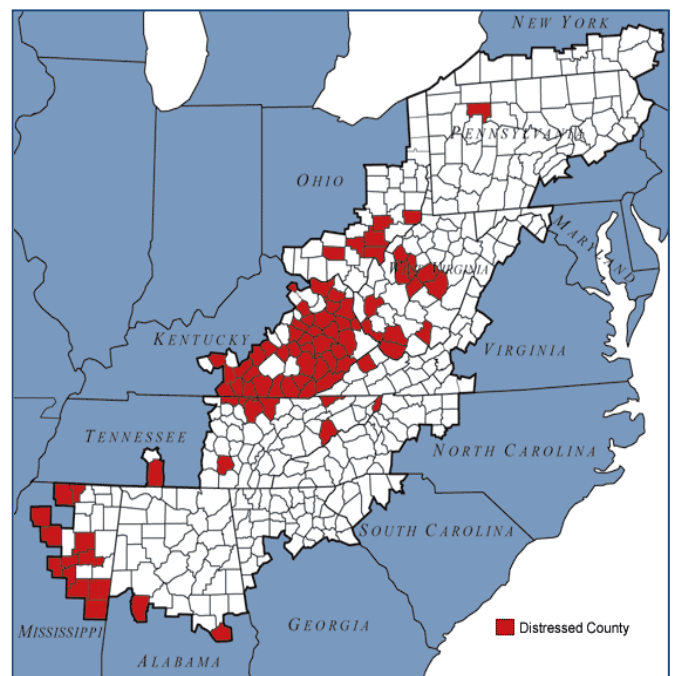


Figure 2. Distressed Appalachian Counties

¹ The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) has designated the most economically distressed counties using measure of economic distress based on three economic indicators: three-year average unemployment rates, per capita market income, and poverty rates.

² Based on demographic statistics reported by zip code at <http://zipwho.com>, accessed 9/1/10

Band Programs

The seventeen directors who responded to this survey identified a total of 35 different bands under their directorship.

Nearly all directors (94%) reported having a concert band at their school. Approximately half (59%) reported having a marching band, while a quarter of the directors also reported having a pep (29%) and/or jazz (23%) band within their program. Most directors (94%) reported overseeing all bands in their school, and the modal number of bands each directed was two. Twenty-three percent of directors were responsible for only a single band.

Each director reported total student census for Grades 4-12 in 2009 and on the number of these students enrolled in band programs. Student enrollment data was unavailable for three of the programs surveyed. Based on reports from the remaining 14 programs, a total of 6098 students were accounted for across schools, of which 661 were enrolled in band (Table 1). Notably, rates of enrollment in band were highly variable across these programs, with overall band enrollment of approximately 11% and a range from 2.9% to 100% at individual programs.

Table 1. Band Enrollment

School	# Students Grade 4-12	# Students in Band	% Students in Band
1	607	30	4.94%
2	495	74	14.95%
3	720	21	2.92%
4	175	22	12.57%
5	1325	147	11.09%
6	700	96	13.71%
7	150	15	10.00%
8	not reported		unknown
9	135	18	13.33%
10	not reported		unknown
11	170	28	16.47%
12	940	62	6.60%
13	143	11	7.69%
14	400	47	11.75%
15	60	12	20.00%
16	78	78	100.00%
17	not reported		Unknown
TOTAL	6098	661	10.84%

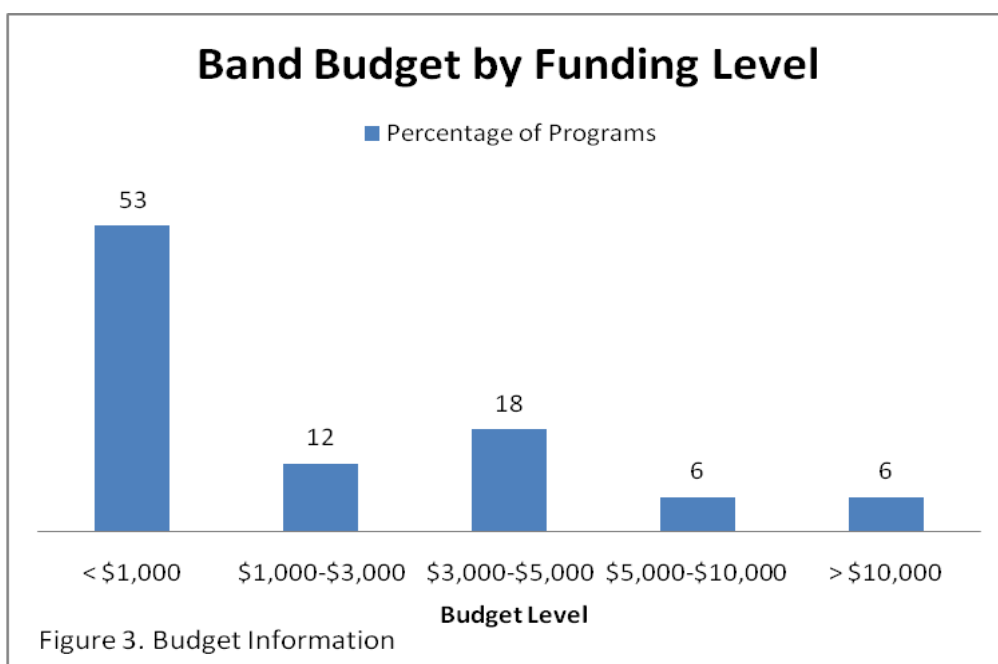
To better understand factors accounting for variability in enrollment, we first examined the relationship between student census and percentage of students enrolled in band. A negative correlation ($r = -.34$) between these variables indicates that the proportion of students enrolled in band relates inversely to the number of students attending each school. This relationship persisted, and increased in strength ($r = -.42$), when a program with exceptionally

high enrollment (program # 16; 100%) was excluded from the analysis. Inferentially, this relationship suggests that the limiting factors affecting participation in band may have greater influence at larger schools. As a next step to identifying factors that influence band participation at these schools we examined budgetary information and directors' perceptions of barriers to participating in band.

III. Budgetary Information

A single survey item asked band directors whether they believe that students who could benefit from participating in band are unable to due to limited financial or other resources, to which 100% (n = 17) answered "yes". Therefore, as anticipated, finances and scarcity of resources for musical education do appear to limit band participation from the band directors' perspective.

Directors were asked to provide general budgetary information for their band program by selecting a funding level that reflects their budget for the 2008-2009 fiscal year: (1) *less than \$1,000*, (2) *\$1,000-\$3,000*, (3) *\$3,000-\$5,000*, (4) *\$5,000-\$10,000*, or (5) *above \$10,000*. Of the 17 programs surveyed, 16 completed this survey item. Based on the distribution of responses submitted (Figure 3), the pre-selected budgetary range adequately characterized funding in this sample, with 82% of programs operating with less than \$5,000, and 53% of the total sample with far smaller budgets of \$1,000 or below.



To explore the question of whether student participation is limited by band program budget, band enrollment rates were contrasted with band directors' estimates of the maximum number of students their program could accommodate on current budgets. According to data from 14 band programs, including only those programs for which student enrollment was also reported, a total of 789 students could be accommodated by these band programs. This estimate of student capacity exceeded actual enrollment by 128 students (Table 1). When examined according to the average difference between estimated enrollment capacity and actual enrollment across programs, budgetary allowances exceed enrollment by approximately 9 students per school. However, this finding is difficult to interpret for several reasons. First, the range of differences in capacity and actual enrollment was surprisingly large across programs, with one director reporting having a capacity that exceeded enrollment by 153 students, and another reporting capacity of 73 students less than actually enrolled. Second, one director reported having a capacity for only 5 students but having 78 enrolled. Because this program also reported one of the highest budgets across schools, we do question the director's interpretation of this survey item. Accordingly, we cannot responsibly draw conclusions about reported differences in band capacity and enrollment without first eliciting confirmation from directors that these specific survey items were understood and answered accurately. In light of these observations, we may also consider revision of this survey item (Appendix A, survey item # 5) for clarity in future applications.

IV. Community Outreach

In addition to band budgetary information, two main forms of community involvement were assessed in this evaluation as forms of community support of band programs (Appendix A, survey item # 9). First, two survey items asked band directors to report on the number of concerts held in the preceding academic year (2008-2009) and the estimated attendance of these performances. On average, bands held 4 concerts per year with 70 community members in attendance of each performance. The numbers of concerts held ranged from a high of 16 to a low of 0, with 2 programs reporting 0 concerts during the specified assessment period. Remarkably, 6 of the programs that held concerts reported average attendance rates of 0. One band director, who held 6 unattended concerts, commented explicitly on the lack of community involvement in their district, stating "the community is interested in the band program, just not supporting it financially". This observation points to the need of more thorough assessment of factors limiting concert attendance at these programs, including information on band directors'

efforts to engage parents and community members in band activity. One band director shared that he allows his band to be part of school-wide performances, such as plays, that enable his students to be part but not the main attraction of performances. This is an example of solution to increasing the visibility of band programs that could be shared and utilized in programs seeking to increase performance opportunities.

The second form of community support assessed in this evaluation was band program fundraising. Thirteen of the 17 participating programs reported doing some fundraising for their program over the 2008 academic year. Most of the fund raising efforts described sales of a food item (e.g., pizza kits, fruit, beef jerky, cookie dough) or other products (e.g., candles, flower bulbs, coupon books). Several innovative fundraising efforts were also described with notable success. For example, one director receives \$50 per basketball game in exchange for having band students work the ticket booth. Another example was a “hat day” that raised \$200 by allowing students to pay \$1.00 to wear a hat to school on a designated day. When asked how funds raised on behalf of the band were used to support program needs, most directors listed specific ways in which the band benefitted directly from this additional support. Most funds were used to purchase and maintain instruments, purchase uniforms, and for travel and registration costs for all-state and other performances. For example, one program purchased a drum set and used remaining funds to help defray costs of transportation to contests, festivals, and master classes. Another program bought uniforms and paid for a band trip. In only one case did funds raised by the band go to another cause, these funds were donated to the Heart Association and a local hospital. Accordingly, it appears that band programs are actively pursuing local fund raising and finding meaningful ways to aid their students as well as broader community.

V. Perceived Barriers

Using an open-ended response format, band directors were asked to state their opinions about the barriers that prevent students from participating in band at their school (Appendix A; survey item # 7). Each of the open response answers provided by 14 band directors generally included more than one potential barrier (Appendix B). Therefore, to rank order the barriers according to prevalence, common themes were extracted from the responses and data was tallied for frequency at which each theme was referenced across the responses. In total 6 central themes were used to capture the range of responses (Figure 4).

The top-ranked barrier across programs was instruments. Of the 16 band directors who provided data on this survey item, 12 (75%) identified lack of instruments as a barrier to participation in their band program. Band directors described lack of student and school owned instruments, affordability of renting instruments, the poor working condition of available instruments, and difficulty finding instruments that are properly fitted to students. Notably, one director shared with us that he/she lends his/her personal instruments to students so that they have something to play.

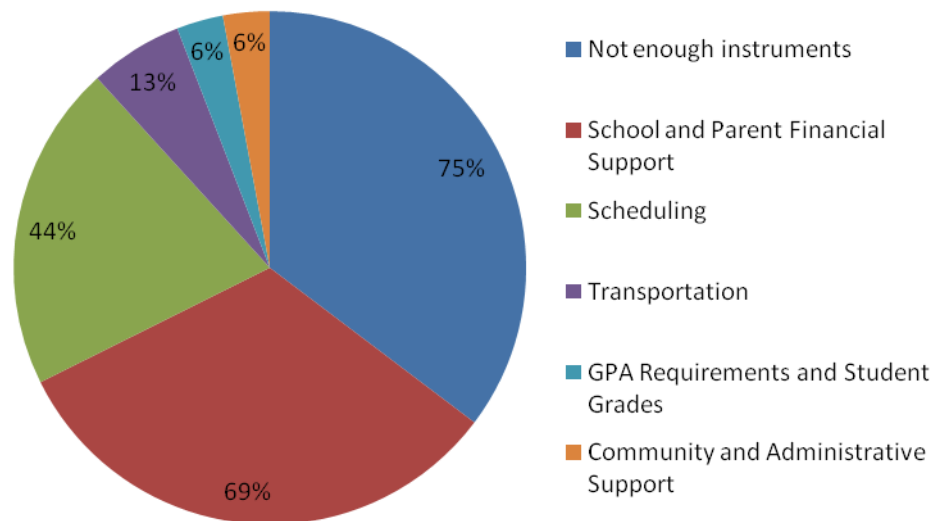


Figure 4. Perceived Barriers to Band

The second most frequently identified barrier was financial support from the school and students' families (69%). While many of these responses described school budget and family finances as a limiting factor on instruments, costs of participating in band activities such as band camp and competitions were also identified. This factor also included the effect of the local economy on families, in which case parents may need to drive out of county to find jobs. Therefore, financial constraints may have a far reaching impact on band participation even after the basic needs regarding instruments are met.

The third major barrier identified was scheduling (44%). Scheduling challenges included the need to have band practice outside of regular school hours, at times which are difficult for students to attend, and holding band during school periods that conflict with required and other elective classes.

Finally, three additional barriers, (1) transportation and family assistance, (2) GPA requirements for extracurricular activities, and (3) lack of community and administrative support accounted for a combined total of 25% of responses.

VI. Common Needs

The primary objective of this evaluation was to identify, from the band director perspective, the prevailing barriers facing students who wish to participate in musical education in distressed regions of Appalachia. This information will be used to guide decisions about where Marching Mountains could direct assistance and what types of assistance will have the most impact across representative school programs. Based on responses from 17 band directors who registered their band program, it is evident that instruments are a significant, if not the foremost, barrier to musical education at these schools. In fact, when asked to answer a second survey item regarding specific needs that, if provided, would help increase student participation (Appendix A; survey item # 8), 94% of directors listed instruments as the first priority. The needed instruments ranged from large items that would serve a single position in the band (i.e., concert bass drum, keyboard, bass guitar) to basic supplies that could be used to maintain multiple instruments (valve oil, reeds, cork grease). In addition to instruments, many band directors identified need for music stands and sheet music, band uniforms, and teaching supplies including basic method books. One director shared that private instruction outside of school is need as, currently, “students have to travel a couple hours for lessons”, while another commented on the condition of stereo equipment for the band room; “CD player that doesn't even show the track # making you guess what track you select”.

This information reflects the diversity of needs and provides a scope for how donations and financial support could assist band programs broadly. In the case of sheet music, method books, and instrument stands, a potential role for Marching Mountains would be to organize large purchase orders across band programs, negotiate bulk-rate discounts, and subsidize band program contributions with financial donations made to the organization. Furthermore, information provided at the individual band level could be used to establish a mechanism to advertise and match donations to meet program specific needs (e.g., specific instrument, CD player).

VII. Online Network

Marching Mountains was originally conceived around the plan to build an online network for band directors in distressed regions of Appalachia to communicate with other programs for exchange of ideas to benefit their programs and, perhaps, as a system of support for challenges they face. This assessment identified several useful types of information that could be shared

using such a network, including ways to integrate band activities with other school and community programs and new methods of fundraising.

When directors were asked whether they would participate in an online network (Appendix A, survey item # 10), 100% responded “yes”. Additionally, directors provided feedback about the specific features they would like to see in an online network, and how they would use such a network. Several directors indicated interest in shared discussion forums and list serves that would allow them to post questions on specific topics. Suggested topics included lesson plans, ideas for fundraising, ideas for promotion of band program, ideas for gaining community/parental support, ideas for gaining grants and seeking donations, where to get quality instruments for the lowest price, and where to get good used instruments. Other requested features were a “wish list” that would enable potential donors to find bands in need of instruments and other contributions and a directory of all participating directors and their contact information that could be centrally maintained. Finally, one director simply stated that “Just being able to communicate with other directors would be a great help”. Based on this feedback, we believe that Marching Mountain’s vision and intentions for creating the network are very much on target with the needs of band directors, and that an online network could provide a cost-effective way to support band programs on many levels.

VIII. Marching Mountains Website Activity

We began collecting data on visits to the Marching Mountains website in March 2010. On average, the site received 503 visits per month from March to August 2010 (Figure 5).

We conducted our first instrument drive in August 2010, at which time 10 instruments were sent or personally delivered to 7 Marching Mountains registered band programs. In

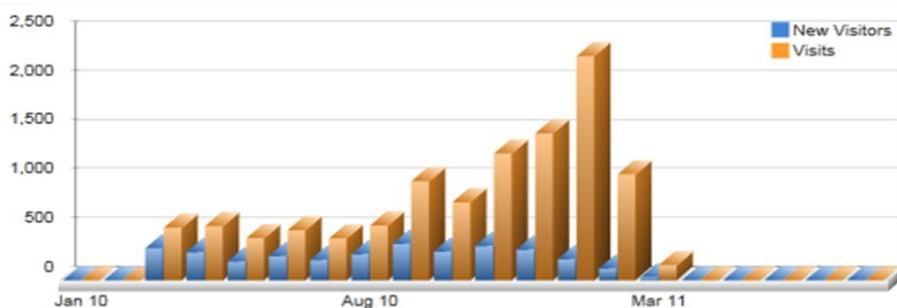


Figure 5. Marching Mountains website visits

September 2010 a story featuring our program and the instrument drive was published in the Huffington Post (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/09/02/post_509_n_704029.html). Since September 2010, visits to the Marching Mountains site increased to an average of 1010 visits per month, an increase of 101% over the preceding 6 months, reaching a peak of 2,284 in

January 2011. The national distribution of website visits over the periods preceding the instrument drive (3/1/2010-8/31/2010) and following the instrument drive (9/1/2010-3/1/2011) is presented in figures 6 and 7 respectively.

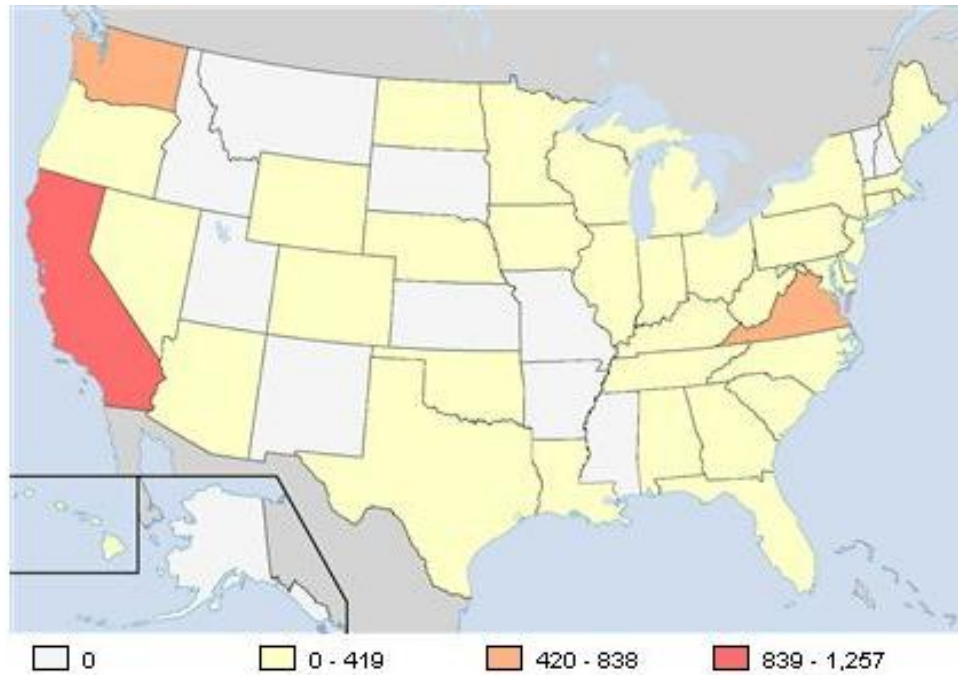


Figure 6: Web Activity 3/1/2010 – 8/31/2010

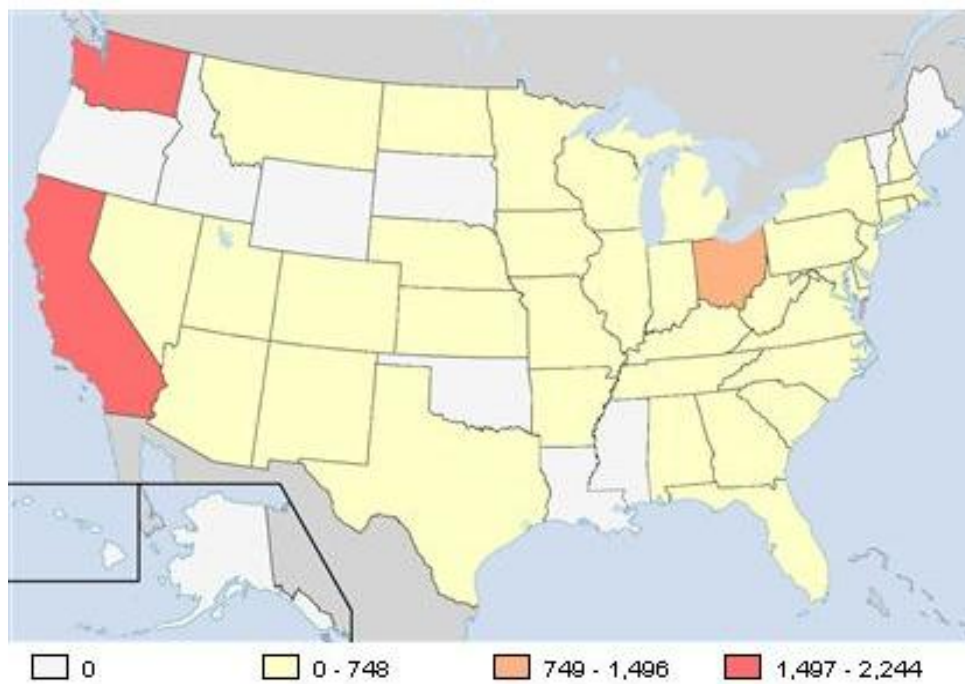


Figure 7: Web Activity 9/1/2010 – 3/1/2011

Appendix A. Needs Assessment Survey Instrument

2009 Application and Survey

Contact Information

Band Director Name: _____

Contact Information:

Phone # _____

E-mail: _____

Mailing/Office Address: _____

School Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Band Program Information:

Please provide the following information to describe your schools student population and band programs.

1). What types of band programs does your school have? (circle all that apply)

Marching Jazz Orchestra Concert Strings Other: _____

2). Are you the director of all bands identified above? YES NO

If NO, which bands do you personally direct? (circle all that apply)

Marching Jazz Orchestra Concert Strings Other: _____

Please provide the names of any other faculty who we may contact regarding bands under their direction: _____

Please complete the remaining questions with regard to the band programs you direct

3) Please report the number of students enrolled at each grade level for the last academic year (2008-2009) and the number who participate in a band program using the chart below:

	Grade Level								
	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th
# Students									
# Students Participating in Band									

4) Approximately, what was your band program budget for the 2008-2009 academic year? (circle one):

Less than \$1,000 \$1,000-\$3,000 \$3,000-\$5,000 \$5,000-\$10,000 Over \$10,000

5) Given your programs financial resources, what is the maximum number of students your band program could accommodate? _____ # of students

6) Do you believe that students who could benefit from participating in your band program are unable to due to limited financial or other resources? YES NO

7) What are some of the barriers that could prevent a student from participating in band at your school?

8) What could your band program use to increase student participation? For example, instruments, uniforms, teaching supplies, sheet music, stands, or anything else you can think of.

9) Level of community involvement in band program:

Number of concerts held in academic year 2008-2009: _____

On average, how many people attended each concert? _____

Did your band do any fundraising events in academic year 2008-2009? YES NO

If YES, what types of fundraising activities did you do? (describe below)

What were the funds intended to be used for? (describe below)

10) If there were an online network of band directors and community members that you could use to communicate with other programs and identify ways to bring new resources to your band program, would you participate in it? YES NO

10b) If yes, comment on features and tools you'd like to see available in the online network.

Thank you very much for participating in our survey

Appendix B. Directors' Perceived Barriers to Band Participation

We have very few school owned instruments. The students here are impoverished and do not have the funds to buy or rent their own.

Lack of funds to purchase instruments, the school and I provide 90 percent of all the instruments for this economically depressed school. In order to supply large instruments we constantly fund raise.

Schedule and no funds for instruments. We have no instruments in any shape to give to students to play.

Scheduling is a problem. I have to have band before school and many students do not arrive early enough to participate. Many students at my school have transportation trouble also. If I could have band during the school day, my numbers would increase and the quality of our band would increase because I would have more time with the students. We also have a grade point average requirement at my school for all extracurricular activities. Some of my band students are not allowed to participate due to low grades. I have started a pep band (the entire group actually plays). We have started playing at basketball games and my students are really excited! I now have students enrolled in solo & ensemble festival later this year. I am also a board member of a new non-profit organization in my area that is called: Friends of Eastern Kentucky Creative and Performing Arts, Inc. We are dedicated to educating and supporting the creative and performing arts. We do not have our nonprofit status back yet from the IRS, but all necessary paperwork has been submitted.

Instrument availability due to financial constraints. Cost of participating in band activities: band camp, competitions, etc.

Mostly the barrier is owning a working instrument. There are very few working school instruments available for students to play.

1) Financial burden - Scott County is at 20% unemployment and rising. My program could have been as high as 30 if families were able to afford to rent an instrument and/or the band's budget be able to provide one. 2) Scheduling - Students must sacrifice other classes (art, computer, gym, and library) in order to take band

Scheduling challenges and having an instrument which is properly fitted for the student.

The most apparent barrier would be financial burden. We have a handful of school-owned instruments that are quite honestly in need of some repair. Aside from these, I lend my personal instruments to students so that they will have something to play. About one third of the students are able to rent instruments.

I left a lot of the information blank because the band program here and in the county has been cut out. I currently teach general music. They tried to do an after-school program but it never got off the

ground. There is a possibility that it may be reinstated next year if we can get it into the schedule. One of the main problems I had when band was offered is the cost of renting instruments. We have no industry here now and most people either drive out of the county to work or are drawing government checks. If our band program is brought back, your help could be instrumental in getting things up and going.

Extreme Poverty...these kids have little or nothing. They need a way out and they need to know that someone cares about them. The barrier would be the schedule...we are a small school and don't have many teachers. Band is during flex period and so is Spanish.

Lack of parental support, financial difficulties of the student's family resulting in ability to acquire an instrument or transportation(most of my students are free/reduced lunch students whose family income falls well below the poverty line), lack of quality school owned instruments to assist those students who cannot afford to rent/purchase their own instrument, difficulties raising sufficient funds through fundraising due to the people the students know being in a financially difficult position themselves, not enough funds to hire sufficient band staff, purchase needed equipment/materials, or music. In addition, this is the second year back in operation for the band after a period of decay to the point that no band was active for a couple of years. Therefore, we have had to rebuild from scratch and were not able to salvage much from the previous program.

Not being able to afford to rent or purchase their own instrument keeps many students from participating. There is a limited supply of school owned beginning instruments, but they are reserved mainly for those students who receive free or reduced lunch. There is a lack of normally owned school instruments, such as mallet percussion, low brass, low reeds, and double reeds.

Lack of support from the community. The community is interested in the band program, just not supporting it financially. There is also a lack of desire from the administration to work with students and their schedules to keep them in band.

As with my other band, the most apparent barrier would be financial burden. We have a handful of school-owned instruments that are quite honestly in need of some repair. Aside from these, I lend my personal instruments to students so that they will have something to play. About one third of the students are able to rent instruments.

Lack of instruments Limited family income to purchase instrument