

Pilot Study: A Survey of Middle and High School Choral, Band, and Orchestra Directors Regarding Professional Development of Musicianship Skills for Music Educators

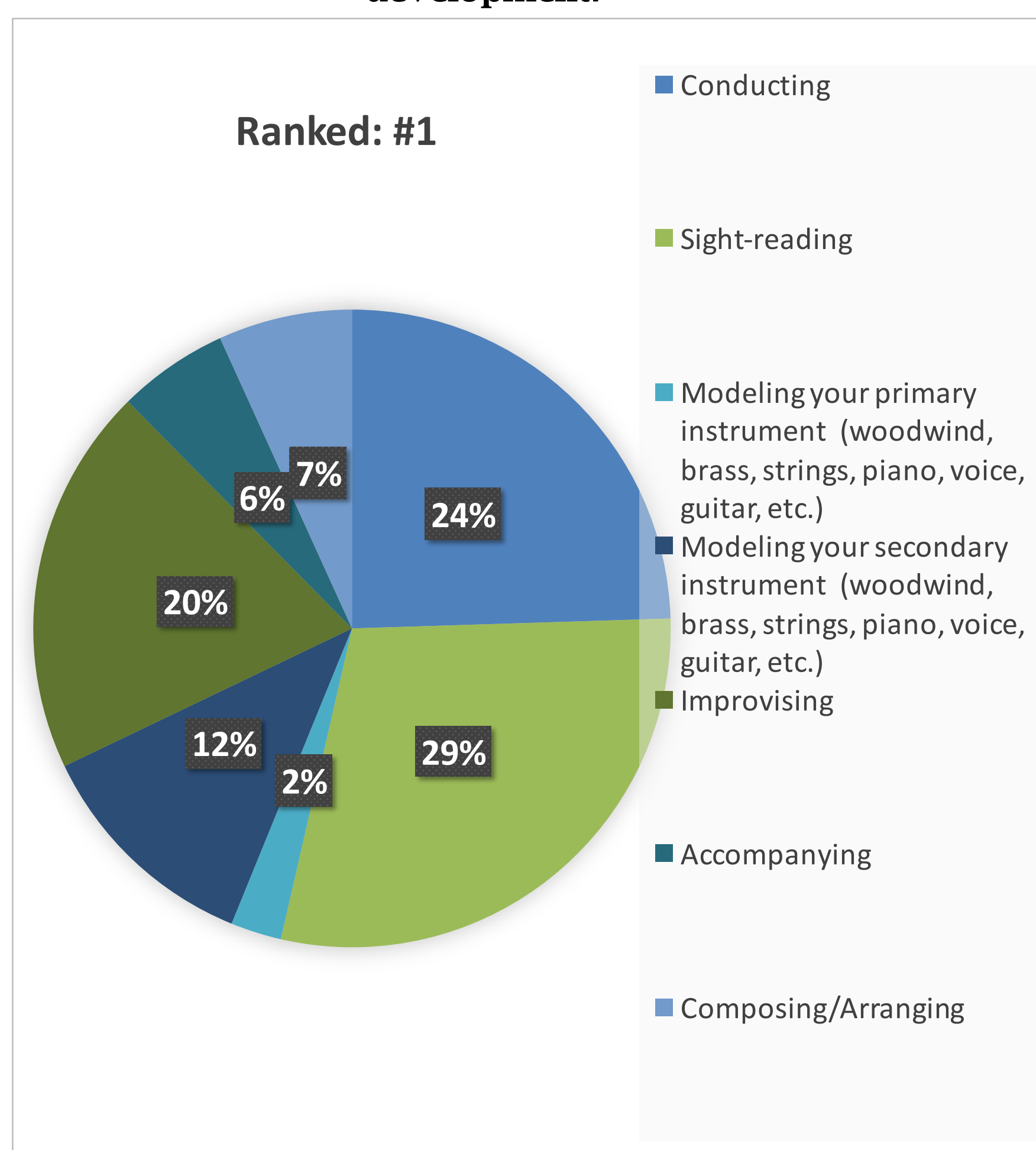
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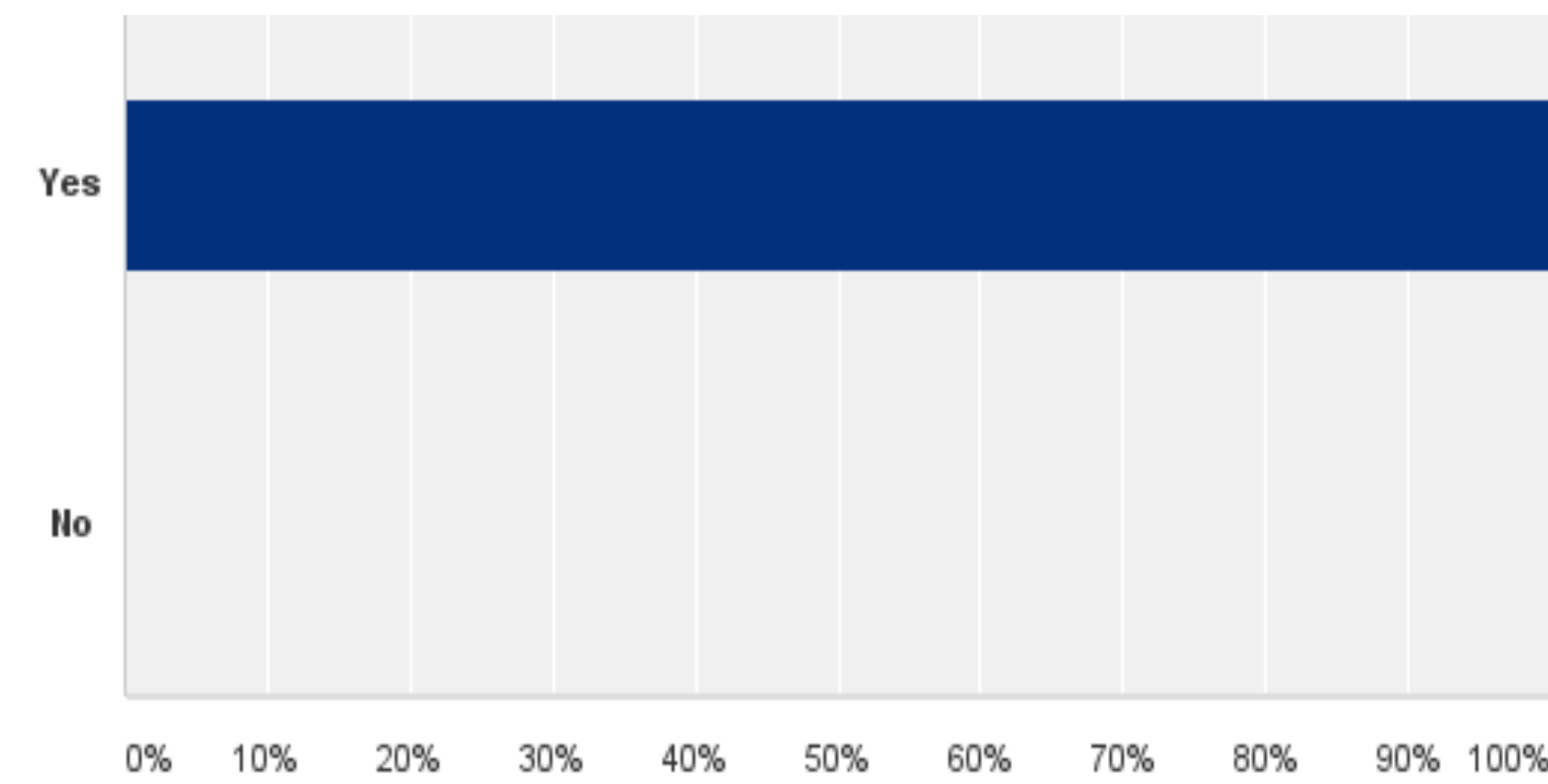
PURPOSE

Professional development is a key component of an educator's journey in continuing to strengthen their teaching. For music educators, maintaining personal musicianship skills is vital for excellent instruction, yet there appears to be little professional development in maintaining those skills. The purpose of this research was to discover what types of professional development would benefit secondary music educator's musicianship skills and by whom and how often this type of professional development should be offered. A brief online survey was sent out to middle and high school music educators who are members of either the Middle Tennessee Vocal Association or the Middle Tennessee School Band and Orchestra Association. The survey consisted of categorical ratings, ranking questions, multiple choice questions, and open-ended questions. The data are reported through frequencies and percentages. The results indicated different types of professional development in relation to the specific needs of secondary music educators. 100 percent of the educators expressed the belief that this type of professional development benefited their teaching. However, scheduling conflicts were the highest deterrents of the teacher's ability to attend this professional development. In addition, cost and location of the professional development also provided difficulties. Conducting, sight-reading, and improvising were ranked as the top skills sought out for professional development sessions. Through this pilot study, it may be concluded that music educators feel the need for a focus of personal musicianship skills through professional development. However, their perceptions of these opportunities are not offered often enough to meet their specific secondary music educator needs. In the future, it may be beneficial to study a larger sample of secondary music educators to corroborate the findings of this study.

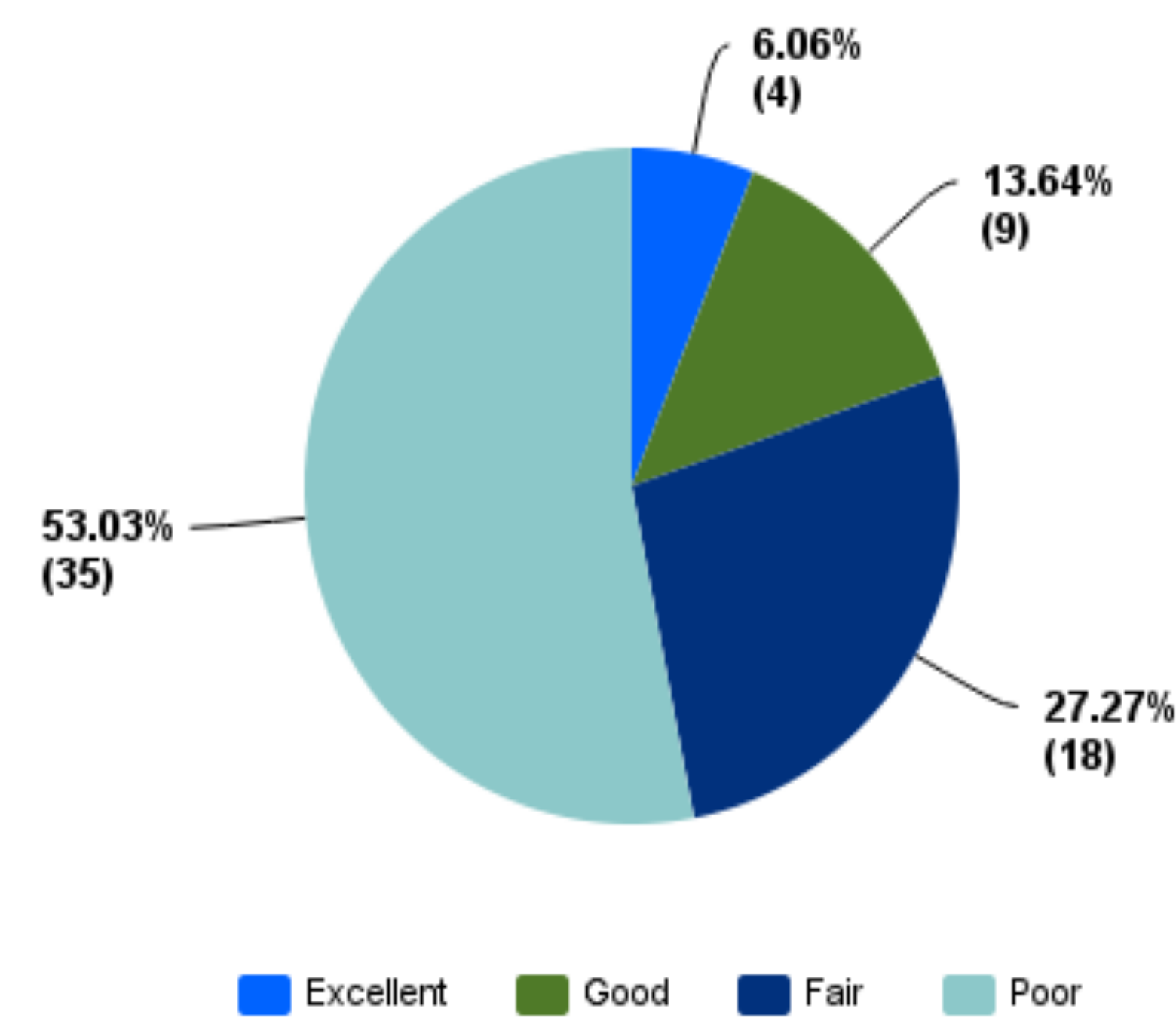
Rank the top three personal musicianship skills you would most like to see offered as professional development:



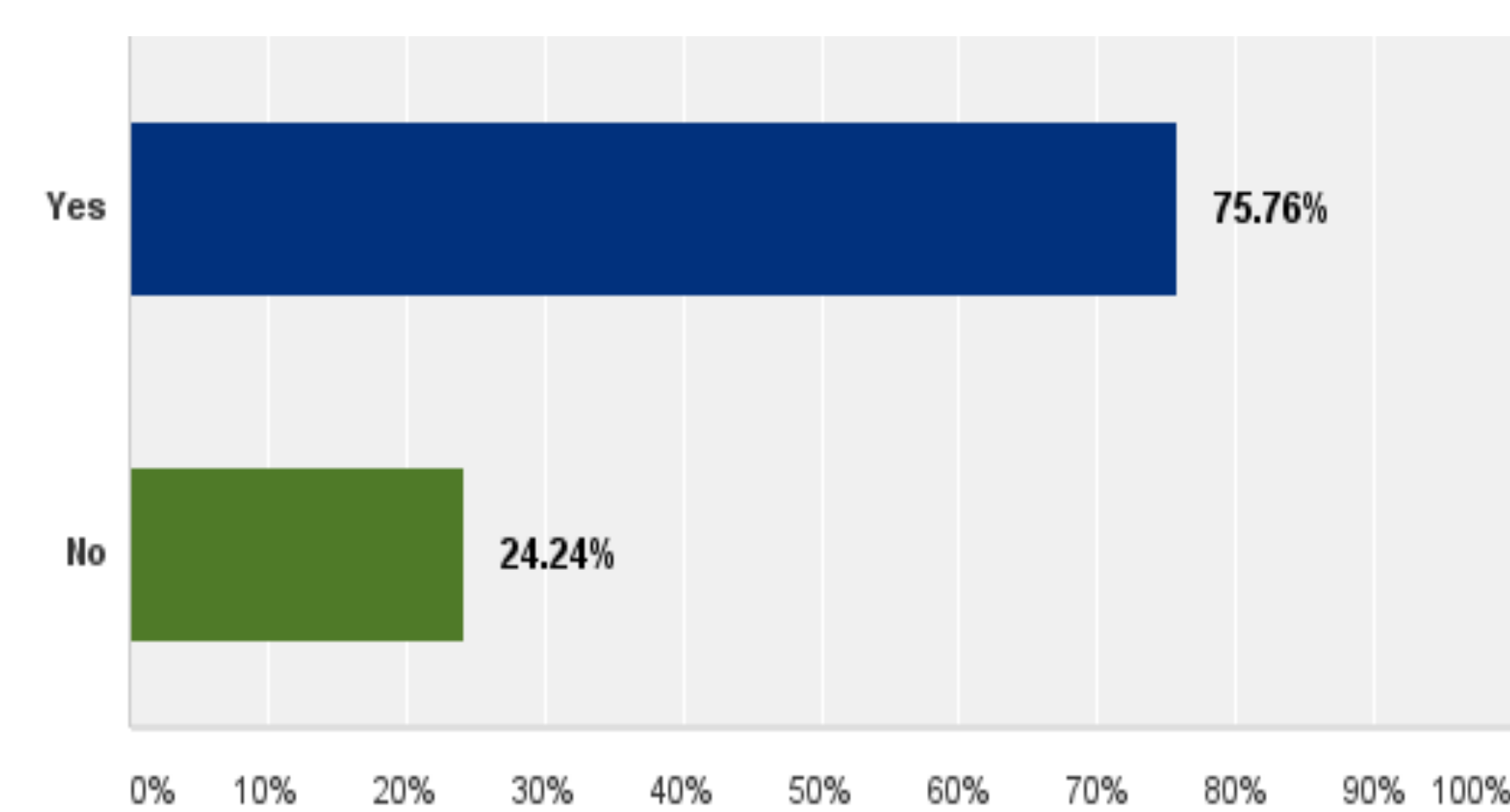
Would you consider attending professional development that dealt with one or more of these musicianship skills in order to improve your effectiveness in the classroom?



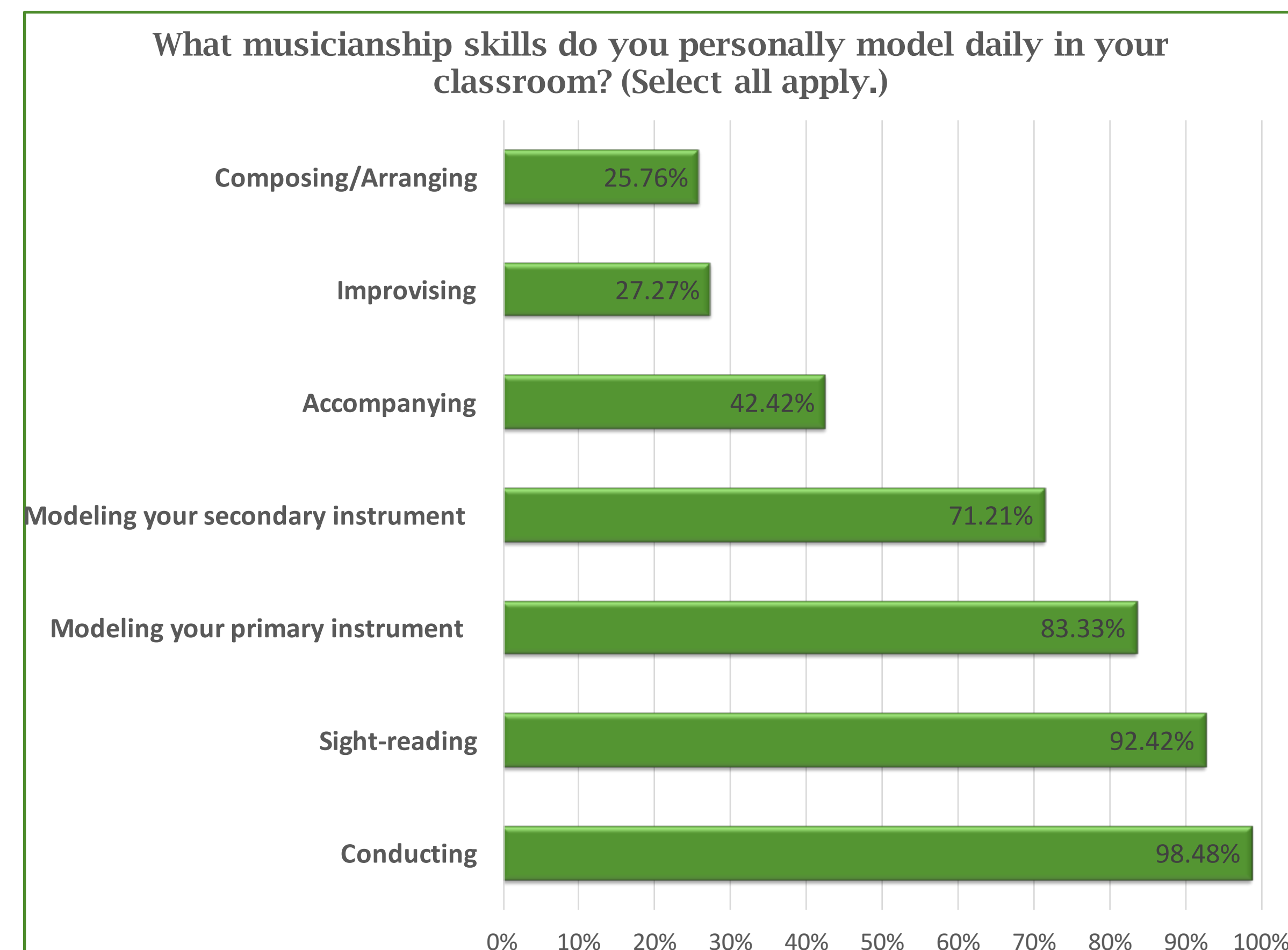
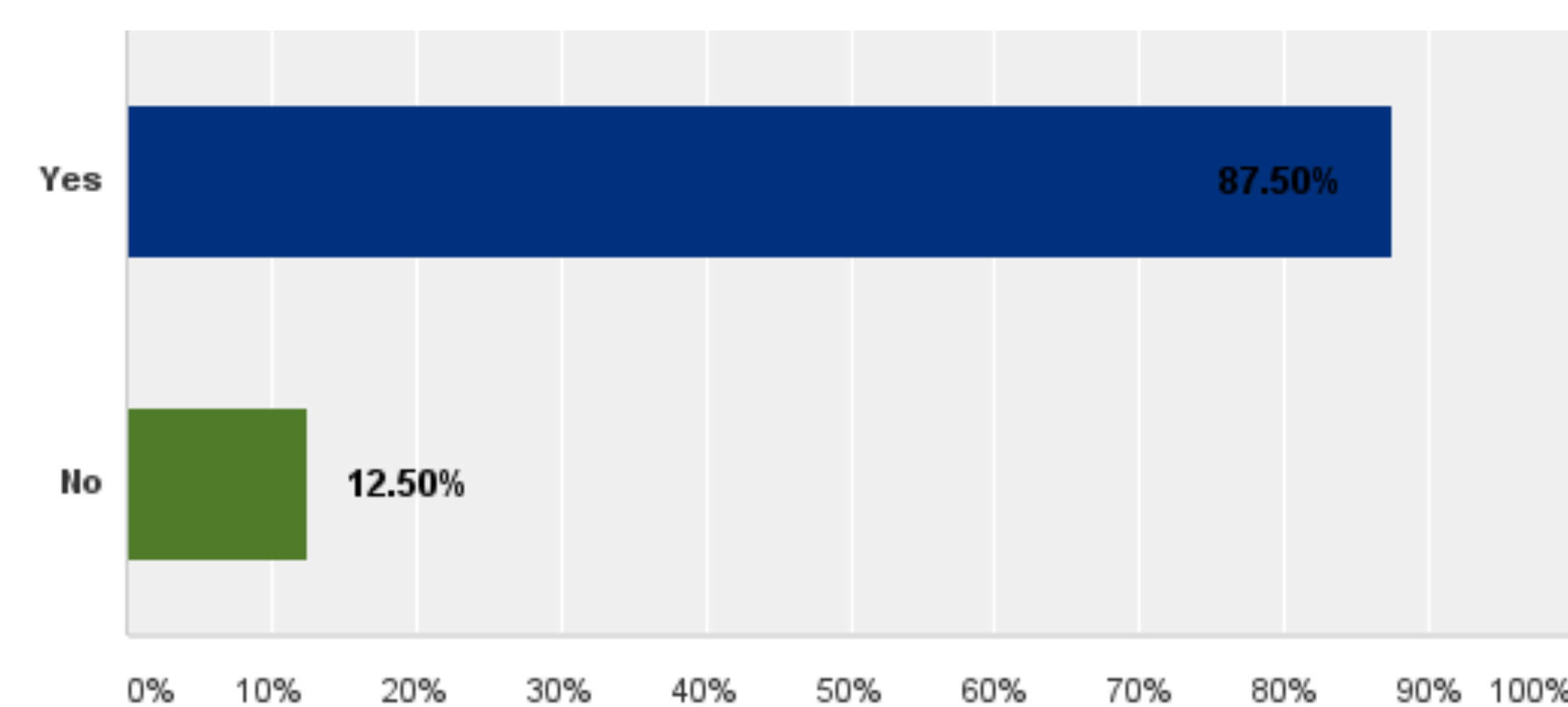
How would you rate your school district in offering professional development specifically for music educators?



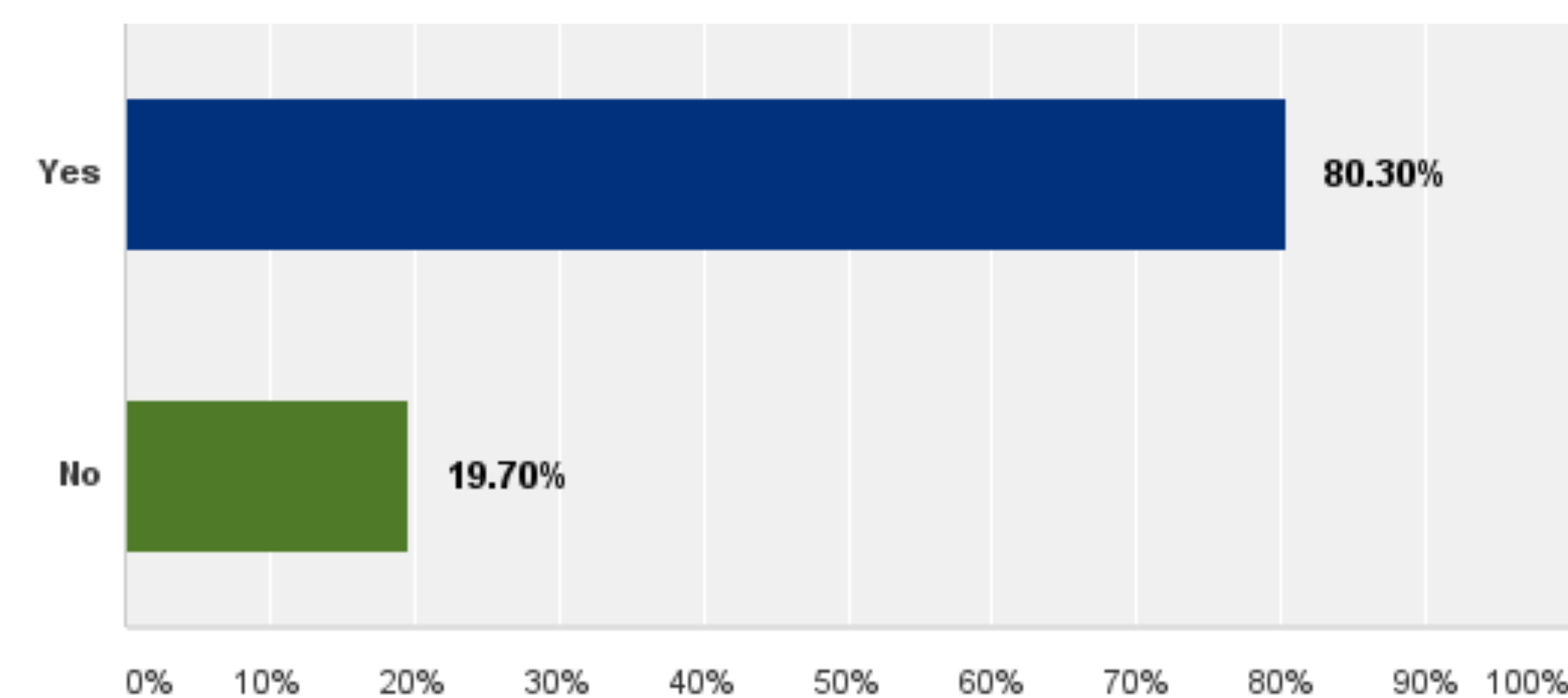
Do you take advantage of professional development sessions specifically for music educators that are offered by area colleges/universities?



Would you like to see more sessions at the TMEA Professional Development Conference that focus on personal musicianship skills?



Do you attend professional development sessions at the TMEA Professional Development Conference?



IMPLICATIONS

Through this pilot study, a better understanding of what Tennessee secondary music educators are looking for in professional development is revealed. Furthermore, there are certain factors that seem to affect educators from being able to attend professional development for personal musicianship skills.

In this research, 33 percent of comments regarding attendance of professional development sessions for personal musicianship skills expressed attending annually or biannually. Further study would help reveal if these educators would want to attend this type of professional development more often. All of the participants responding yes to considering to attend this type of professional development does not correlate with attendance being only once or twice a year. Additionally, 53 percent of these same educators expressed a poor rating for their district of offering professional development specifically for music educators. A larger study could help determine what percentage of professional development that is offered by their district is focused on music education alone.

When asked about the factors that hindered the educators from attending such professional development, many commented on the cost as well as the travel as major deterrents.

The educators did not express relationship between these two factors, but if this study was replicated it may be beneficial to explore the connections between these interferences.

Furthermore, 20 percent of the educators do not attend the TMEA professional development conference or attend professional development offered by surrounding colleges. If the teachers were provided more support from their school districts, then there may be more of a possibility for these teachers to attend.

The pilot study revealed that 100 percent of these teachers would attend professional development focused on personal musicianship skills, however not all of the teachers can attend or attend them rarely. If there was more of a focus on this professional development and when it is specifically offered, these educators may have a better ability to attend.

CONCLUSIONS

All 65 MTVA or MTSBOA secondary music educators expressed their need for professional development focused on musicianship skills to improve the effectiveness in their classroom. These secondary educators conveyed personally modeling conducting and sight-reading the most for their students. In addition, 96 percent of the teachers felt that personal sight-reading skills were either important or very important in maintaining effective teaching. Conducting and modeling their primary instruments were also high in percentage for maintaining effective teaching. When the teachers were asked to rank their top three personal musicianship skills they would most like to see offered as professional development, sight-reading and conducting received the greatest amount of votes.

Regarding the issues of whom should offer this professional development, 87 percent of these educators expressed the need for more professional development focused on personal musicianship skills at the TMEA Professional Development Conference. Over 75 percent of these teachers attend the TMEA Professional Development Conference and professional development that is offered by area colleges or universities. However, 53 percent of these educators rated their school district as "poor" in the ability to offer this type of professional development for music educators.

When the educators were asked how often they attended this type of professional development, 35 percent commented they attended annually or biannually. The largest hindrance to the educators being able to attend these professional development sessions was time conflicts. The second largest hindrance was the fees or cost. There were five comments from the teachers regarding the issue of their schools not allowing them to attend development during school hours, and comments requesting this development to be on the weekends. Participant 20 commented they were unable to attend because their principal would not release them while school was in session to attend professional development. In addition, participant 52 commented "administrators not understanding the need" for this type of professional development for secondary music educators.

This pilot study shows more of an understanding of the types of professional development that secondary music educators are looking for to maintain effective teaching. They expressed the types of musicianship skills to focus on and the difficulties they have in attending these development sessions. In conclusion, there is a greater insight to where and when these educators are looking for this type of professional development.