

## **PREPARING FUTURE TEACHERS TO WORK WITH UNDERPRIVILEGED AND AT-RISK POPULATIONS**

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The majority of orchestra programs in the United States are located in affluent schools. Consequently, less affluent school systems with orchestra programs tend to experience difficulty finding qualified string teachers. Many young graduates trained to teach orchestra tend to avoid positions in less affluent schools where they perceive the program may not be valued or are fearful of potential classroom management challenges. One possible solution is to offer an environment for undergraduate students to gain experience in urban and at-risk settings while simultaneously being able to explore questions at the university that arise from the field placement. This session will describe the experience of one university partnership with an underprivileged school district that impacted the elementary school, undergraduate music education students, and community in a positive way.

The Peck Elementary String Program is a collaborative effort between the Greensboro Symphony, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and the Clara J. Peck Elementary School. The primary goal of the Peck Elementary String Program is to provide instrumental music instruction to underprivileged students, who otherwise may not ever be exposed to a string instrument. The secondary goal, which will have long term impact for music education in the Greensboro area and surrounding areas, is to provide an opportunity for music education majors from UNCG to experience a diverse teaching/learning environment. Peck Elementary School is a Title I school and a diverse community. The demographics of the students enrolled include, 66% African American, 6% Asian, 8% Caucasian, 15% Hispanic, 2.5% Multi-Racial, 2.5% Native American. Peck Elementary School currently does not offer instrumental music education and has a limited general music program.

The project has positively impacted the UNCG music education students, Peck Elementary School, and the surrounding community. Twenty-three UNCG music education students, both string players and non-string players, volunteered to help teach and perform over the course of a one-year period. University students participated in grant writing, initiated fundraisers, arranged and performed alternative styles of music, and learned important repair skills that would reduce costs for a less affluent district. Feedback from the preservice teachers indicated an increased desire to work with a lower income population, increased comfort with classroom management issues, and increased comfort teaching string instruments. Reflections from the Peck Elementary String Students revealed that orchestra was important to them. The power point presentation includes background information pertaining to the elementary school, development of the program, and the university and fourth grade students' reflections on their experience in the program.

