

the employee first suspects that the child has been or may be abused or neglected (H.B. 3379). An employee may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report.

To make a report of abuse or neglect of a child, call the Department of Family and Protective Services at 1-800-252-5400. To make the report online: <https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/Default.aspx>

In addition to making the report, the employee should notify their immediate supervisor of the suspected abuse or neglect of a child on the same day in which the abuse/neglect is first suspected.

Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Austin to provide an educational and working environment for its students, faculty and staff that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. In accordance with federal and state law, the University prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment. Sex discrimination and sexual harassment will not be tolerated, and individuals who engage in such conduct will be subject to disciplinary action. The University encourages students, faculty, staff and visitors to promptly report sex discrimination and sexual harassment.

<http://www.policies.utexas.edu/policies/sex-discrimination-and-sexual-harassment>

Title IX

[Title IX](#) is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity. Title IX protects all members of our campus community who experience sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, interpersonal violence (including dating and domestic violence), stalking, or discrimination on the basis of pregnancy. These protections apply to students, faculty, staff, contractors, applicants and campus visitors. We are committed to creating and fostering a campus environment free from all forms of sex discrimination.

Any person may report an incident of sexual assault, interpersonal violence (including domestic and dating violence), stalking, sexual harassment, and sex discrimination to the [Title IX Coordinator](#), via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu, via mail at PO Box 8118, Austin, TX 78713-8118, or by calling 512-232-3992, regardless of whether the person reporting is the person alleged to be subject to the complained-of behavior. Also, any person may report incidents anonymously via [an online reporting form](#).

University of Texas Charter School System – Title IX Coordinator:

Dr. Autumn Leal, autumn_leal@austin.utexas.edu

Office: 512-699-5142

Workplace Searches

Non-investigatory searches in the workplace, including accessing an employee's desk, file cabinets, or work area to obtain information needed for usual business purposes may occur when an employee is unavailable. Therefore, employees are hereby notified that they have no legitimate expectation of privacy in those places. In addition, the district reserves the right to conduct searches when there is reasonable cause to believe a search will uncover evidence of work-related misconduct. The district may search the employee, the employee's personal items, work areas, including district-owned computers, lockers, and private vehicles parked on district premises or work sites used in district business.

Employment Contracts

UTCSS employees do not have contracts. Employees may resign or be terminated in accordance with University policy and procedures. Employees are encouraged to respect the school year for the purpose of educational continuity for the students and for the program. When an employee resigns, a minimum of two weeks' notice is expected for the above stated reasons.

Teacher State Certification

All teachers of UTCSS must be certified by the State of Texas for the subject areas and grade levels taught. Contact the Director of Academics and Professional Development for additional information.

Confidentiality of Student Educational Records

Confidentiality is addressed in both state (Texas Education Code - TEC) and federal law (Family Educational Right to Privacy Act – FERPA) and applies to personally identifiable information in educational records. Educational records are all records that contain information directly related to a student and are maintained by an educational agency or institution, or by a party acting on its behalf. A record means any information recorded in any way, including handwriting, print, tape, film, microfilm, microfiche, and digital images.

All UTCSS employees must protect the confidentiality of student educational records in their position. Records should not be shared with other staff members who do not have a legitimate educational interest. Any papers with a student's name or other identifying information must be shredded before disposal. **No one may use a student's name or other identifying information in email communications.** No one should refer to any student by name or other identifying information to any person outside of UTCSS employment unless the appropriate paperwork has been processed.

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, any paperwork related to ARD meetings, reports from the partner facility, assessment results, or any other identifying information regarding a student. These documents should never be left in plain sight or otherwise unsecure.

Dress and Appearance

Employees are expected to dress professionally and appropriate for their workplace. Accordingly, standards may vary by campus. Employees should consult their supervisor on the expectations of their campus. Employees who do not meet expectations for professional appearance may be sent home by their supervisor to change. Employees will charge such an absence to their accrued leave.

Timesheets

Employees are required to submit timesheets on a weekly basis in Workday <https://www.myworkday.com/utaustin/d/home.html>. Timesheets must accurately reflect time worked. Failure to submit weekly, accurate timesheets is a violation of UT policy and can lead to disciplinary action.

Absence from Duty

Employees must report all absences to their supervisor.

To report an unplanned absence (illness or emergency):

- Notify the supervisor by phone call as soon as the need is identified, but no later than 7:00 am. Contact your supervisor so that cover may be arranged. Notification solely by text message or email is not acceptable.
- The employee shall confirm that the supervisor has received the report of unplanned absence.

- To the greatest extent possible, the employee should be available to speak with supervisor by phone to ensure workplace operational continuity.

To request a planned absence (staff development, medical appointments):

- Notify your supervisor in person or by phone call as far in advance prior to the absence so that cover may be arranged. Notification by text message or email is not acceptable.
- It is the employee's responsibility to ensure they have enough accrued leave for the requested absence. Preapproved absences may be canceled by the supervisor if there is not adequate leave to coverage the absence. It is a teacher's responsibility to provide lesson plans and/or activities for a substitute teacher to implement in the teacher's absence.
- The supervisor may deny requests for leave due to business necessity.

Paid Leave

During the academic school year between the months of August through May, any absence requests taken for leisure purposes of three consecutive days or greater must be pre-approved by the Superintendent. Visit UT Human Resource site for more information. <http://www.utexas.edu/hr/current/leave/>

COVID-19 Policy & Procedures

- All UT-Austin employees have access to COVID-19 vaccinations. While vaccinations are not mandatory, they are highly encouraged to promote safety and well-being of the entire school community.
- UT-Austin staff and students (age 12 years and older) have access to COVID-19 vaccinations. For more information: <https://uthealthaustin.org/patient-resources/covid-19-updates/covid-19-vaccination>
- If an employee (faculty or staff) tests positive for COVID-19 or is considered presumed positive by their healthcare provider, please contact immediate supervisor and the Health Point Occupational Health Program (OHP) at 512-471-4647 or healthpoint.ohp@austin.utexas.edu. OHP will provide campus and public health guidance on self-isolation criteria & tracking, assist with notification of close contacts, review leave options and establish return to work criteria.
- Vaccinated employees with an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are not required to quarantine if the following criteria are met:
 - Are fully vaccinated (greater than 2 weeks following receipt of second dose in a 2-dose series or greater than 2 weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine).
 - Have remained asymptomatic since the current COVID-19 exposure
- Employees who tested positive for COVID-19 within the past 3 months and recovered do not have to quarantine or get tested again as long as they do not develop new symptoms.
- As a precaution, unvaccinated employees who test negative for COVID-19 and have symptoms should not return to on-campus work until 24 hours have passed without symptoms. Employees should report that they were tested for COVID-19 to the Health Point Occupational Health Program regardless of a negative result.
- Unvaccinated employees may be required to self-quarantine due to recent travel from a Level 3 region or due to other public health guidance.
- If made available by Texas Education Agency, the UTCSS will participate in the rapid testing program which will allow voluntary testing of all employees.

Salary Information and Employment Verification

Verification of Employment (VOE) will be given upon request to authorized agencies and is generally restricted to dates of employment, job title, department, full- or part-time status, and verification of the salary or wage amount given to us by the agency. Contact the Human Resource Service Center at 512-471-4772 for an official, signed verification of employment. Turnaround time is two to three days; more time may be required for non-computerized records searches.

Employee Appraisals

All employees will be evaluated at least annually per university policy and department guidelines.

<https://teachfortexas.org/>

<http://www.policies.utexas.edu/policies/performance-evaluation-policy-classified-personnel-and-non-faculty-professional-staff>

Use of Tobacco and Vaporizers

Smoking and use of smokeless tobacco is not allowed in any educational building or within 200 feet of an educational building. If smoking or smokeless tobacco is allowed on the facility property, these policies should be followed when out of the prohibited area for educational buildings.

Vaporizers, including e-cigarettes, with or without nicotine are not allowed in any educational building or within 200 feet of an educational building.

Asbestos Notice

The University of Texas at Austin works diligently to maintain compliance with federal and state laws governing asbestos in school buildings. UT Austin's Asbestos Management Plan is available in the administrative office. If you have any questions, please contact Autumn Leal-Shopp, Assistant Superintendent of Operations at 512-699-5142.

Student Attendance Accounting

Attendance will be taken daily. Please review the Attendance Accounting Guidelines in the Appendix. Attendance accounting is subject to federal and state audit. Inaccuracies may be considered falsification and have legal and financial ramifications for the district and district employees.

Special Education Process

<http://utcharter.org/special-education/>

<http://utelementary.org/special-education/>

Grade Book

UTCSS uses an electronic grade book. Grades for each week must be entered into Grade Book no later than noon on the following Tuesday.

Please check with the campus principal regarding campus deadlines for three-week progress reports and report cards.

Report Card grades should be entered no later than three days after the six-week reporting period ends.

The TEKS Resource System/Lesson Plans

UTCSS utilizes the TEKS Resource System, which is a comprehensive, customized, user-friendly curriculum management system built on the most current research-based practices in the field. Its primary focus is to impact instructional practices in the classroom to improve student performance.

Lesson plans for the upcoming week are due to principals by the previous Friday. Included in lesson plans should be the activities to be implemented by the classroom instructional aide. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that the IA has the appropriate materials and information to implement their portion of the lesson plan. Lesson plans must explain the lesson being taught and include daily information regarding implementation.

Textbook Procedures

All textbooks purchased in accordance with Texas Education Code (Chapter 31.102a) are the property of the State of Texas.

At the end of each year, the district shall requisition textbooks for the following school year based on the maximum attendance report.

Once requisitioned and delivered, the District shall continue to use those instructional materials during the contract period or periods of the materials. The District may not return copies of one title to secure copies of another title in the same subject.

Teacher Editions are also part of the textbook inventory and must receive proper care and treatment.

Inventory Security (Textbook Coordinator)

The district's textbook inventory will be housed in a secure room at the district office. Access is limited to the textbook coordinator or designated personnel only.

Campus Responsibilities (Principal)

1. Each principal is responsible for maintaining an accurate inventory of books.
2. Any campus that has missing or damaged (beyond repair) books will need to reimburse the district for the full cost of the books.
3. The principal will issue the textbooks to teachers.
4. At the beginning of each school year, prior to issuing textbooks to teachers, the district textbook coordinator will schedule a mandatory inventory of all textbooks.
5. The district textbook coordinator will schedule a mandatory mid-year textbook inventory.
6. The district textbook coordinator will schedule a mandatory end-of-year textbook inventory.
7. During the course of the year, any surplus books will be returned to the district storage facility.
8. In the event that additional books are needed, a written request must be submitted via email to the textbook coordinator. If the books are in inventory they will be shipped immediately.

9. If the textbook is not currently available, the textbook coordinator or principal can check other campuses for surplus. Based on enrollment and need, if a campus has surplus books they must transfer them to the requesting campus.
10. The textbook(s) must be checked in and checked out as soon as received at the new campus.
11. Lost or damaged books must be reported to the textbook coordinator upon discovery for correction to the inventory and assessment to replace the book.

Teacher Responsibilities

1. Maintain an accurate record of all textbooks issued to the classroom.
2. Assist students with proper care of textbooks and monitoring to insure that textbooks are always covered.
3. Assist principal with mid-year and end of year inventory.
4. Teacher's editions are always included in the inventory process.
5. If additional books are needed during the school year, submit a request to the principal.

Instructional Aide Guidelines

The primary duty of instructional aides (IA) is to enhance student learning by assisting the supervising teacher(s). The IA should participate in planning curriculum and instruction with the classroom teacher whenever possible. The planning should include the implementation of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and TEKS Resource curriculum. The IA should be familiar with the curriculum being taught in the classroom as well as with classroom management procedures. Communication between the IA and the classroom teacher is critical in order to maximize student performance.

IAs are on duty throughout the school day. They may accompany students to lunch and supervise them during the lunch period. IAs will remain in the classroom with the classroom teacher and the students unless the classroom teacher or principal requests otherwise. The IA should move about the room assisting individual students with assignments, working with small groups as needed, and helping monitor a student's understanding of material. The IA is expected to be actively involved in the instructional activities that the teacher has planned for the day.

Classroom Sign Out

Whenever a student leaves the classroom for whatever reason, the absence must be documented on a sign-out sheet. A sheet should be available in every classroom. Facility or school staff taking a student from class must record the following:

- Student Name
- Date
- Time in/ Time Out
- Reason/Destination
- Staff accompanying student

Sign-out sheets should be delivered to principals for review and data analysis according to campus schedule (not to exceed a reporting period). These are kept on file by the principal according to district guidelines for maintenance of attendance records.

Restraints

TEA collects data on student demographic and academic performance, personnel, financial, and organizational information each school year using PEIMS, the Public Education Information Management System. In order to be in accordance with PEIMS standards, UTCSS must submit data on restraints.

Restraints must be documented when they occur during the school hours if school personnel are involved in the restraint. The PEIMS Restraint Documentation Form must be completed and turned into the principal within 24 hours of the restraint. The guidelines for appropriate documentation will be provided by the campus principal.

Field Trips

Teachers may plan field trips for academic purposes. Advance approval is required from the campus principal. To allow time for transportation and food arrangements, a field trip form should be submitted in at least three weeks in advance.

Instructional Technology

Students should be actively monitored by school personnel at all times, including activities that require technology. Students and school personnel must comply with the UTCSS Acceptable Use Policy.

<http://security.utexas.edu/policies/aup.html>

If there is an equipment problem or a need for software installation, please inform your supervisor. Log in and complete the online technology request form called Service Now. <https://ut.service-now.com/utss/>

Movies/Video

All movies and videos, in whole or in part, must relate to a concept/TEKS being taught and must be approved by the campus principal. No "R" rated movies will be considered for student viewing. Movies rated "PG-13" will not be considered for viewing by students in grades K-7.

The title of the movie/video being excerpted must be included in the lesson plan. Regarding copyrighted movies, a Video Request form must be completed one week prior to the showing of any movie. Teachers must justify the educational connection and document the movie in lesson plans.

Candy/Food Reward Policy

The policy on giving students candy is mandated by the state. Food should be used minimally for reward purposes.

Policy applies to schools participating in Federal food programs. <http://www.squaremeals.org/>

Substitute Folder

Teachers should keep an emergency substitute folder which includes class times, location of all needed materials, class procedures, class helpers if appropriate and generic subject related work. Teachers shall provide their principal and classroom IA the location of the substitute folder at the beginning of the school year. The substitute folder should be updated throughout the year as needed to maintain student learning

during teacher absence. The Substitute Handbook should be given to all new substitutes no later than at the start of their first scheduled day.

Testing Schedule

A semester testing schedule will be provided to each teacher at the beginning of the school year. Due dates should be followed without exception. Other campus testing requirements and schedules will be provided to teachers in a timely manner by the campus administrator. The TEA website, as well as the district calendar, includes all statewide assessment dates.

When a student enrolls on the campus, it is each teacher's responsibility to perform any testing required by the district in order to obtain an accurate assessment of that student's academic achievement.

Classroom Management Plans

Classroom management refers to the procedures and routines that are used in each classroom to relate the expectations of the teacher and campus to the students in that class. Academic and behavioral expectations are part of classroom management. All teachers must create and submit plans to their principal prior to the beginning of the school year.

Plans with any student expectations, rewards, or consequences must comply with applicable facility policies, district policies, and any campus-wide rule statements. Procedures should be brief and clearly stated.

Classroom Appearance

Classrooms should be neat, clean, safe, orderly, and conducive to learning. Some students may have difficulty concentrating in a cluttered environment. Classrooms should reflect the importance of learning and the curriculum. Decorations and ornaments should be purposeful and add to the educational value.

Campus Faculty Meetings

Campus faculty meetings will be held regularly throughout the school year. The date and time will be determined at the start of the school year, but the principal may call a meeting at any time. Teachers are required to attend all faculty meetings unless excused by the principal. If a teacher is excused from the meeting, it is his/her responsibility to obtain the information discussed and seek any needed clarification.

Schedule of Classes

The campus schedule, including beginning and ending times for all classes, must be followed at all times unless a deviation is approved by the district office. Normal school days for staff are comprised of eight hours of work, plus time for lunch. Teacher start and end times will span 8 ½ hours.

Electronic Communication with Students

At no time, including non-school hours, will any UTCSS staff member communicate directly with a student using any personal devices or accounts, including but not limited to text messaging, instant messaging, email, blogs, chat rooms, video sharing websites, editorial comments, social network sites, landline phones, cell phones, and other web-based applications. All staff members shall keep personal telephone numbers and email addresses confidential. If a student engages in any improper communication with a school employee, staff must contact their direct supervisor immediately to report the incident.

Video Recording

At no time will any UTCSS staff member video record any students or staff members without the expressed written consent of their principal or immediate supervisor.

Student Conduct Complaint and Reporting – Bullying and Harassment

Upon knowledge of a suspected incident, the Campus Administrator files a report, conducts a thorough investigation, and completes a follow up determination report. All parents involved are promptly notified of the complaint and the pending investigation. All interviews concerning any student involvement should include the student, the parent and an additional staff member. The investigation must include the following

- Conducting interviews of all students involved
- Conducting interviews of witnesses
- Investigating the circumstances of the incident, including events or incidents that preceded the incident in question
- Documentation of all interviews on the complaint form

Regardless of the outcome of the initial investigation, the Campus Administrator continues to monitor the situation paying special attention to the student or students involved as well as the interaction with any incidents that may involve a staff member. The summary of the events and the findings are sent to the Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator keeps a record of any reported incidents. The Coordinator may assist in the investigation if needed and may be requested to offer a third party opinion for the determination of actual harassment. If the determination results show that some form of harassment occurred, the Campus Administrator is responsible for taking immediate and swift action to end the harassment, eliminate any hostile environment and its effects and prevent harassment from recurring. Any steps taken will not penalize the student who was harassed, intimidated and/or bullied. The actions involved may include but are not limited to the following

- Removing the student being harassed from the situation where the events occurred
- Removing the student accused from the situation where the events occurred
- Available counseling options for a student who is a victim of harassment intimidation and/or bullying
- Available counseling options for a student who engaged in conduct that was harassing, intimidating and /or bullying
- Consequences in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct

In the event that any person involved does not agree with the determination or follow up actions, they may appeal in writing to the Superintendent. Only written appeals will be reviewed and investigated by the Superintendent's Office.

Upon receipt of a written appeal concerning the determination and/or action steps taken to rectify a complaint, the Superintendent's office will complete the appropriate documentation, and will conduct its own investigation and interviews of all of the parties involved.

After the secondary investigation by the Office of the Superintendent and the determination that follows, the complaint is considered closed. All parties are notified in writing of the results of the investigation and the actions taken to address the situation. Further appeals or action requested by the parent or guardian shall be considered only in the event that further evidence can be shown to conclude that harassment may again have occurred.

Lice Notification

If a student is diagnosed with having Lice, a parent letter will be sent to each member of the class notifying them of the discovery. Names cannot be revealed only that the lice has been identified as present.

RTI Notification

At the middle of the term (3 week or 4.5 week), the content teacher will create a Progress Report using the RTI area of DMAC for students that have a grade below 75. The reports will be printed and given to the registrar to mail.

The Progress Report includes the Response To Intervention (RTI) measures taken to address the poor performance. The notification will include any additional intervention programs utilized to support and improve the poor performance.

Electronic Communication and Data Management

AVAILABILITY OF ACCESS

The Superintendent or designee shall implement, monitor, and evaluate electronic media resources for instruction and administrative purposes.

Access to the District's electronic communications system(s), hereafter referred to as ECS, including the Internet, shall be made available to students, employees, and other authorized users primarily for educational and administrative purposes and in accordance with administrative regulations.

LIMITED PERSONAL USE

Limited personal use of the system shall be permitted if the use:

1. Imposes no tangible cost on the District;
2. Does not unduly burden the District's computer or network resources;
3. Has no adverse effect on an employee's job performance or on a student's academic performance;
4. Is used on a limited basis; and
5. Employees and authorized users may not be paid or otherwise profit from the use of any district-provided information resource or from any output produced using it. Commercial activity may not be promoted using university information resources.

EMPLOYEE USE OF DISTRICT ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

Employees or authorized users may not remove equipment, such as desktops, laptops, and other electronic devices, from the assigned inventory location in school buildings, school offices, or classrooms unless authorization has been obtained.

For use away from work in conducting school-related business, a signed copy of an authorized Use of Equipment form shall be approved by the District instructional technology department and the employee's direct supervisor. The form must be on file with the employee's direct supervisor prior to the removal of the equipment from its assigned location. Equipment released to employees in such a manner may not be used for personal use and must be properly safeguarded and handled with reasonable care.

The Authorized Use of Equipment approval is for a specific piece of equipment with a unique inventory number. Review and adjustment of the equipment for offsite security may take several days.

VIOLATION OF LAW NOT PERMITTED

No user of the ECS may violate applicable state or federal laws, including copyright laws. Copying or using text, graphics, video and sound clips, and software may be a violation of applicable copyright laws. The user shall use care not to violate these copyright laws by use of copyrighted items. Any individual employed or contracted by the District shall determine whether use of material requires permission.

Users of the ECS may not publish or otherwise use personally identifiable educational records of students without permission of the student or the student's parents/guardians unless the user complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. Section 1232g.

The ECS shall not be used for material that is obscene or indecent, is patently offensive as measured by contemporary community standards, is sexually explicit or tends to degrade any race, religion, ethnic group, or gender.

COPYRIGHT

Copyrighted software or data may not be placed on any system connected to the District's system(s) without permission from the holder of the copyright. Only the owner(s) or individuals the owner(s) specifically authorize may allow use of copyrighted material for use on the system(s).

SYSTEM ACCESS

Access to the District's electronic communication system (ECS) will be governed as follows:

With the approval of the principal, or division/department supervisor or designee, users will be granted appropriate access to the District's ECS.

Any user of the District ECS identified as having violated District, campus, and/or division/department system acceptable use guidelines will be subject to disciplinary action consistent with District policies and regulations.

The campus principal will make the final decision regarding whether a student has violated the guidelines, subject of any right of appeal.

ACCEPTABLE USE

The Superintendent or designee shall develop and implement administrative regulations, guidelines, and user agreements, consistent with the purpose and mission of the District and with applicable laws and policies.

Access to the District's electronic communications system is a privilege, not a right. Noncompliance may result in suspension of access or termination of privileges and other disciplinary action consistent with District policies. Student access to the ECS is permitted unless the parent has returned the Denial of Internet Access/Electronic Publication form to the campus.

Violations of law may result in criminal prosecution as well as disciplinary action by the District.

SYSTEM COORDINATOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES –

Responsibilities for the system coordinator(s) (principal or division/department supervisor, or designee) will include but not be limited to the following:

1. To be responsible for disseminating and enforcing applicable District policies and acceptable use guidelines for the District's ECS.
2. To ensure that all users of the District's ECS abide by the District policies and administrative regulations regarding such use.

3. To ensure that all employees supervising students who use the District's ECS provide training emphasizing the appropriate uses of these resources.
4. Authorization to monitor or examine all ECS activities made available by UCS IT and deemed appropriate by the Superintendent or designee to ensure proper use of the ECS.

INDIVIDUAL USER RESPONSIBILITIES –

The following standards will apply to all users of the District's electronic information/communication system(s). Users who violate these standards may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with District policies and/or administrative regulations.

SYSTEM(S) CONDUCT

1. The ECS may not be used for illegal purposes, in support of illegal activities, or for any other activity prohibited by District policy. Examples would be use of the ECS for selling commercial products and/or services or for lobbying.
2. Users may not use another person's ID or password
3. Users will maintain electronic information in accordance with established guidelines.
4. Users may not upload or download programs to or from the District's system(s) without appropriate authorization.
5. Users may not bring unauthorized materials into the District's ECS.
6. Non-UCS equipment shall not be used on UCS networks or in conjunction with District resources.
7. If a user identifies or has knowledge of a security problem on the network or any UCS resource, the user must notify a system administrator.
8. The security problem should not be shown or demonstrated to other users.
9. If a user identifies or has knowledge of unsecured confidential data, the user must notify a system administrator. This includes, but is not limited to, unencrypted confidential information, unsecured transfer of confidential information, and unauthorized or inappropriate use of confidential information.
10. Exemplary behavior is expected on "virtual" field trips. When "visiting" locations on the Internet or using video conferencing or screen-sharing communication tools, users must conduct themselves as representatives of both their respective schools and the District.
11. Any District user's traffic that traverses another network may be subject to that network's acceptable user guidelines.

INTERNET SAFETY

The Superintendent or designee shall develop and implement an Internet safety plan to:

1. Control students' access to inappropriate materials, as well as to materials that are harmful to minors;
2. Ensure student safety and security when using electronic communications;
3. Prevent unauthorized access, including hacking and other unlawful activities; and
4. Restrict unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personally identifiable information regarding students.

FILTERING

The District ECS shall have an Internet filtering device or software that can block access to visual depictions that are obscene, pornographic, inappropriate for students, or harmful to minors, as defined by the federal Children’s Internet Protection Act and as determined by the Superintendent or designee. Normal settings on the filters will block access to any site not directly related to the curriculum and to instructional activities or other school purposes.

The Superintendent or designee shall enforce the user of such filtering devices. Upon approval from the Superintendent or designee, an administrator, supervisor, or other authorized person may adjust settings on the filtering device for bona fide research, other lawful purpose, or school district needs.

MONITORED USE

Electronic mail transmissions and other uses of the District’s ECS by students and employees are not private and may be monitored at any time by designated District staff to ensure appropriate use.

E-mail is an essential tool for communicating within and outside the University. It is important that e-mail be used in a manner that achieves its purpose without exposing the University Charter School to unnecessary technical, financial, or legal risks. The following practices are required:

Each faculty member, staff, or student using an e-mail address shall exercise prudent e-mail use in accordance with the policies, standards, and/or procedures related to Information Resources acceptable use and retention.

All e-mail is subject to logging and review.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Students shall retain all rights to work they create using the District’s ECS, but shall be deemed to give the District the right to use such work for any educationally related purpose.

The District, as employer, shall be the author of all works prepared or created by District employees while performing their job responsibilities for the District and using the District’s ECS. The District grants each District employee the right to use such works that he or she creates in his or her own activities as an educator or education administrator, even when the employee is no longer employed by the District.

VANDALISM PROHIBITED –

Any attempt to harm or destroy District equipment or materials, data, of another user of the District’s ECS, or any other agencies or other networks that are connected to the Internet is prohibited. Deliberate attempts to compromise, degrade, alter programs or settings, or disrupt system performance may be viewed as violations of District policies and administrative regulations, and possibly, as criminal activity under applicable state and federal laws. This includes, but is not limited to, the uploading or creating of computer viruses.

Vandalism as defined above will result in the cancellation of system use privileges and will require restitution for costs associated with system restoration, hardware, or software costs.

FORGERY PROHIBITED –

Forgery or attempted forgery of electronic mail messages is prohibited. Attempts to read, delete, copy, or modify the electronic mail of other system users or deliberate interference with the ability of other system users to send/receive electronic mail is prohibited.

VIOLATION OF STANDARDS –

Users who violate these standards may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with District policy and/or legal actions.

AUTHORIZATION FOR ECS ACCESS –

The District and/or systems coordinator may limit, suspend, revoke, or restore a system user's access to the District's ECS in accordance with District policy and/or administrative regulations regarding acceptable use.

USER LIABILITY –

All communication systems resources are the property of UT-UCS. Users may be held responsible for any damage to resources caused by the user.

DISCLAIMER OF LIABILITY

The District shall not be liable for the users' inappropriate use of the electronic communication resources, violations of copyright restrictions or other laws, users' mistakes or negligence, or costs incurred by users. The District shall not be responsible for ensuring the accuracy, age appropriateness, or usability of any information found on the Internet.

The District's ECS is provided on an "as is, as available" basis. The District does not make any warranties, whether express or implied with respect to any services provided by the system(s) and any information or software contained therein. The District does not warrant that the functions or services performed by, or that the system user's requirements, or that the system will be uninterrupted or error-free, or that defects will be corrected.

Opinions, advice, services, and all other information expressed by users of the District ECS, information providers, service providers, or other third-party individuals in the system are those of the providers and not the District.

The District will cooperate fully with local, state, or federal officials in any investigation concerning or relating to misuse of the District ECS.

University of Texas-University Charter School System

Acknowledgement Form

By signing this document, I am indicating that I have read and understand the contents of the University of Texas-University Charter School System Employee Information Guide and that I will be held accountable for information contained in the information Guide.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

**University of Texas Elementary School
Management Board Resolution**

**Endorsing the approval of a resolution regarding the Health and Safety of the
Students at UT Elementary School**

**A Regular Meeting Held on August 24, 2021, in Accordance with the Texas
Open Meetings Act**

Whereas, the Delta variant of COVID-19 is a novel virus due to increased transmission, which has led to escalations in cases, including those among unvaccinated children; and

Whereas, on August 5, 2021, Austin Public Health raised the Austin-Travis County area's risk-based guidance for COVID-19 to Stage 5, recommending the highest level of safety measures to save lives and preserve finite medical resources; and

Whereas, mask mandates have been ordered in school districts in major metropolitan cities across Texas, including the Austin Independent School District; and

Whereas, the Texas Medical Association, the Texas Pediatric Society, the Texas Public Health Coalition, and Austin Public Health all call for masking everyone in schools grades K-12 because mask-wearing is a critical defense against COVID-19; and

Whereas, since all students at UTES are under the age of 12 and, therefore, not eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, these students are at greater risk of COVID-19 exposure; and

Whereas, many parents of UTES students have expressed concern about the lack of a mask mandate at UTES; and

Whereas, the Management Board of UTES believes student and staff safety is the most important responsibility of a school; and

Whereas, the Management Board of UTES believes the UTES Superintendent is in the best position to determine safety policies for the school;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by The Management Board of The University of Texas Elementary School That:

1. The President of UT convey the safety concerns outlined in this resolution of the UTES community, including the UTES Management Board, administration, staff, and parents, to the Chancellor of The University of Texas System and The University of Texas Board of Regents;
2. The President of UT, Chancellor of the University of Texas System, and The University of Texas Board of Regents advocate to the Governor's Office and the Texas Education Agency that public K-12 schools, particularly schools like UTES

with a population of students who are ineligible for the COVID-19 vaccine, have the flexibility to allow mask-mandates in order to protect the safety of the school populace if deemed necessary by the school administration or governing board for needed (and perhaps limited) period of times;

- 3. The President of The University of Texas at Austin (UT) allow the Superintendent of The University of Texas Elementary School (UTES) to mandate mask-wearing of students, staff, and visitors for the period(s) necessary to protect the safety of the UTES community during the 2021-22 school year;

Management Board Members [Signature denotes approval of the above-stated resolution.]

_____	_____
Sherry Field, Chair	Date
_____	_____
Kathy Armenta, Vice Chair	Date
_____	_____
Terrance Green	Date
_____	_____
Mark Williams	Date
_____	_____
Sharon Vaughn	Date
_____	_____
Felipe Estrada	Date
_____	_____
Cynthia Franklin	Date
_____	_____
Scott Gray	Date
_____	_____
James Kallison	Date
_____	_____
Bill Lasher	Date
_____	_____
Shasta Buchanan	Date

Alex Eusebi

Date

J.E. Johnson

Date

Victor Saenz

Date

Starla Simmons

Date

Division of Diversity and Community Engagement
University of Texas Elementary School
FY 21-22
Proposed Budget

	2020-2021 Budget	2021-2022 Budget	District %	State %	Variance to Previous Budget
5700 Local and intermediate sources	694,067	561,071	15%	49%	(132,996)
5800 State program revenues	2,816,657	2,848,450	74%	39%	31,793
5900 Federal	176,337	451,881	12%	12%	275,544
Total Revenues	\$ 3,687,061	\$ 3,861,402	100%	100%	\$ 174,341
0011 Instruction	2,139,395	2,270,268	58.8%	56.1%	130,873
0012 Instructional resources & media services	89,519	24,913	0.6%	1.1%	(64,606)
0013 Curriculum/instructional staff development	11,500	49,676	1.3%	2.3%	38,176
0023 School leadership	264,389	289,272	7.5%	5.9%	24,883
0031 Guidance, counseling, evaluation services	89,005	300	0.0%	3.8%	(88,705)
0033 Health services	40,987	21,351	0.6%	1.0%	(19,636)
0034 Student transportation	5,000	10,000	0.3%	3.1%	5,000
0035 Food services	221,281	230,242	6.0%	5.4%	8,961
0041 General administration	317,406	381,713	9.9%	3.3%	64,307
0051 Plant maintenance and operations	299,068	324,068	8.4%	9.7%	25,000
0052 Security and Monitoring Services	19,600	5,400	0.1%	1.04%	(14,200)
0053 Data Processing Services	22,000	24,264	0.6%	1.8%	2,264
0061 Community Services	-	2,262	0.1%	0.5%	2,262
0081 Development	212,378	227,672	5.9%	0.0%	15,294
Total Expenditures	\$ 3,731,528	\$ 3,861,402	100.0%		129,874
Net Budget Surplus (Deficit)	\$ (44,467)	\$ (0)			
Beginning Fund Balance	\$ 1,096,780	\$ 1,096,780			
Ending Fund Balance	\$ 1,052,313	\$ 1,096,780			

Revenue

5700 - UT support for development expired \$150,000. Updated to include planned pledge payments \$26,240

5800 - state revenue projections are based on SY 2021 first semester averages. 262.4 ADA and 16.145 special education full time equivalents. Included funding for Additional Days School Year. UTES will offer 17 additional instructional days for partial day funding.

5900 - Added ESSER funding \$238,544 and increased revenue projections for National School Lunch Program by \$37,000

Expenses

The University increased the fringe rate from 30.1% of salaries to 30.9%.

A 2% merit increase is budgeted.

Function 11: Added extended learning opportunities, Early Childhood Interventionist and 1:1 special education instructional aide.

Function 12: Librarian position will be supported by UT Charter School

Function 13: Added Teacher Professional Development funded by ESSER

Function 23: Moved part time Principal to Full time Associate Principal

Function 31: Services in this function will be supported by UT Charter School

Function 33: Part time nurse will be supported by UT Charter School

Function 34: \$10,000 available to cover any field trips and August 2022 expenses

Function 41: Added indirect costs on federal funds \$3,600. Updated the 5% UT Administrative rate on general funds

Function 51: Increased budget to cover facility maintenance and air conditioning parts/units

Function 52: Added security cameras to UTES in the summer of 2020. Annual maintenance will be \$5,400 for 15 cameras

Function 53: Updated cost of Student Information System

Function 61: Added parent training and related expenses (materials and childcare)

Function 81: Adjusted Development and Communication Manager to .75 UTES and .25 UTUCS.

**University of Texas Elementary School
Management Board Resolution**

**Endorsing the approval of a resolution to submit an “other” waiver to provide
Remote General Education Homebound Services**

**A Regular Meeting Held on August 24, 2021, in Accordance with the Texas
Open Meetings Act**

Whereas, the University of Texas Elementary School is approving an ‘other’ waiver to provide Remote General Education Homebound Services to qualifying students during the 2021-2022 school year;

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Management Board of the University of Texas Elementary School endorses the approval of an “other” waiver to provide Remote General Education Homebound Services.

Management Board Members [Signature denotes approval of the above-stated resolution.]

Sherry Field, Chair _____
Date

Kathy Armenta, Vice Chair _____
Date

Terrance Green _____
Date

Mark Williams _____
Date

Sharon Vaughn _____
Date

Felipe Estrada _____
Date

Cynthia Franklin _____
Date

Scott Gray _____
Date

James Kallison _____
Date

Bill Lasher

Date

Shasta Buchanan

Date

Alex Eusebi

Date

J.E. Johnson

Date

Victor Saenz

Date

Starla Simmons

Date

The Effect of Reciprocal Peer Assisted Learning on Music Performance Outcomes of
Fourth Grade Orchestra Students: An Exploratory Investigation

by David J. Saccardi & Laurie P. Scott

Center for Music Learning

The University of Texas at Austin

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of two different reciprocal, asymmetrical peer-assisted learning (PAL) configurations on music performance achievement in the elementary orchestra classroom. Using a quasi-experimental between-subjects design, students from two fourth-grade orchestra classes at the same elementary school ($N = 36$) were randomly assigned to one of three treatment conditions: (1) a pull out group participating in PAL to reinforce material from orchestra class; (2) an identical group, receiving a lesson on effective interaction strategies prior to beginning PAL instruction; (3) and a control group of students who remained in their orchestra class to receive traditional classroom instruction. Students worked in pairs over the course of six weeks and took turns as tutor and as tutee. Overall, the PAL interactions were beneficial and results indicated a significant difference between control and experimental groups, though there were no significant differences between the modeling group and either the control group or the PAL-only group. Effects on student performance outcomes and social-emotional growth are discussed and implications for follow-up study are offered.

Keywords: peer-assisted learning, reciprocal learning, elementary instrumental music, orchestra, social-emotional learning

Method

Since this was a pilot study with only six weeks to be completed, I wanted to test not only the efficacy of peer groups, but to see if an additional component that included modeling of effective peer interaction strategies prior to students engaging in PAL resulted in significant changes in performance quality. This study involved pulling students from their regularly scheduled orchestra class to engage in reciprocal PAL. I provided the training for students in place of their classroom teacher, who was out on maternity leave with a substitute providing regular classroom instruction. I received approval from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Texas at Austin and the Management Board at the University of Texas Elementary School to conduct this study (Appendix A). Any names mentioned have been changed to maintain student confidentiality.

Participants in this study included the substitute classroom orchestra teacher and two separate classes of fourth grade students at the University of Texas Elementary School ($N = 36$). All students at this school receive class violin instruction beginning in the second grade using a curriculum based on Suzuki methodology (Suzuki, 1969). This includes rote instrumental instruction, aural skills instruction via singing and listening to course material, and group instruction, including small group and peer to peer interactions. All students had been playing for a minimum of two years prior to commencement of the study with some students receiving supplemental instruction

outside of class either in the form of private lessons and/or extra-curricular programs in the community.

I received student demographic information from the principal at UT Elementary, including free/reduced lunch status, an accepted marker of students who come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and the results of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) test, a standardized reading exam taken in place of the traditional State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STARR) testing due to disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic.

I used a between-subjects research design for this experiment. In consultation with the regular classroom orchestra teacher prior to their maternity leave, students were grouped into asymmetrical dyads based on previous demonstrated performing ability. I then randomly assigned students ($n = 12$; 3 dyads per treatment per class) to one of three treatment groups: (1) a pull out group participating in PAL to reinforce material from orchestra class; (2) an identical group, receiving a lesson prior to beginning PAL instruction where I modeled effective interaction strategies; and (3) a control group of students who remained in their orchestra class receiving traditional classroom instruction from their teacher.

Research has demonstrated that PAL is a more effective teaching strategy when students are first trained in effective peer interaction strategies prior to engaging in PAL (Fantuzzo & Ginsburg-Block, 1988; Rohrbeck et al., 2003). Prior to implementing the six-week PAL treatment period, all orchestra students, regardless of treatment group, participated in two training sessions demonstrating effective peer interaction skills. The first training session focused on reinforcing peer interaction skills the students used

regularly as a part of orchestra class learning activities. Students participated in a question and answer session about what they perceived working with a partner would look like and answered a questionnaire modeled after one used by Johnson (2015; Appendix B) that assessed the students' understanding of different teaching strategies and addressed topics related to PAL including setting daily goals with a partner and how to ask leading questions.

The second training session focused on partner observations of various left- and right-hand skills on the instrument. Students were paired with a random partner (different from their partners for the actual treatment period) and given a clipboard with a checklist, which checkpoints for technical aspects of playing the violin such as posture, left-hand placement, and bow hold (Appendix C).

Results of research analyzing the gaze patterns of expert teachers has determined that they tend to focus on one aspect of a student's playing per performance trial (Hicken, 2019; Markum, 2016). Though it is impossible to replicate the years of experience an expert educator possesses that draws them to a singular aspect of a student's playing, it seemed useful for training purposes to instruct student tutors to replicate the behaviors of experts by instructing them to focus their attention on one aspect of their partner's playing. This helped students from being overwhelmed trying to parse out disparate aspects of a tutee's performance. Students were instructed to focus on one aspect of their partner's performance at a time, and had opportunities to practice helping their partner set up their instrument and shape their bow hold. For a full write-up of the training protocol, see Appendix D.

Following the treatment periods, the same students in each treatment group were pulled from class during every class meeting for six weeks. Each orchestra class met every 4 days as determined by the school schedule. Students were preparing a performance of *French Folk Song*, a traditional instructional piece for beginning string students. All tutoring sessions took place in the cafeteria at UT Elementary and were monitored by the researcher. This was a deviation from recommendations in the PAL literature, which suggests that the classroom teacher implement the training and interventions, not the researcher (McMaster et al., 2006; Rhorbeck et al., 2003). This decision was made due to the absence of the regular classroom teacher and to determine the efficacy of continued training verses no additional training among PAL groups when compared with a control group receiving traditional classroom instruction. It was also made for practical and legal reasons, as a certified teacher needed to remain with the students in the control group.

Following the six-week treatment period, I recorded all participants performing the melody from *French Folk Song* using an Apple iPad mounted on a tripod for consistent video quality. Each student performance was evaluated using a rubric (Appendix E) and received a score out of 30. The rubric itself was designed based on previously validated string performance rubrics (Wrigley & Emmerson, 2013; Zdinsky & Barnes, 2002). Two independent observers, experienced as string music educators, viewed and scored eight student performances to determine inter-observer reliability, which was reported at ___ and ___ respectfully.

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine the effect of reciprocal peer assisted learning on the music performance outcomes of fourth grade orchestra students ($N = 36$). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the assigned peer teaching intervention groups students participated in: control group ($n = 12$), peer teaching only group ($n = 12$), or peer teaching with modeling group ($n = 12$). Prior to conducting the formal ANOVA procedures, I administered Levene's Test to reveal if there were any violations of the normality assumption, of which none were revealed, $F(2, 33) = 2.22, p > 0.05$.

The results of the ANOVA are shown in Table 1. The effect of reciprocal peer teaching on music performance results was significant, $F(2, 33) = 3.53, p = 0.041, \eta_p^2 = 0.18$. The type of peer teaching intervention accounted for approximately 18% of the variance in the student scores on the music performance assessment, indicating practical significance with the overall strength of the relationship being strong, as the $\eta_p^2 = 0.18$ is greater than the accepted 0.14 cutoff (Cohen, 1977). Though initially intended to be part of the analysis, it was decided not to use the DIBELS scores, as the performance data provided ample evidence for the efficacy of the treatment and material for discussion.

Table 1

Analysis of Variance for Reciprocal Peer Teaching Groups

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Partial η_p^2	p
Group	384.22	2	192.11	3.53	0.18	0.041
Error	1793.67	33	54.35			
Total	15098.00					

Comparisons of means using Tukey's HSD post-hoc test determined the differences between treatment groups. Students in the peer teaching only group ($M = 23.00$, $SD = 5.43$) scored significantly higher on the final performance assessment than students in the control group ($M = 15.00$, $SD = 8.99$). There were no significant differences on the performance assessment between either the peer teaching only or control groups and the students in the modeling plus peer teaching group ($M = 18.83$, $SD = 7.27$).

Discussion

Performance and Social-Emotional Outcomes

Results pertaining to performance outcomes indicated that overall, students made significant gains and improved their performance abilities through participation in the PAL groupings. Further examination of the performance scores reveals a large range in average performing ability for each group. Despite this disparity, students in the PAL groups who might have otherwise been unable to perform *French Folk Song* without the aid of their partner, showed improvement, with most students classified as "low ability" able to execute a complete performance of the piece. This stands in contrast to the majority of students in the control group who were either not able to complete a full performance of *French Folk Song* or when asked, refused to play ($n = 8$).

This last point revealed the most salient difference between the PAL groups and the control group. Despite the mixed statistical results, nearly all students in both experimental groups were able to complete a full performance and demonstrated deeper evidence of an aural concept of the piece, with only two students in the experimental

groups unable to complete their perceived performances. Students in the experimental groups also demonstrated a more convincing degree of musical fluency than the majority of the control group as evaluated on the performance rubric. Musical fluency was determined by how successfully students demonstrated evidence of an aural concept of the piece and performed with a convincing degree of musical fluency. As a result of the bond students had forged with their partner over the six-week treatment period, partners would often encourage one another during the final performances; a facet missing in the more individualized nature of the control group, where students would capitulate after one small mistake, claim they did not know the piece, or outright refuse to play.

While not measured statistically, there was a marked shift in the social-emotional state of many of the students in the experimental groups as a result of the increased and intentional exposure to the peer tutoring experience, particularly for those previously classified as “low ability”. Johnson and Johnson (1991), whose collective work focuses primarily on the importance and efficacy of collaborative learning, write of numerous social-emotional gains experienced by students who engage in cooperative learning. They describe child and adolescent psychological development as a progressive loss of egocentrism and an increase in the ability to take in more complex and worldly perspectives; students become more empathetic as they mature. Through extended research and observation of cooperative learning, Johnson and Johnson have concluded that by participating in PAL, students further this psychological development by making positive gains in intrinsic motivation for learning, social support, emotional maturity, social adjustment, stronger self-efficacy, and a more optimistic view of people and their place in the world.

In a particularly striking example at the onset of the treatment period, Rachel, a student in the modeling group, frequently expressed her desire to be a “loner” and how she did not believe in herself generally or her ability to specifically succeed musically, exhibiting behaviors associated with low self-efficacy and verbally expressing a pessimistic outlook on her own education. Her playing ability reflected this lack of confidence. Over the six-weeks of treatment, however, coupled with verbalizations of empathy and encouragement from her partner, Rachel began to show stronger performance ability. Her final performance, though imperfect, represented a marked contrast to her approach to performance and general attitude noticed at the beginning of the experiment. With the help and encouragement of her partner, Rachel was able to achieve her first complete solo performance of *French Folk Song*. Relating the experience of this student to theories of socioconstructivism, when individuals enter a social learning situation, they take away from it not only knowledge about the topic at hand but knowledge about how to manage and interact in such situations (Salomon & Perkins, 1997; Vygotsky, 1935/1978), often leading to unintended gains beyond what an experimenter is trying to measure.

PAL Groupings

Given that asymmetrical PAL groupings have proven beneficial across a wide variety of contexts and outcomes (e.g. Johnson, 2017; Topping, 2005), it is not surprising that the findings of this study confirm gains in music performance ability. Previous studies have demonstrated the efficacy of PAL within music education (Alexander & Darrow, 1983; Darrow et al., 2005; Goodrich, 2021; Johnson, 2017; MacLeod et al., 2020), however this

is the first documented study confirming the efficacy of reciprocal PAL using elementary orchestra students as the subjects and the first study within music education to solely focus on performance outcomes as the dependent variable, as opposed to music skills such as rhythm or sight reading.

Despite the overall significance of the performance results, a further look at the data reveal more mixed results. There was no significant difference between the PAL plus modeling group and the control group or the PAL plus modeling group and the PAL-only group. Why was there a significant difference between the PAL-only group and the control group, but not the group that received supplemental training in effective PAL strategies? Rohrbeck et al. (2003) found that PAL interventions were the most effective and had higher effect sizes when students were provided more autonomy in their interactions, specifically in monitoring partner performance and evaluating goal attainment. It is possible that by providing additional modeling of effective PAL interaction strategies I was complicit in prompting autonomy-thwarting behavior, leading students to feel less autonomous and competent in their actions (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Patall et al., 2018). Put another way, in trying to immediately recreate the mini lessons in their own interactions, the students were robbed of the opportunity to allow their interactions to unfold organically.

Another explanation for the mixed results could lie in the structure and setting of the student interactions. Previous research suggests that PAL interactions are the most effective when students are trained and monitored by their classroom teacher and the procedures take place in the students' classroom, as opposed to an alternative space in the school (Darrow et al., 2005; Duran et al., 2020; Fantuzzo & Ginsburg-Block, 1988;

Goodrich et al., 2018; Johnson, 2017; Madsen et al., 1988; McMaster et al., 2006; Rohrbeck et al., 2003; Topping, 2005). Due to circumstances driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, I could not administer these conditions in a safe way that maintained Texas Education Agency (TEA) mandated social distancing guidelines. As such, the researcher rather than the classroom teacher administered the treatment conditions, with treatment taking place in the school cafeteria as opposed to the orchestra classroom. Because these treatment conditions were not germane to typical classroom instruction, the novel environment and the presence of the researcher may have distracted students. This is a question of environmental validity which needs to be addressed in subsequent research.

Implications for Teaching

The results of this study offer some important and unique insight for teachers wishing to implement PAL in their classrooms. The most salient finding is the continued demonstration of the efficacy of PAL in an elementary instrumental music context, adding to the body of findings in elementary general music (Darrow et al., 2005; Jellison et al., 1984, 2015, 2017), middle school instrumental music (Alexander & Dorow, 1984; Johnson, 2017), and university music education (Bergee & Cecconi-Roberts, 2002; Furby, 2016; Goodrich et al., 2018). Further, the findings of this study demonstrate the importance not only of effective PAL training for students prior to implementation (Fantuzzo & Ginsburg-Block, 1988; Fuchs et al., 1997), but to create an autonomy-supporting environment for students to thrive within their PAL groupings (Deci & Ryan, 2017; Patall et al., 2018), as well as encouraging teachers in elementary instrumental

settings to make PAL an integral part of their overall curriculum and classroom pedagogy.

Elementary instrumental music teachers wishing to implement PAL in their classes can also be assured that this intervention works under varying class schedules and sizes. Because of a COVID-19 influenced bell schedule designed to minimize student movement around the school, students in this study only met for orchestra every four days for 90-minute class periods, resulting in class meetings only once a week for the majority of the semester. Despite this restriction, students still showed significant gains on music performance examinations, and findings from previous research have demonstrated that increased time with PAL groups tends to yield significant findings with higher effect sizes (McMaster et al., 2006; Rohrbeck et al., 2003; Topping, 2005).

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

Several limitations prevented this study from potentially realizing its full efficacy, beginning with those imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. While many fourth grade students had returned to school for in-person learning, there were still members of the class ($n = 3$) who were participating in online-only learning and were not able to participate in the study. Further, students who were in-person struggled to maintain masking and social distancing requirements, and the forced sterility of their interactions may have prevented several students from interacting with their partners in a way that they otherwise would have were there not said requirements. Additionally, despite the fact that many students had returned to school for in-person learning by the time the study commenced, a majority of students had been participating in online distance

learning for over a year. As a result, the disparity in ability levels that tends to be present in any heterogeneous classroom was magnified as a consequence of many students having not played their instruments during an entire calendar year in which they otherwise would have been learning as a group and making progress in their performing abilities. This fact made the ability gap between the “high ability” and “low ability” students wider, and in some cases, made it difficult to create enough asymmetrical pairs, as so many students had fallen behind in their playing abilities. At the time of this writing, the pandemic seems to be abating in America and future research will hopefully not be subject to these limitations, though the repercussions of missing over a year of in-person learning will assuredly be felt in the intervening academic years.

Additional limitations to this study include the classroom environment and elements of the study design. The students’ regular classroom teacher was out on maternity leave for the duration of the study, though this individual was able to help set up the study and the PAL groups prior to their departure. Regardless, the fact that a substitute teacher was providing the regular classroom instruction likely had an effect on students’ overall music performance efficacy, particularly on those in the control group (Glatfelter, 2006). Further, the structure of the study had students being pulled out of their already disrupted regular classroom environment to participate in their PAL groups in a novel environment. Follow-ups to this study should be conducted between classes and take place in the orchestra classroom, being led by the classroom teacher instead of the researcher.

Despite these limitations, there was still an overall significant result with a large effect size, demonstrating the efficacy of reciprocal PAL as an instructional strategy in

the elementary orchestra classroom. Future research no longer needs to determine whether or not reciprocal PAL is an effective strategy in the elementary orchestra class, inviting opportunities to explore the efficacy of further elements demonstrated in the PAL research literature, such as symmetrical versus asymmetrical pairings (Johnson, 2017), parental involvement (Fantuzzo & Ginsburg-Block, 1988), or cross-age versus same-age peer tutoring (Goodrich, 2018). Exploring these elements will further validate PAL as an effective instructional strategy and offer continuing guidance to music educators regarding how best to implement PAL in their classroom.

Appendix A – Notice of Institutional Review Board and
UTES Management Board Approval