The article compares two schools that have adapted the Reggio Emilia approach to music in early childhood education. The researcher and writer, Vanessa L. Bond (2014), immersed herself in both atmospheres for two weeks while she collected data from observations and interviews. One of the schools is urban and the other suburban, which creates an initial difference in the surrounding communities, how the schools are structured, and the varying achievement levels of the students. Teachers at the urban John Dewey Center in Illinois use a more directive teaching method with their students, while teachers at the suburban Mountain Top School in New England cater to the students at a higher level by following the children’s interests (Bond 2014).

From the reading, I learned the ways in which the Reggio Emilia approach to learning about music can be applied differently in two school settings and “sociocultural contexts” (2014). The teachers organized their classrooms differently and, in turn, their students responded in certain ways to the presentation of the material. On the other hand, there are many ways in which the students had similar learning experiences because they were the ones who commenced their own learning through experimentation with sounds and vocals. The students were the center of the class when it came to music lessons, even though there were differences in the types of music that they chose to reference (2014). Students had autonomy when it came to choosing the songs that were not the ones they had to memorize. Students at John Dewey Center routinely paired themselves off to dance when they heard Latin music, which exemplified modeling of their home environment since about 95 percent of the students are of the origin (2014). Children
from both schools expressed curiosity about similarities and differences in music. Teachers can enhance these discussions by scaffolding to help their understanding (2014).

The Mountain Top School especially related to my preschool because I attended a suburban, small, private school from pre-kindergarten to second grade. In music class we had a variety of small instruments. The music room was in a different classroom entirely, which is similar to what teachers expressed in the John Dewey Center. Too many instruments could become a significant distraction in the main classroom environment because children may use them excessively during free time and during class. Inappropriate usage could attribute to children’s lower attention spans. My preschool was similar to Mountain Top School because “There was no rush to move forward or required amount of time for particular activities” other than memorizing the Pledge of Allegiance, “America, the Beautiful” and songs for musical performances (2014). The classes that were not focused on learning songs allowed us to experiment with different instruments and sounds.

The article relates to what we are currently learning in subtle ways since not every lesson in the classroom is about music. The ways teachers control or let the students explore for themselves are important in the commonalities and differences between the two schools. I have learned how sociocultural factors impact the school environments, and think that the students’ backgrounds affect how they view the classroom and how the teacher views their schooling. I initially learned about this effect in the Social Foundation of Education class my first year. However, can school funding be the only impact? Bond elaborated that lack of music usage might be less about school funding and more about teachers being “unsure how to incorporate these materials into the classroom” (2014). This was intriguing because the teacher’s confidence and enthusiasm about music contributes to how much the students learn (2014). With that said,
teachers at Mountain Top School had more leeway in their lesson plans and goals because the independent funding gave them freedom. They allowed for open-ended and extensive discussions about music. How can funding differentials and surrounding area have less of an impact on the students’ learning? All in all, I believe this is a better method to teaching in preschools since the teacher has the flexibility to make a lesson out of one student’s observation at recess or in the classroom, but a teacher can also succeed in a more constrained environment.

Teachers are known to be creative and I believe that I try to meet that criteria. My creativity gives me more confidence than I had before and will hopefully benefit me in the future. Although the article does not explicitly explain the Reggio Emilia approach of teaching, I have a grasp on it that helps me comprehend some positives and negatives. I would like to know what each argument, for and against, outlines and possibly more statistics that back up the sides. Teachers need to have experience with how to apply the Italian Reggio Emilia approach to the United States and incorporate our educational values. How could this be possible? In what ways could teachers have access to better training to follow this teaching approach? When do teachers use a more directive approach, and how does that impact the Reggio Emilia approach to learning?

References