

School Music Suite

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This article describes the Music Suite of a public High School in Palmerston North, New Zealand. The community under study appears to be extremely successful in its aims of achieving inclusiveness and excellence. The Music Suite's sense of fun, opportunities for members, and communication patterns, and the provision for musicians more generally within the city, are seen as strengths that empower individual students. The non-competitive and inclusive nature of the Music Suite, compared with similar institutions around New Zealand, is also considered a positive feature because it promotes participation in and enjoyment of music, and perhaps this extends much further both in school and life more generally. The opportunities available in the wider community, added to the excellent teaching available, produce young musicians who can and do participate in 'real world' music settings as audience, performers, and teachers. Ecological theory provides a framework for the hypothesis that members of the Music Suite community gain general feelings of confidence and competence that may generalise to other areas of their lives. This paper suggests that strengths such as social support and opportunities for personal growth at one level of a human ecological system (within the Music Suite) may be internalised by individual members and then generalised to other levels, contributing to their future adaptation.

The paper begins with a discussion of community and ecological theory, followed by a short description of the music suite community under study, and interactions with other levels of the ecological system. Finally, suggestions will be made as to the possible effects of the Music Suite community on members.

Community and the Ecological Model

A dictionary defines a community as a group of people with a common location, culture, values, or interests (Atkinson, 1991). Similarly, Gregory (1999, p. 242) describes a community as "a group of people related through common values, a common location, communication

patterns, and or a relationship", and notes that communities have boundaries, social structures such as hierarchies, dynamics, and strengths. One method of investigating communities is to use an ecological paradigm, in which the community under study is considered to be part of an ecological system (Levine and Perkins, 1997). This system has several levels, and investigation at several levels is thought to give a broader, more accurate picture of the subject of interest (Levine and Perkins, 1997). In this paper, the Music Suite community is examined at several levels; the individual members, the Music Suite community as a whole, the macrosystem of Palmerston North, and the still broader national and international "Music" community.

Several concepts in ecological theory make it an appropriate model for the study of the High School Music Suite. Firstly, it is assumed that different parts of an ecological system are interdependent, and that change (or status quo) in one part will affect all other parts (Kelly, 1966, cited in Levine and Perkins, 1997). Secondly, ecological theory assumes that the environment can exert significant effects on individuals (Levine and Perkins, 1997). Although all organisms are limited in certain ways by their genetic makeup, the environments in which people find (or place) themselves can have dramatic effects on their lives. A consequent assumption is that by altering a particular environment we can influence many people at a time (Levine and Perkins, 1997).

The High School Music Suite can be considered a community because they have a common location, common interests, and adherence to common rules and regulations. Further, it is useful to consider the Music Suite part of an ecological system because it interacts with larger macrosystems such as the city in which it exists, and a wider, more abstract, community, including all musicians. The Music Suite cannot be explained by looking only at individual members because the position and experience of each member is defined by relationships with other members, non-members, and their context (Thomas, 1984). Also, characteristics of one part of the ecology,

such as the Music Suite, can affect other parts. Possible ways in which this might happen are discussed later.

Description of the Community

The community under study, a music suite, is located within a co-educational Palmerston North public high school. The school to which the music suite belongs is nearly fifty years old. Since its beginnings, High School X has had a music program. In 1990 an arson attempt resulted in the total loss of the original music rooms and resources. Insurance in excess of one million dollars was paid to the school (H, personal communication, 15 March 2002). The Head of Music at that time, Mrs. R, used this fresh-start to refurbish and add to an existing classroom block, and to introduce a number of initiatives that resulted in a highly successful music suite (H, personal communication, 15 March 2002). These initiatives included an improved instrument tuition program, band classes, school ownership of a keyboard academy franchise and performance opportunities throughout the community (H, personal communication, 15 March 2002).

The refurbishment of a classroom block which had previously housed the technology department allowed music for the first time to have a physical identity separate from the rest of the school (School magazine, 1997). This physical separation has caused the Music Suite to develop as a somewhat independent institution. Additions to the original building, which was made up of several large rooms, resulted in a large and attractive music suite. The current suite includes five small practice rooms, two large classrooms, a band rehearsal room, two toilets, and a studio with built in recording control room. In addition to these student facilities, four administration or resource rooms, and an administrator's office can be found. All areas of the music suite appear new, modern, clean, and attractive (site visit, 15 March 2002).

Demographic Information

The high school has over a thousand full-time students, ranging in age from 12 to 18. Thirty are overseas fee-paying students. The school is co-educational, with approximately equal numbers of male and female students. Slightly more

than half of the management and other staff positions of responsibility, for example, the Head of Department, were held by women (School magazine, 1998). Although information about ethnic variation within the school was unavailable, the author estimates that the proportions would be similar to those of Palmerston North in general.

Aims and Philosophy of the Community

The Head of Music, who holds the majority of power within the Music Suite, aims to create an environment where everyone can have a go; an inclusive policy as opposed to elitist (B, personal communication, 20 March 2002). The music department's infrastructures allow students to excel, but also to try to provide programs for those who do not take music as a school subject (B, personal communication, 20 March 2002). This policy is quite different from that of some other high schools in New Zealand, which cater only for top students (B, personal communication, 20 March 2002). This philosophy is also a reflection of the wider school's new charter aim to 'care, innovate and excel' (B, personal communication, 20 March 2002). These values, determined by Music Suite staff and affected by the character of the school, shape the experience of community members. Because emphasis is given to providing for all members of the community, less able students receive support and encouragement that might be lacking in other settings.

Services Provided

The programs offered by the music department include normal school subject classes, an applied performance program which offers weekly tuition on a musical instrument, and specialist classes in Audio Engineering. In addition, students can join any of a number of music groups including concert bands, jazz bands, choirs, rock groups and chamber music groups. These groups perform regularly throughout the Manawatu, and several have toured overseas in the past ten years. Because of the very high standard achieved by a number of the department's performing groups, a number of local and national awards have been received and in 1998 a compact disk was produced and sold (P, personal communication, 22 March 2002).

The High School stages a major musical production every two years or so, which brings together the skills of music, art, and drama students. Additionally, this high school was the first school in New Zealand to own and run a keyboard academy. The academy offers group lessons in many schools around the region as well as in the suite during and after school (T pamphlet, 2002).

Membership of the Community

The music suite community as defined for this study has two kinds of members: staff and students. Staff are appointed by the high school's senior management based on their qualifications and experience. The current staff members include a Head of Music, a full-time administrator, three part-time teachers, and ten itinerant music tutors. The teachers give theoretical music lessons and conduct the band classes, in which students learn by practising together as a concert band. The itinerant tutors give individual or groups lessons to students learning instruments.

Participation in music suite activities is available to all students attending this high school. Any student may enrol in music subject classes, although the limited number of option choices may prevent some students from taking music because they consider other subjects more important for their future career. In March 2002 there were nearly 200 students enrolled for the music subject option, about 15 percent of all students (H, personal communication, 15 March 2002). Even if a student does not take music as a subject, they may still enrol at any time for tuition on the instrument of their choice. In March 2002 there were 190 students receiving tuition on an instrument (H, personal communication, 15 March 2002). It is likely that almost all are (or will be) members of the music class. Any student can join the many bands, orchestras, choirs or other groups that are based in the music suite. If a suitable group is not in existence, students are encouraged to form one. Staff then support such groups, with access to music, help, and performance opportunities. In March 2002, about 60 students were involved in choirs, and approximately 70 students total in the two concert bands. Another 40 or so students who had just begun to learn an instrument would be competent enough to join a concert band in six months (H,

personal communication, 20 March 2002).

Although both staff and students are members of the community, their positions are quite different. The next section examines some major differences. The remainder of this paper will focus on students rather than staff, because it is for their benefit that the school and Music Suite exist.

Decision Making and Social Structures

Daily decisions regarding the Music Suite and keyboard program are officially made by the Head of Music. For example, buying music or equipment, or matters to do with teaching. The music administrator and other key staff such as the teachers are almost always involved in decision-making and implementation of decisions (Observation of processes, 15 & 20 March 2002). For decisions which involve school rules and policy, such as taking a group of students on a trip, higher levels of school management must be involved (B, 20 March 2002). The number of people involved in decision-making depends on the scope and extent of the decision. For example, for a small day trip, the Deputy Principal must give his permission. For longer out-of-school trips, or spending not included in the music department budget, the Principal and Board of Trustees must be involved.

Students and parents are not officially involved in Music Suite decision-making, although they do have an informal voice. If these groups want to influence decisions they can do so either by direct application to a higher level, such as the Principal or by involvement in the Board of Trustees. Each of these methods has drawbacks. If a direct appeal is made, it may be ignored. If the student or parent becomes involved in the Board of Trustees, they may be too far removed from the Music Suite to effect decisions about that part of the school, or their influence may be slow in reaching the Music Suite.

Rules and Regulations

Several levels of rules and regulations influence what is done or not done by members of the music suite community. Most generally, anybody living or residing in New Zealand is obliged to abide by national and local laws. On the next level, schools and other educational institutions have to concur with regulations made by

government departments such as the Ministry of Education. The effects of these large decision-making bodies will be examined more carefully elsewhere. More specifically, the Music Suite has to be run in accordance with school rules made by the Principal and Board of Trustees. These rules include enforced limitations of the behaviour of individuals, for example, prohibiting verbal abuse such as swearing, and insist upon certain conventions such as wearing school uniforms. Music Suite rules constitute the most specific level of regulation because they apply only to members. For example, students enrolled in the Applied Performance Program agree to attend all lessons and catch up on missed class work (Conditions of Tuition, 2002).

Measurement of Success and Achievement

Until recently, the formal academic achievements of music students were measured by a combination of internal assessment and nationwide examinations such as School Certificate (year 11) and Bursary (year 13). Beginning in 2002, these qualifications will be replaced by the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA, A Quick Guide, 2002). Under this system, students will gain credits by mastering each unit of work. At level 1 (Year 11) 80 credits will be needed to gain the certificate (NCEA, A Quick Guide, 2002).

Musical success is also indicated by "placings" in local and national competitions. In the past ten years, musical groups and soloists from this high school have won or been placed in a number of competitions including: Chamber Music, Choral Federation Competitions, Smoke Free Rock Quest, Concert Band Festival, McDonald's Young Entertainers, Manawatu Competition Society Competitions and Stage Challenge (P, personal communication, 22 March 2002).

The effectiveness and achievements of staff are not measured directly. Possible informal measures of success might include popularity with students and non-music staff, prestige of the music department, and achievements of musical groups.

Links With Similar Organisations or Communities

The links between the High School Music

Department and other high school music departments are stronger than is usual in other parts of New Zealand (B, personal communication, 20 March 2002). Twice a term, the Association of Secondary School Music Teachers meets for discussion. The high school has been involved in a number of joint ventures (with other high schools), including workshops, shared resources, and moderation (B, personal communication, 20 March 2002). Moderation is the process of examining video recordings of student performances to ensure that the assessment was fair and consistent with other assessment in the region (P, personal communication, 22 March 2002). The supportive relationship between Manawatu high schools is considered to be quite unusual (H & B, personal communication, 20 March 2002). One staff member, who previously held a position as Head of Music at a High School in another New Zealand city said that competition between the different high schools in that area resulted in a lack of sharing and support, and music departments which focused only on the very best students (B, personal communication, 20 March 2002).

Financial Situation

The Music Suite requires money to pay staff and to buy supplies such as music. Because of the unusually high proportion of students involved in music at this high school, the full-time Administrative position, and the school-owned keyboard academy, the Suite costs more than a quarter of a million dollars to run (annually). This is very atypical of a high school music department (B, personal communication, 20 March 2002). The Suite receives money from several sources. Most of the money required comes from the school's bulk grant. Under current legislation, each school receives a sum of money from the New Zealand Government. The school's Board of Trustees then determines how much of the money will go towards funding each area of the school based on budgets prepared by each department (B, personal communication, 20 March 2002).

The Ministry of Education provides money for 32 hours per week of tuition by itinerant music tutors. Students learning instruments through the itinerant tutor scheme are charged \$180 a year (Conditions of Tuition, 2002). This money

enables the Music Suite to offer ten extra hours of teaching time a week. These extra hours mean that all students have the opportunity to learn an instrument (B, personal communication, 20 March 2002). Small amounts of money are occasionally generated by concerts and performances (H, personal communication, 20 March 2002).

The Music Suite as Part of a Larger Community

Larger institutions influence the Music Suite in three major ways: by determining educational policy, financially, and by affecting the availability of musical opportunities. The introduction of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement is one example of a policy change that affects the Music Suite. In this case, decisions made by the Ministry of Education and Qualifications Authority, determine what music department staff teach, how the subject matter is presented to students, and how achievements are measured (NCEA, A Quick Guide, 2002). Another example of how the policies of a larger institution influence the Music Suite comes from within the high school. In 2002, music ceased to be a compulsory subject in Year 9 (3rd Form). This decision was made by High School senior management, and has resulted in a huge drop in the number of Year 9 students taking music (H, personal communication, 15 March 2002). It is too early to tell whether this change will alter the number of music students at higher levels.

The Music Suite is seriously affected by financial decisions made by bigger organisations such as the school and Government. Currently, the number and kind of programs offered by the Music Suite are restricted by financial constraints (B, personal communication, 20 March 2002). It has already been noted that the Music Suite receives the majority of its funding from the government, either directly or through the school. Financially, the Music Suite is not autonomous and relies on the support of these larger organisations.

Members of the music suite are influenced by availability in the community of opportunities for musical advancement. Because the Palmerston North City Council plays such an important role in this area, it is treated separately in the following section.

The City Council and Music

It has already been mentioned that the Music Suite encourages the development of musical groups, including both those offered officially, and those created spontaneously by students. The Suite offers a venue for practices, tuition, and performances, and arranges workshops and performances with established musicians. However, for student musicians to move into the 'real world' of music, it is necessary for them to perform regularly at a variety of functions and for a variety of 'real' public audiences (rather than just proud parents and teachers). The Palmerston North City Council offers these opportunities. For example, any person or group can apply for a free 'Busking Licence', which allows them to perform live in the central business area of the city (PNCC Busking Licence, 2002). Busking is both a great way to gain confidence, and an opportunity to earn money as a performer.

Secondly, over the last decade, the Palmerston North City Council helped fund the rebuilding and refurbishment of the Regent Theatre. Now a world class performing venue, the Regent Theatre is run by a City Council funded Trust Board. Performing groups can rent the Theatre for a set fee. The existence of a venue of such high quality in Palmerston North is of benefit to Music Suite students in several ways. Firstly, the theatre's size and design make it suitable for small or large-scale productions of ballet, theatre, and music. The new Steinway grand piano also serves to attract both New Zealand and international performers of the highest quality. The inexpensive student tickets available for most shows make it possible for students to observe and learn from the best performers in their field. Secondly, productions and concerts at the Regent give students the opportunity to perform in front of large, public audiences. In addition, in 2001, the manager of the Regent Theatre offered advanced local piano students the opportunity to practice on this piano on a regular basis at no cost. Because the quality of the instrument puts limits on the quality of the performance, this gave students the opportunity to reach levels of playing and experiment with a range of techniques not possible on a lesser instrument.

A third way in which the City Council supports music in general, and Music Suite students in particular, is through annual festivals such as

'New Year on Broadway', 'Esplanade Open Day', and the 'Festival of Manawatu'. At New Year on Broadway (1999 & 2000), a host of musicians, clowns and dancers were booked to perform for half-hour slots on several stages around the Square (the centre of Palmerston North) from mid-afternoon until 1:00 am. Several of the performers, and many members of the audience in these years were past students of the Music Suite. The Esplanade Open Day was stage-managed by students from the Music Suite, thus giving them valuable knowledge about behind-the-scenes event organisation. These occasions provide further opportunities for local students to perform live, and to experience other performers.

Strengths of the Music Suite as a Community

The Music Suite is a vibrant, beautiful place that appears to be fulfilling the needs of any student willing to give music a go. Given this positive evaluation, any number of strengths could be identified, so this is a summary of those considered most important in establishing the fabulous atmosphere.

In the author's view, a major strength of the Music Suite is the social hierarchy and communication patterns between members. Students talk directly to decision-makers, in particular the Head of Music and Music Administrator. Observations suggest that students and staff know each other by name and are aware of pertinent social details such as skills, interests and social relationships. Communication between staff and student members is friendly, helpful and compassionate (Observation, 15 & 20 March 2002).

Another strength is the enormous quantity and quality of opportunities available to students. Young musicians from High School regularly perform throughout the community as well as stage managing public events, winning competitions, taking part in workshops, travelling overseas, making recordings, and watching jazz and opera. The tuition provided by the itinerant music scheme is of good quality and students of the Music Suite have gone on to become professional and amateur musicians throughout New Zealand (P, personal communication, 22 March 2002).

Perhaps the biggest strength of the Music Suite community is its sense of fun. A poster on

the wall next to the entrance reads 'The Manawatu's largest, craziest, busiest, happiest, most fun, best-known music department' (Site visit, 15 March 2002). As far as the author can tell, this may well all be true. Interactions between the Head of Music, staff and students are often humorous or good-naturedly teasing. Everybody in the building appears smiling and stimulated, and the sounds coming out of the band practise room speak volumes about the success of this department (Observations, 15 & 20 March 2002).

Effects of Membership

The hypothesis of this paper is that membership of the Music Suite provides social support and opportunities for personal growth (or empowerment to use Rappaport's term) which are internalised, thus altering the individual's experience at other levels of the ecological system, and at later times in their lives. It is also suggested that belonging to the Music Suite gives students the opportunity to develop a life-long affection for music that enriches their life.

Levine and Perkins (1997, p. 230) note that "social support acts to increase or decrease, in some nonspecific way, a person's vulnerability to or resistance to stress". Stress is often defined as either a psychological response to some event that requires adaptation, or as a stimulus (stressor) in the environment to which the individual must adapt (Davidson and Neale, 2001). Thus, social support may be considered a factor that protects the individual from being unable to cope with difficult life situations and events, or their cognitive reactions to such events. There is much research to support the idea that social support is associated with a reduced risk of developing psychological problems such as depression (Levine and Perkins, 1997). The assumed reason for such a relationship is that, for an unsupported individual, stress contributes to negative psychological states such as hopelessness and anxiety (Levine and Perkins, 1997).

Gerald Caplan (1976, cited in Levine and Perkins, 1997) postulated a model of an idealised family and described how such a group might provide beneficial social support for its members. Several of his ideas may be applied equally well to the current discussion of how a small community such as the Music Suite might support it's

members. Firstly, Caplan (1976, cited in Levine and Perkins, 1997) notes that the family is a source of information. Members may learn vicariously about roles they might play or encounter in the outside world, and about other characteristics of the world. The Music Suite also serves this function, giving students the opportunity to observe the roles of teacher and mentor, and allowing them to experience roles such as performer, group member, and organiser. Additionally, by associating with fellow students and teachers who have links with other musicians (and related people), members of the Music Suite community gain an understanding of how musicians function in the real world. For example, when the High School Senior Jazz Band performs at a city jazz club, students become familiar with an important musical venue, form links with other musicians, organisers, and members of the audience, and experience performing for a 'real' audience. Such experiences give the student a starting point for organising their own 'gigs' (performances), and other kinds of involvement in music when they leave school.

The second way in which an ideal family supports its members is as a "feedback and guidance system to help its members understand their reactions to others and the reactions of others to them" (Levine and Perkins, 1997, p. 231). This function is less specific and is probably accomplished by any group that interacts regularly, although the common interests of participants in a group such as the Music Suite may increase group cohesion and thus allow feedback to be given in a positive and constructive manner. Caplan notes that social support scales do not directly measure this element of social support (Levine and Perkins, 1997).

Thirdly, the ideal family is the source of the values, beliefs, and accepted codes of behaviour that determine a person's understanding of the world and their place in it (Levine and Perkins, 1997). The Music Suite operates similarly in two ways. First, the Music Suite and school more generally, have a culture that students may or may not identify with. Because of the Music Suites' goals of inclusion, it is unlikely that many students feel alienated in this setting. Secondly, students gain a more specific understanding of where they fit into the world wide music community which is comprised of teachers, students, performers, audiences, and associated personnel everywhere. For example, they may discover that

their preferred genre is Classical music, and thus adopt the values and behaviour generally associated with this style of music -performing in very formal clothes and a posh venue to an audience who make no noise (other than clapping in clearly understood places) and who never eat, drink, or smoke during a performance.

A final way in which a family assists members, is to provide them with a positive sense of personal identity. Caplan (1976, cited in Levine and Perkins, 1997, p. 232) described how during the frustration and confusion of struggling with an at-present insurmountable problem, most individuals feel weak and impotent and tend to forget their continuing strengths. At such times, their family reminds them of their past achievements and validates their pre-crisis self-image of competence and ability to stand firm. The Music Suite supports members in this way both by developing member's strengths, and by providing a network of people who understand each other's struggles because they have experienced similar difficulties. Firstly, I have already described how the Music Suite develops students musical skills by providing them with the ability to play one or more instruments and allowing them to take part in bands, choirs, competitions, performances, tours, and dramatic productions. The knowledge gained in this way may lead to future employment as a performer or teacher, or it might simply result in a life-long enjoyment of music. Thus, the Music Suite may protect people from feelings of helplessness by making them less helpless in the real world. Secondly, the Music Suite brings together (or creates) a group of people with similar interests, goals and problems. Because of their similar experiences, these people are ideally suited to provide emotional and practical support for each other during stressful times.

To illustrate this point, I will draw upon my own experience as a student of the Music Suite between 1994 and 1999. Music students then (and now) were required to complete a number of assessments including a video-taped performance (in front of a small audience), and an original musical composition. The weeks before a performance or a composition was due to be handed in or performed were particularly stressful for students because, unlike in other subjects, one's success or failure in a musical assessment was public and obvious. Despite the anxiety associated with these evaluations, memories of these times are some of my fondest

from high school, because our common fear and purpose drew us closer at this time. Students waiting to perform were helped, hugged, and offered practical advice with a kindness and sincerity that is only possible from someone who has gone through the same experience. Previously we had spent much of our spare time listening to each other's performance pieces and compositions, offering encouragement and constructive criticism. Even non-music students were drawn into the experience; requesting permission from their other teachers to miss class in order to support their friends by being part of the audience. The most poignant examples of this social support came from performances which otherwise might be called a failure. In recognition of the immense personal risk one takes with one's self-esteem when one performs, a classmate who broke down in the middle of a performance because of nerves would be listened to compassionately, and quietly encouraged to begin again. After the performance was over, there was never any teasing, but rather plenty of reminders of previous musical successes and accomplishments that restored the hurt individual's sense of balance.

The social support provided by the Music Suite might also be considered through the lens of Julian Rappaport's (1987) empowerment theory. Rappaport (1987) suggests that empowerment is a positive value that is evidenced by actual and/or subjective feelings of control over one's life. He notes that empowerment will manifest itself in different ways depending on the person and their context (Rappaport, 1987). It might be argued that the Music Suite empowers its members in both objective and subjective ways. The skills and knowledge students gain during their time at high school increase their real (objective) power over their life because such skills are economically valuable. Although this form of empowerment might be claimed by any educational institution, its validity could only be established by investigating the extent to which members actually internalised skills and knowledge (rather than just being exposed to them). Secondly, student of the Music Suite are likely to feel more in control of their own lives because the social support provided in this community provides them with feedback, values, behaviours, self-esteem, and a personal identity.

These kinds of social support may enable students to develop self-esteem, and other

positive skills and knowledge which will continue to affect their lives in other situations. For example, the skills I developed during my time in the Music Suite enabled me to become a music teacher and local performer. Thus, I have been objectively empowered because I earn my living based on my musical ability. I also feel subjectively empowered because I have learned that I can survive and cope with stressful experiences such as performing live. Although I am unlikely to be representative of all student members of the Music Suite community in every way, it seems sensible to begin with the null hypothesis that if the Music Suite supported me, it is likely to have supported others.

CONCLUSION

This paper describes a small community of people belonging to a High School Music Suite, and attempts to demonstrate how the social support offered by this community might be internalised by members. Further speculation suggests that the feelings of competence or empowerment gained through participation in this group might generalise to other parts of the ecology, for example, enabling past students to become more confident in their everyday life. Various characteristics of the Music Suite are seen as strengths that create this process of empowerment (Rappaport, 1987). The Music Suite appears to be highly successful in its goal of allowing students to "have a go" at music. Students receive an excellent musical education and a number of musical opportunities for a very small cost (Conditions of tuition, 2002). It also seems to encourage students to excel. The decision-making processes and social structures allow input from all members of the community. This input is further encouraged by the relaxed communication patterns within the community (Observation of processes, 15 & 20 March 2002). Although the Music Suite is not financially independent, the author considers this a good thing because it ensures the organisation remains connected to High School X and thus available to students. If a successful community is one in which the members are many, happy, and stimulated, with effective interactions between members and non-members, then the Music Suite is a good community. Although much further research will be needed to investigate speculative accounts such as those offered

in this paper, such accounts provide a beginning.

KEY WORDS Secondary School. Music. Ecological Theory. Social Support

ABSTRACT Secondary school provides young people with a transition from early education towards goal attainment, social and vocational roles, and work activities. Achievement, accomplishment, and most of all, participation with peers under the guidance of skilled and talented teachers enables young people to gain skills, and then test and measure and try out their developing abilities. The author focuses on students of music and their progress as they learn to perform in the secondary school and the larger community, then examines the roles and links of the music suite in the context of Palmerston North as a community.

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