Assessing Quality Teaching and Learning in Music Classrooms

Session Presenters:
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Update: Applications of Research in Music Education 2007 25: 4
DOI: 10.1177/87551233070250020102

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Published by:
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National Association for Music Education

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>> Version of Record - Jan 1, 2007
What is This?
Program Evaluations in Music Education: A Review of the Literature

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Program evaluations can serve many goals. They can be undertaken in an attempt to determine a program’s effect. They can be used as a tool for advocacy or as a justification for funding. Program evaluation can also be used as a summative “report card” or can be formative as an aid in decision making. Music education program evaluations are often undertaken by graduate students in music education in fulfillment of thesis or dissertation requirements. In public schools, evaluations often take place locally to fulfill accreditation requirements, or are undertaken at the state level for advocacy purposes. Ideally, these evaluations should take place regularly as a part of a normal cycle (Rimington, 2000). Frequently, however, music teachers lack a working knowledge of program evaluation methods that can help them further refine music programs at the local level.

This review of literature explores the varied program evaluation methods advocated in education generally and used in music education specifically. Numerous evaluations of collegiate music programs exist, but this review includes only program evaluations directly or indirectly involving students in grades K–12. Following definitions of program evaluation, the review explores various evaluation models. It continues with examples of music program evaluations, examining literature relating to K–12 evaluations at both the local level and the state or national levels. Evaluations of other related music programs are followed by another section citing how-to sources for teachers or evaluators who wish to undertake program evaluations. A summary concludes the study.

Definitions of Program Evaluation

From its beginnings in the late 1800s, program evaluation has been defined in many ways. Even now, there is not a central definition of precisely what constitutes program evaluation. There are instead several different definitions within the field, each of which is specific to a particular style or method of evaluation. Adding to the confusion, there is frequently overlap between program evaluation methods and other research methods.

Frequently, a program evaluation is defined as research used in a managerial process as an aid for decision making (Royse, Thyer, Padgett, & Logan, 2001). Such a view of evaluation is common when the purpose of the evaluation is to justify funding or when some sort of accountability is mandated. Evaluations of this type tend to be more objective, based on quantifiable data.

Others define evaluation as the systematic process of determining the value or worth of an object (Sanders, 1994; Woody, 1997). Such a definition lends itself to evaluation as a formative endeavor or as a tool for advocacy. Evaluations of this type, while they may employ elements of objective assessments, generally take into account a broader context and broader program goals than those that may be assessed objectively.
Nevo (1995) balances both views as he defines educational evaluation as the act of systematically collecting information regarding the nature and quality of educational objects. This definition combines description and judgment but distinguishes between them because of their different nature. Description can be based on systematic data collection and thus result in highly objective information. Judgment is based on criteria which in most cases are determined by values, social norms, and personal preferences of stakeholders associated with the evaluation. Judgment may thus be very subjective in nature. (p. 11)

The way in which an individual or a group defines program evaluation will greatly affect the method selected for an evaluation. The determination of what constitutes a “program” might also vary. In music, a program could be considered a plan of instruction (such as a unit on jazz) or it could be the organization of a multigrade sequence of all music offerings in a school district. A program evaluation could even be as comprehensive as evaluation of music educational practices and outcomes in multiple districts of a given region or nation. In music education, program evaluations most commonly take place within a school or institution such as a school district or university. While many descriptive or qualitative research studies could qualify as program evaluations, for the purposes of this review, a “program” is defined as a larger structure of instruction —music offerings and teaching in a school, district, or state—rather than teaching practices in isolation.

Evaluation Models

Just as there are many different definitions of program evaluation, there are numerous evaluative models as well. In education in general, Stufflebeam (2000) identified and defined 22 program evaluation models that have emerged over time. Within music education, Colwell (1985) presented eight methods that are particularly appropriate for evaluation of music teacher education programs: the Context-Input-Process-Product (CIPP) evaluation, the systems approach, and the behavioral objectives, goal-free, art criticism, accreditation, adversary, and transaction methods. Other methods well known to music education program evaluation include case-study and survey methods (Colwell, 1985). Often these two methods converge into a “mixed method” evaluation (Stufflebeam, 2000). Each model can be used to provide information on the nature or quality of educational objects (such as materials or tools) or educational practices. Since each evaluative method is effective and valid, the choice of which to employ is largely dependent upon the type of information one wishes to obtain. While each model may be appropriate in some circumstances, not all forms are necessarily represented in the music education literature.

Connoisseurship, the model advocated by Eisner (1983), is an in-depth method of program evaluation often called art criticism. This method involves the application of two thought processes: connoisseurship and criticism. The connoisseurship model is similar to a well-versed, seasoned movie critic’s review of a new release. The evaluator draws upon personal expertise and experience when making judgments of the value or worth of a program. Likewise, Stake (1983, 1995) advocated a narrative evaluation model that is sensitive to the needs of the arts. Stake’s responsive (also called transaction) model relies on narrative data describing in detail the surrounds and interaction of all elements of a program. Responsive evaluation focuses more directly on program activities than on program intentions. This evaluative method also responds to audience requirements for information and takes into account differing value perspectives of those stakeholders involved in the program.
He felt that the responsive model is particularly appropriate in evaluating the arts, since much of what is undertaken in the arts is done for the purpose of intrinsic value rather than for mastery outcomes. Others, such as Lehman (1992) and Boyle (1992), advocated a more preordinate, behavioral objective form of evaluation. Lehman stated that the more commonly used general assessments of concerts or contests might provide a picture of overall achievement, but do not adequately assess the individual. In other disciplines, individual assessment is accomplished through standardized tests. Lehman stated that while standardized testing in music may not be the norm, students can still be tested on basic musicianship skills as a measure of achievement. Boyle (1992) pointed out, however, that such assessment can and should be both formative and summative. Formative evaluation seeks to inform and guide present practice of the music teacher, while summative gives a final evaluation of the program.

Seidel (1994) advocated an accreditation-style method of evaluation. In this model, assessment is undertaken by teams using locally created standards and assessment criteria. In addition, he advocated that both the educators and the students in the classes should, in groups, assess learning outcomes and structures to ensure future improvement. Seidel stressed, however, that these assessments should be made with evaluation indicators that match the goals of the program. Versions of this method are quite popular and are frequently employed by school evaluative organizations.

Many of these advocated methods are represented in the music education program evaluation literature. Since there are so many differing methods—including evaluations that combine several techniques—it may be more informative to examine evaluations based on the programs they evaluate. The literature regarding music program evaluations in K–12 situations can be further divided into local (classroom-based, school, or district-level) evaluations, and state or national level evaluations. Local-level program evaluations are presented first, followed by state and national evaluations.

K–12 Program Evaluations

Local Evaluations

Wing (1978) employed the CIPP evaluation model in her study of a secondary general music classroom. The four categories—context, input, process, and product—served as sequential stages in the evaluation of the program. The program’s present state was assessed in the context stage (including evaluation of objectives), while the program weaknesses were assessed in the input stage. The process stage evaluated implementation of selected strategies, and reassessment occurred in the product stage. This evaluation model was selected because it served as an aid in decision making and amending curricular choices. In addition, it also illuminated effects of the evaluation process itself on a classroom situation, including changes in instructional focus and increased student involvement.

CIPP was used as a model by Svengalis and Johnson (1990) in an evaluation of the Des Moines, Iowa, public school music program. Undertaken by the district music coordinator in conjunction with an outside evaluation consultant, this evaluation presented a snapshot of student achievement, perceptions of the program, and suggestions for improvement. This served as both formative and summative evaluation of the district music program and also as an advocacy tool. For example, many of the improvements suggested in the evaluation called for increased funding (an influence in the “input” portion of CIPP) for music-specific teacher in-service, equipment, and travel and enrichment funds.

Masear (1999) also used CIPP as a basis for establishing a field model for evaluating
elementary string programs. The evaluation model looked at eight areas of a string program: goals and objectives, leadership, staff, curriculum and scheduling, materials, equipment, facilities, and outcomes. In Masear’s model, testing and observational instruments were based on the National Standards (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994) for music and on studies by string pedagogues and researchers. The model was applied to string programs in three school districts. The study noted that there were statistically significant improvements in the “product” stage of the evaluation in the area of goals and objectives, indicating that goals and objectives of each string program were met.

Using a similar model, Reese (1982) evaluated the context, process, and product of the Central Midwest Regional Educational Laboratory (CEMREL) aesthetic education program in three elementary classes in Urbana, IL. Primary data were acquired through approximately 225 classroom observations, compiled with field notes and tape-recorded class sessions. Additionally, teachers, students, and administrators were interviewed, and questionnaires were administered to students to gain a thorough evaluation. Through observations, Reese determined that teachers in the program adequately planned for varied activities, adhered to unit objectives, and used CEMREL procedures. Through surveys and interviews, he determined that both students and teachers held positive views of the program’s content, implementation, and learning experiences.

Also using surveys and class observations, Mills (2000) studied the role music instruction played in a multiple-intelligences–focused elementary school in the South. Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences lists music as one of eight areas of intelligence. Mills, however, found that in the multiple-intelligence–focused charter school she observed, music served more to reinforce other subjects than it functioned as a stand-alone subject. For instance, teachers used contrived songs as aids for students to memorize math facts and spelling words as opposed to using songs to explore uniquely musical elements. What was defined by teachers as exposure to music was generally background music used to focus the students and encourage better writing. Mills also noted a disparity between observed levels of musical involvement and parental perceptions of students’ musical involvement at school.

Similarly, Ferguson (2005) used a mixed-method technique in his evaluation of K–5 music education in three schools managed by Edison Schools, Inc., in three different regions of the country. Parent surveys, student surveys, class observations, music teacher interviews, administrator interviews, and a student interview were used to gain a complete picture of the nature and quality of music education in each of the three evaluated schools. This evaluation also reviewed curricular materials and equipment inventories in each school. With findings similar to Mills (2000), this study noted perceptual disparities between parental and observed views of dominant activities. Observational data focused on teachers’ use of class time and noted in several instances (particularly in classes with noncertified teachers) large amounts of time spent on extraneous talking or giving instructions rather than engaging students in standards-based activities.

Milner (2000) used the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards as a basis for evaluating fifth-grade music instruction. Following Stake’s countenance model, Milner conducted observations, followed and supported by teacher questionnaires, to determine the extent to which instruction was provided in one aspect of the TEKS. The targeted area, which is essentially reading and notating music, was observed and reported to occur regularly.

While many examples of evaluations at the local level have employed some degree of
evaluator subjectivity, Piper and Shoemaker (1973) used behavioral objectives to conduct an experimental type of evaluation. The Kindergarten Music Program (KMP), a conceptually based music program in California, was assessed through a pretest-posttest control group design. Students were asked to imitate sung examples, perform rhythmic passages, and identify formal elements of musical examples similar to those presented in class meetings. Though the reliability of the posttest was low, Piper and Shoemaker still deemed the program a success in teaching things that students would otherwise be unable to do, as noted by a statistically significant improvement in scores. In spite of statistical significance, however, the authors noted that there were many things the program purported to teach that were not taught well. This evaluation was formative as it served to inform future decision making and improvements to KMP.

Schuetz (1964) also used behavioral objectives in an earlier school music program evaluation. This study attempted to evaluate the musical achievement of students at University High School at the University of Illinois in Urbana. Schuetz compiled the overall objectives with input from teachers, students, and parents who indicated their program goals and objectives through surveys. Student performance was measured in areas such as pitch matching, note reading, and recognition of musical forms. This was done through a series of tests ranging from objective tests of knowledge to subjective assessment of skills by the evaluator. The results of the evaluation showed that the program met the objectives as stated by faculty, students, and parents. This was also true in the area of freshman general music (a full-year course), although student test-score gains were higher for the first semester than for the full year of instruction.

The Dodge County (GA) Board of Education (1969) undertook a similar study for all of the district’s fine arts programs. This evaluation provided a type of report card to administrators regarding the effectiveness of their fine arts curriculum, newly implemented through federal funds at the time. Results indicated that the project’s goals were met, and that the curriculum would likely stay in place after federal funding had ceased. While the evaluation model largely used behavior objectives (assessed through skill-based tests) to determine the program’s effectiveness, the survey also assessed student attitudes. In this area, 88% of seventh-grade students, 75% of sixth-grade students, and 70% of fifth-grade students stated that they enjoyed music instruction in the program.

Martinez (1987) also used behavioral objectives in evaluating music in the Albuquerque, NM, schools. Student achievement was compared with enrollment data, equipment inventories, student attitude surveys, and teacher surveys. This K–12 evaluation provided the district and others with information that could help policy makers with decisions for improving music education in that school district. One prominent issue in the evaluation was inequity in elementary general music instruction. Inadequate staffing meant that 15 itinerant music specialists provided instruction to students in 28 of the district’s 74 elementary schools. Not surprisingly, the evaluation noted that “fourth grade students who were in schools that had a classroom music itinerant teacher consistently scored higher on music theory and literature than did their counterparts in schools where they had not studied with music teachers” (p. 62).

In this section on local evaluations, most used some sort of subjective information gathered by the evaluator, such as class observations. Frequently, however, evaluator subjectivity was coupled with more objective data in the form of surveys or performance-based achievement measures.

State or National Evaluations

Survey data are more common in large-scale evaluations. In some instances, however,
case studies have been undertaken using qualitative techniques such as those advocated by Eisner (1983) and Stake (1983). Stake, Bresler, and Mabry (1991) identified eight sites from varied geographic, socioeconomic, and racial backgrounds for in-depth study. This study used observations and interviews presented with rich and descriptive language to evaluate schools that were not necessarily exemplars of music education—nor were they poor examples. The rationale in selecting this type of setting was that “ordinary classrooms are understudied, [and] often misunderstood” (p. 6). This study, which also evaluated programs in visual arts, drama, and dance education, provided insight into what happens in music classes on normal days in normal schools. Evaluations of this type require well-trained staff and time for a thorough evaluation of observed data.

Similar in methodology but different in focus was a classic study undertaken by Thomas (1966) who, on behalf of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, identified exemplary and experimental programs of music instruction in the United States. This study, commonly called the “Manhattanville” study, identified 15 exceptional programs in various regions of the United States and presented a case study of each setting. In addition to gathering qualitative information on the nature and style of instruction, the study included for balance a somewhat more objective assessment of student attitudes, musical knowledge, and musical skills. Thomas found that in each setting, the philosophical rationale behind the program was clearly defined and each program achieved success, though the philosophical rationales differed. What was consistent was the clarity of each program’s philosophy, providing the foundation for equally clear pedagogical objectives. These and other findings from the case studies helped music educators establish goals for music education in general.

Johnston (1966) undertook a large-scale public school program evaluation to gain some understanding of the scope and design of music programs in Illinois (excluding Chicago) through surveys sent to building principals and administrators. Respondents were asked to evaluate music programs in local schools and provide information about the extent of the program, teaching personnel, facilities used for music classes, instructional materials available, time allotments, and supervision. Through collaboration with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Illinois, the questionnaires were efficiently disseminated and were returned at a 93.2% response rate. Variances in providing comprehensive, high-quality music programs were found along geographic lines as well as between district sizes. In general, large schools more frequently provided comprehensive programs than small schools. The highest concentration of comprehensive music programs was found in northeastern Illinois, while the lowest concentration was found in the southeastern portion of the state.

Another large-scale study was undertaken by Leonhard (1991), who studied arts education in the United States. This study involved surveying a randomly selected stratified sample of 1,326 schools categorized as either small or large elementary, small or large middle, or small or large secondary schools. The survey asked administrators and teachers about the amount of time spent teaching the arts, types of class offerings, and the amount and type of instructional equipment used. This study was a follow-up to a similar study undertaken in 1962, and the results of the two studies were compared. Results of this study provided music educators nationally with information for advocacy, revealing decreases in schools offering band and string instruction as well as decreases in average time allotted for general music instruction.

Carpenter’s (2001) study is another example of a large-scale program evaluation
with potential uses in advocacy. This study compared enrollment data, director perceptions of student proficiency, scheduling conflicts, and preferences from 77 surveyed directors in Louisiana schools featuring block scheduling, and compared the results to survey data acquired from 77 schools in the state on traditional schedules. Results indicated higher enrollment averages in performing arts classes where traditional scheduling was in place.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) undertook a national study of arts education programs in 1997 (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1999). This study evaluated students’ objective musical knowledge, their abilities to perform, and their abilities to respond to music (evaluate or describe it). Over 2,000 students at the eighth-grade level were evaluated, and data were correlated with student demographic and “opportunity to learn” variables. This study also surveyed the students to determine their musical background as well as common practices in their school music experiences. Findings of this sort noted that 18% of the eighth graders surveyed were enrolled in band, 3% in orchestra, and 22% in choir (there was no way to know if student overlap existed in these areas). In another area, 97% of surveyed students stated that they liked to listen to music, yet when asked whether the music teacher played music for them to listen to, only 28% said this happened every day, 13% said one or two times a week, 10% said one or two times a month, 14% said never, and 34% stated that they didn’t have music instruction.

At the state level, the Rhode Island University Department of Music (1973) published a report on the status of K–8 music. Using survey data, the report provided detailed information regarding demographic data for the state’s music teachers as well as information related to music course offerings, scheduling, and facilities. Results of the survey were compared to standard models, and the authors concluded that, at the time, Rhode Island schools were poorly supported in terms of staffing, equipment, and scheduling.

Clay (1982) used similar methods in a report of music education in Ohio, sending surveys to the state MENC membership and to all district superintendents in the state. Teacher surveys yielded a 47.5% response rate, and 49% of the superintendents responded. This survey measured retention of music teaching positions, job satisfaction, administrator and teacher perceptions of quality in their programs, and views regarding program funding levels. Results indicated that few music teaching positions were cut at the time and a vast majority of the music teachers felt fulfilled by their work, but that there was a general sense that programs were poorly funded.

The Michigan State Board of Education (1983), however, used behavioral objectives in a statewide study of music learning. The study consisted of a test administered to 4th, 7th, and 10th graders in 36 randomly selected schools in 33 districts. Tests given in both group and individual settings involved evaluation of performing, listening, identification of music concepts and symbols, interpretation, expression, and appreciation. Results indicated that although students generally seemed to like music, less than 30% possessed knowledge and skills needed for active participation in music. Most striking was that students reported gaining musical knowledge more through their environment than from instruction.

**Other Music Program Evaluations**

Since programs in music education can be broadly defined, the literature includes a few evaluations of music programs that are not a part of a traditional K–12 or collegiate music curriculum. The Arts in Community Education (ACE) program in Milwaukee, WI, is one example of a nontraditional program. ACE is a district partnership with local visiting artists from the Milwaukee symphony. Using a qualitative design, DeNardo (1997) evaluated
the ACE program to determine how best to assess student learning in this program and what insights into student learning have emerged. This formative evaluation led to refinement of the rubric scoring guides, an understanding of preferred venues of dissemination to teachers, and enumeration of varied levels of student achievement in each area of learning outcomes.

Shender’s (1998) study looked less at outcomes than it did at measures of inputs when evaluating a private studio group piano method that employed technology. Shender evaluated implementation of the program—determined through observing facilities and equipment, scheduling, and teachers—as well as impact of these items as documented through student testing and performance results. A student/parent questionnaire was distributed to assess how well the school’s teachers achieved their goals in the areas of teacher attitudes, organizational skills, personality and character, professionalism, and the overall music program. In addition, a teacher questionnaire was distributed to determine the strengths and weaknesses of group instruction and the use of technology in fostering musical growth and student interaction. This combination of survey and observational data was very useful in determining both the nature and effectiveness of instruction in this setting. It was determined that the main goals of the program were achieved, but that there seemed to be concerns about lack of individualized student attention. Overall views of the program by parents, students, and teachers were generally very positive, however.

Dokken (2002) also used observational data in identifying important elements of piano training at Ferenc Liszt Academy in Hungary. In addition to observations, she interviewed students, faculty, and an administrator to gain insight into significant and characteristic achievements of the program and the manner in which those achievements are accomplished through instructional methods, setting, and curricular choices. These observations led to the conclusion that key factors in the Liszt Academy’s success were the structure of the curriculum (which placed a premium on performance artistry and skill) and the consistency of approach among its instructors.

How-To Sources

The report of the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (Sanders, 1994) is intended to be used as a text for teaching evaluators as well as a reference for experienced evaluators. The report outlines 30 standards for program evaluation, grouped into four areas that help define important attributes of an evaluation. Those attributes are (a) utility standards—intended to “ensure that an evaluation will serve the needs of the intended users” (p. 23), (b) feasibility standards—intended to “ensure that an evaluation will be realistic, prudent, diplomatic, and frugal” (p. 63), (c) proprietary standards—intended to “ensure that an evaluation will be conducted legally, ethically, and with due regard for the welfare of those involved in the evaluation as well as those affected by the results” (p. 81), and (d) accuracy standards—intended to “ensure that an evaluation will reveal and convey technically adequate information about the features that determine worth or merit of the program being evaluated” (p. 125).

Specifically in music education, Rimington (2000) developed a guide to aid music educators and administrators in evaluating music programs. He maintains that evaluative data can, and should, be gathered through a variety of means.

Test scores, student counts, and facility and material investigations are examples of information that is easily quantifiable. Attitudes, teaching methods, and community/school relations may be analyzed quantitatively, but a more qualitative approach may be more suitable for this
information. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages. The purpose here is not to debate the value of one approach over the other, but rather to offer both so the user of the handbook can choose which ever approach seems appropriate for their individual needs. (p. 154)

Moreover, Rimington asserts that by using a combination of the two techniques, “the reports that are generated may be more practical and accessible to administrators, other teachers, and community members” (p. 33).

Rimington advocates a broad-based approach to the evaluation process in which the needs of all stakeholders are addressed. This process takes into account music faculty, student, administrator, parent, and community member needs by surveying each group to determine what each group feels is of value or worth in the program. A committee then meets to further focus the scope of the evaluation. Evaluations may be cyclical and ongoing, wherein year one would focus on curriculum, year two on facilities and equipment, year three on school/community relations and booster groups, and so on over the course of seven years. Rimington further states that an ideal evaluation would consist of both internal and external evaluators. While under this model each district should tailor its evaluation to its own needs, the most effective evaluations will be tied to larger goals in music education such as the National Standards.

In addition to conducting a thorough evaluation of music education, the NAEP (2003) provided several strategies for districts to use in implementing the same style of evaluation locally. The NAEP Web site offers strategies, templates, and examples in an easy-to-understand fashion. The NAEP suggestions, like Rimington’s, feature evaluative procedures that are both subjective and objective, and can be used separately or together depending on the goals of the local evaluators.

Summary and Discussion

Through this review of literature, teachers, researchers, or district administrators may find numerous models for conducting evaluations of music programs. While formal program evaluation in music is not yet widely practiced or published, several methods such as the survey, connoisseurship, case-study, CIPP, and mixed-method models have been advocated and used effectively in public school, university, and private settings.

Evaluations can serve many purposes. Stakeholders in music programs may wish to undertake a summative evaluation in order to see what has been achieved in a given year, or they may undertake a formative evaluation in order to determine what can be improved in an ongoing program. Many evaluations have also been used as tools for program advocacy. In this review of literature, each evaluation of school district music programs (Svengalis & Johnson, 1990; Dodge County Board of Education, 1969; and Martinez, 1987) used the process and results for all three purposes: summative, formative, and advocacy.

Many evaluations in this review consist of dissertations conducted for research purposes rather than published as a part of a program cycle. It is hoped that through this review of literature, more schools, school districts, or regional educational organizations might become acquainted with methods used in the evaluations presented, and that they would undertake evaluations and publicly share their findings.

If evaluations of this type are to be shared with the music education community at large, there needs to be a venue designated for dissemination of this information, and evaluators must be willing to present their findings there. Perhaps evaluators hesitate to publish because they are uncomfortable with negative findings. This seemed to be the case in a review of educational program evaluation literature by Stufflebeam and Welch (1986). Of 150 articles referenced in their review,
there were no reports with negative results. It should also be noted that no arts evaluations were included.

It is easy to understand how educators might be uneasy presenting negative information, but often negative findings can bring about positive changes in a program. To have effect, however, the results of the evaluation must be openly shared (Woody, 1997). Colwell (2002) noted that presentation of program evaluations in music could serve to direct public attention to the adequacy of each program. If music education is to be perceived on an even footing with other disciplines, we in the profession must be willing both to evaluate our practice and to share those findings with the community at large.

Publication of program evaluations provides the opportunity for future applications of the evaluative techniques presented here. While we certainly hope academic researchers will continue to evaluate music programs, greater opportunity and encouragement should be given to practitioners to undertake music program evaluations and present their findings.

References


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Fostering a Lifelong Love of Music: Instruction and Assessment Practices that Make a Difference
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*Music Educators Journal* 2011 98: 45
DOI: 10.1177/0027432111412829

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://mej.sagepub.com/content/98/1/45

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What is This?
Fostering a Lifelong Love of Music

Instruction and Assessment Practices that Make a Difference

Abstract: Music educators can nurture students’ lifelong musical involvement, both as consumers and as participants. Orienting musical instructional practices around classroom elements suggested by achievement goal theory can foster lifelong musical connections. Practices related to using meaningful and challenging tasks, evaluations that decrease emphasis on competition and emphasize effort and enjoyment, and allowing students to participate in decision making are advocated and described.

Keywords: achievement goal theory, assessment, lifelong, practice, rehearsal

Encouraging attendance at musical events, such as symphonies and operas, has been a topic for discussion and research for several decades. Many attempts have been made to reverse the trend of dwindling audiences and to change perceptions toward classical music. The decline in concert attendance echoes a trend in declining student music participation in the public schools. In 1983, 17.6 percent of students in grades 7 through 12 were enrolled in one or more choral groups, and 20.7 percent participated in a band or orchestra. More current figures show the total number of tenth graders participating in all musical activities (band, orchestra, or chorus) at 21.5 percent. Historically, enrollment in a performance group such as band drops more than 50 percent from grade 7 to grades 10 through 12. Declining enrollment in music groups may also affect the larger picture, because research indicates participation in the fine arts serves as a key intervening variable in preventing high schoolers from dropping out of school.

Many music educators feel that a major (though often unspoken) goal is to foster a lifelong musical connection among students, both as consumers and participants. But with the current economic recession, the arts are being cut in schools, fewer students are involved in secondary music classes, and attendance at musical performances is in decline. How can music educators increase lifelong musical enjoyment and appreciation that music is an essential part of education and of life? Research suggests that a student’s valuing music and continued participation are influenced by previous musical experiences.

Focus on long-term learning in music classes (as opposed to “who’s in first chair”) can help all students develop an interest in music that extends beyond their time at school.

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But do the kinds of experiences music educators provide nurture future involvement in music? Unfortunately, the statistics on decreasing musical participation as well as anecdotal evidence we have collected from our students over the years suggests that continued participation is realized less often than music educators might wish. If our ultimate goal is lifetime involvement with music, we may need to look toward broader issues that influence long-term outcomes.

The impact of our classroom decisions as educators can shape students’ perceptions and actions related to music throughout their lives. Students with low confidence in their own musical ability are less likely to value music. As college professors, we have noticed that our elementary education majors often seem reluctant to sing during their required music method class because they think they do not sing well, even when that is not the case. Several students have mentioned an incident where they were told not to sing in a performance because they were not good enough. While research indicates that musical aptitude has little relationship to participation and attitude, a lower self-perception of ability has a negative impact.

Attitudes and self-perceptions may also influence participation. Fewer students are now taking part in secondary music classes than previously, and involvement declines precipitously from the elementary and middle school grades to high school. Some have suggested that these declines stem from an emphasis on competition and performance techniques that are not relevant to students, especially after they finish high school. In addition, bands and choirs often place chair assignments or winning competitions, rather than from intrinsic rewards and love of music.

From research and our personal experiences, we know that mere contact with a musical program is not enough to generate an affinity for all things musical. Some deliberate and careful tending of students’ budding musical interest is necessary. We recently examined some of the research on motivation in education, and one approach, achievement goal theory, provides guidance. Understanding this approach and applying it to the music classroom provide insights that can promote stronger positive attitudes as well as increased student motivation for musical endeavors.

Achievement Goal Theory

Achievement goal theory addresses the reasons students make an effort to succeed in academic activities. The research has focused on two orientations held by students: a grade (or performance) orientation and a learning (or mastery) orientation. Students holding a grade orientation are concerned with appearing competent and doing better than others. They might appraise their progress by asking, “Did my solo get a 1 rating at all-state?” or “Does my teacher think I’m good?” or “Will my audition place me in first chair?” Music students with a grade orientation usually focus on their performance level and enjoy competing with others, if they have high ability. But a grade orientation does not reward students who are toward the middle and bottom of the perceived performance distribution. These students give up more easily and label themselves as untalented or as poor musicians. They gradually practice less and disengage. Yet the grade or performance orientation is dominant in most classrooms, including music classrooms.

In contrast, students holding a learning or mastery orientation are more interested in developing their skills, and they use more internal standards to evaluate themselves rather than comparing themselves to others. Their significant questions might be, “How much have I learned this semester?” “Has my singing improved compared to last year?” or “What kinds of music do I enjoy most?” These students focus on their own learning and improvement over time and less on other people’s judgments. In addition, many other positive student behaviors accompany a learning orientation. Psychologists stress that this orientation, though all too rare in classrooms, increases student motivation. Students persist longer with difficult tasks, they are more willing to try challenging tasks, and—perhaps most relevant for fostering a lifelong love of music—they have more positive attitudes toward the subject matter.

While this research has primarily been conducted with other areas of learning, we believe these findings can profitably be applied to realms such as music. A key to this approach is that a student’s orientation is not a fixed personality trait. Teachers play a large role in helping their students be grade-oriented or learning-oriented. Teachers can encourage students to view successful musical participation as being independent of talent or family genetics. They can reward effort toward mastery and enjoyment rather than focusing solely on winning competitions and comparison to others.

This shift in focus can increase positive attitudes because students have more control in reaching mastery and finding success. That is because success can now be defined more broadly than holding first chair or winning the state competition. But becoming more learning-oriented does not mean that students must give up a grade orientation completely. Both kinds of goals can be positively related to strong motivation depending on the context. Some students benefit from having different ways to measure their success. A student can care about being in the top performing group but also practice for the love of music and pursue their interest beyond class requirements for band or choir.

Because our culture is competition-oriented and the grade orientation is pervasive in classrooms and beyond, students need strong encouragement to develop a learning orientation. This is especially true for students who do not have a great deal of innate talent. Teachers who encourage a learning orientation increase motivation and help these students see musical participation in a whole new light. Research suggests that students who perceive that their teachers are emphasizing a learning orientation tend to have more positive attitudes toward school and subject matter.

Carole Ames has summarized the research on specific actions that teachers can take to structure their classrooms
to promote a learning orientation among students.\textsuperscript{17} We believe this work suggests a number of instructional and assessment strategies for the music classroom that can foster more positive attitudes toward music, making lifelong engagement more likely.

Ames suggests three key classroom elements that research has shown to be effective in promoting a learning orientation among students. We believe this work is particularly worth highlighting, given recent concerns that exclusive emphasis on large-ensemble performance groups at the high school level may prove to be “totally out of touch with the musical needs of our society, to the point where students find us irrelevant and disconnected to their lives.”\textsuperscript{18} In the following sections, we describe each element, and we offer suggestions for its incorporation into music classrooms. Our suggestions are organized and highlighted in Table 1.

### Tasks

The types of tasks teachers use have a real impact on the type of motivational orientation that students develop. Meaningful tasks that incorporate variety and student interests are more likely to promote a learning orientation and higher motivation.\textsuperscript{19} This makes implicit sense—we have all seen how practicing the same piece of music over and over, trying to perfect it, can kill motivation. But if, instead, activities at the heart of the meaning of music are employed, motivation can be sparked and a learning orientation takes over. Mechanics must be taught, but if we focus only on mechanics, the joy and creativity and the emotional impact of music can be lost.

As an example, one of our former students, who currently teaches middle school band, points out that students are seldom encouraged to compose or improvise. She realized this when one day during her student teaching, she was forced to come up with an unusual lesson for her seventy band students because the high school had borrowed all the music stands from her classroom. She quickly thought up the idea to have each section learn to play “Happy Birthday” by ear after she gave them a starting pitch. As she reports, “Yes, it was loud and a little crazy-sounding, but the kids never even realized you could do that—they thought music only came out of the method book and didn’t realize they could figure out and play any tune they wanted. The kids left energized and they learned something about music, not just their instrument that day.”\textsuperscript{20}

A variety of such broadening activities can be introduced regularly. For example, one of our colleagues, a former band director, started every class with music playing (from twentieth-century music to

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**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom Elements</th>
<th>Music Classroom Examples</th>
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| Varied, meaningful, challenging tasks | - Small- as well as large-group activities (e.g., rehearsals, listening, discussing, comparing different performances of the same piece)  
- Performing well-known pieces by ear  
- Learning tasks for individuals involving creating, performing, and experiencing music using digital technology  
- Increasing learning tasks that address comprehensive aspects of music (e.g., listening, improvisation, analysis, music advocacy, lifelong music appreciation)  
- Allowing individual and groups of students to develop goals and keep track of their progress related to the goal (e.g., creating original rhythms, improving dynamics) |
| Evaluation and recognition practices | - Less emphasis on competition, more emphasis on effort, improvement, enjoyment (e.g., tackling complex arrangements for fun, analyzing a recent performance for ways to improve)  
- Using assessments where results can be kept private rather than always public (e.g., individual recordings at the beginning and end of the semester)  
- Stressing the importance of individual strengths and musicality in assessments (e.g., private conferences, recognition for meeting personal goals)  
- Appointing students to leadership positions based on character factors in addition to musical skill  
- Student opportunities for self- and peer assessment (e.g., frequent checks during practices, e.g., Did we keep a steady beat? Was our signing louder than the accompaniment?) |
| Student participation in decision making | - Providing choices for ways for students to show what they have learned (e.g., annual portfolios, students write program notes for performance)  
- Student-led activities (e.g., rhythm and singing games)  
- Student participation in performance role choices, music choices |
Baroque to opera) when students entered the room. Stopping the music was the cue to begin rehearsal. But first he invited them to talk about the piece, and then he provided information about the composer that students would be fascinated by (e.g., Charles Barnes Chance died after being struck by lightning). At the elementary level, rather than focusing solely on memorizing note values, the teacher can encourage pairs of students to collaborate in writing a song with the musical goal of having four measures of legible music showing variety and contrast.

Other meaningful, challenging tasks can address some of the National Standards that go beyond performance and notation to round out a more comprehensive approach to music instruction. Activities that get at the core of seeing music as a basic human need—as “a way to express feelings when we have no words, a way for us to understand things with our hearts when we can’t with our minds”—can make a difference. Promoting active student engagement with the music in their lives (e.g., analyzing the impact of music in films, examining the importance of music on special occasions) and then enriching their experiences of music through exposure to new genres can help students expand their participation and encourage their appreciation as a lifelong pursuit.

Activities involving listening and analyzing can also include comparing performances of the same piece. Using a Venn diagram to compare the Jimi Hendrix version of “The Star-Spangled Banner” to Whitney Houston’s performance allows students to analyze and develop musical preferences. Educated consumers of music understand what makes a good performance.

Tasks that are defined to help students establish specific, achievable short-term goals can also promote a learning orientation. When we have appropriate goals, they direct and energize our behavior and they increase our persistence. Short-term tasks can be incorporated into rehearsals at any level. In the elementary classroom, a teacher might target phrasing and ask students to play recorder phrases in one breath. Older students might work on dynamics to give shape to phrases. After performing, students can evaluate their success and offer suggestions to refine their performance.

In the elementary grades, the book *Hedgehog Band* can be a springboard for student-created rhythms. This appealing picture book introduces Harry, who plays his rhythm on a drum. Other characters play different rhythms and join Harry’s band. After reading this book, students may be asked to create and notate their own rhythms. One teacher awards students who correctly perform an original rhythm a Rhythm Writer’s Certificate with the student’s composed rhythm. Students then become official members of the school’s Rhythm Writers Band. Children are encouraged to take their certificate home and perform their composed rhythms for their parents. All students typically reach this short-term goal.

**Evaluation and Recognition**

One of the most noticeable means of influencing classroom goal orientation is the method by which students are evaluated. Many classrooms are focused on summative evaluation and final products or performances. Ames singles out music education programs that push “public-ready production[s]” at the expense of other types of music appreciation and learning as examples, suggesting that the study of music should not simply equal musical performance. A classroom that emphasizes process (e.g., tackling complex arrangements for fun) and formative evaluation (e.g., students and teachers analyzing a performance for improvement after the concert is over) is more likely to foster a learning orientation among students.

Another factor related to evaluation that can enhance a learning orientation is minimizing social comparison judgments among students. Emphasizing the individual’s progress across time is more likely to encourage a learning orientation and less likely to lead to discouragement than an exclusive diet of constant competition with others (e.g., for coveted first chair slots). In addition, keeping evaluation private rather than public helps minimize overly frequent comparisons. Several band directors we know have students privately record their playing at the beginning and at the end of each semester. Then the student and teacher both evaluate the recordings. This procedure helps individual students focus on their own progress rather than on where they stand in the ensemble’s pecking order.

Other strategies that deflect competition, emphasize individual progress, and foster a learning orientation involve a switch in emphasis. For example, instead of the district’s paying for a few students from each school to go to state, a clinician can be brought in for the benefit of all choral or band students. Another shift in focus from performance products to individual progress is illustrated by the evaluation procedures in one music program we know. Evaluation includes a portfolio of artifacts that students choose, with guidance, to show their best work each year that will be passed on to their music teacher at the next school. As students add to their portfolios, they see their personal growth rather than where they fall in the performance hierarchy.

Choosing band or choral student leadership positions on the basis of the quality of students’ character rather than only the quality of their performance skills also is a means to foster a learning orientation. Playing or singing ability can be one component, but when politeness, ability to get along with others, consistent attendance, effort, and other role model qualities are factored in, a strong message is sent to students that traits other than musical ability get recognition.

Similarly, to deemphasize “innate musical talent” and to focus on individual strengths, an elementary teacher we know carefully selects students for performances. She provides a variety of tasks, such as singing solos, playing instruments, dancing, acting, narrating, and introducing. Every student learns all parts and gets turns to practice. During the practices, the teacher makes a note of the parts each student can competently perform, and students list their top four choices for program parts. Everyone gets a special part, and the teacher reports that students are excited to make a personal contribution to the show.
Finally, highlighting student effort is another strategy to enhance a learning orientation. Effective feedback on effort can reinforce productive student behaviors. Small actions, such as writing an encouraging note on a practice log or commenting on students' focused attentiveness during a rehearsal, make a difference. An illustration of effective feedback occurred with one of our former elementary students. As a kindergartner, “Jack” did not try to sing at the start of the year, and when encouraged to sing, he would only mumble words. Jack, however, loved playing classroom instruments. His playing improved as his efforts to listen and find the beat of the music were encouraged. The class continued to work on singing skills using presinging tasks, such as vocal sirens. When Jack started participating, his efforts and progress toward singing improved as his efforts to listen and find the beat of the music were encouraged. Jack finally sang a *sol-mi* solo in tune as a second grader, and a “music-gram” was promptly sent to his parents describing his hard work and accomplishment. Jack continued to study music as a band member. A few years later, his mother mentioned that music classes helped Jack finish high school.

**Student Decision Making**

The last aspect of classroom structure to examine is student participation in decision making. Giving students opportunities to develop independence and responsibility for their learning rather than keeping all authority in the hands of the teacher promotes a learning orientation. Helping students learn to self-manage and self-monitor is key. Ramona Wis wrote a book that discusses sharing ownership of the classroom. Her definition of leadership is “the way in which conductors use their skills, knowledge and character to create not only a fine musical product, but also a meaningful musical experience.” As Deborah Blair states in a recent article, “If students are primarily responding to the teacher, waiting and watching for cues as to how to interact within an activity, then something is amiss. However, when students are engaged with the music, solving musical problems, and interacting with others . . . [they] are interacting with the music and, by doing so, informing their own musical understanding.”

An elementary teacher we know allows her students to make decisions, such as:

- What songs should we select for our program?
- What instrument would sound good with this song?

She also asks students to evaluate:

- How can we improve our performance for our program?
- Why doesn’t that instrument fit the song? Students spend time discussing, concluding that a lullaby is too slow and quiet for drums, for example.

Older students can also make decisions. At the end of the year, some teachers let students play and evaluate the old repertoire in the files to vote on each piece as “trash or a treasure.” This activity not only values students’ musical sensibilities, but it also has the added bonus of honing their sight-reading skills. Similarly, if music is played each day before rehearsal begins, students could take the responsibility of choosing the piece and describing the composer’s biographical information. If students are provided structure to make some musical decisions, they become more self-sufficient and successful as musicians and as music aficionados.

**Meaningful Participation**

We believe that orienting instructional practices around these three classroom elements will foster lifelong music appreciation and participation. Challenging, meaningful tasks that cover all National Standards, not just those related to performance, will attract students to participate musically in meaningful and varied ways and still produce competent musicians. Evaluation and recognition practices that decrease emphasis on competition and emphasize effort and enjoyment will broaden students’ positive experiences with music during their school years, even for those who are not the strongest performers. Allowing students to participate in decision making related to music prompts them to develop their own personal sense of musicality and to see their own musical strengths. Students’ perceptions of their musical skills influence the types of activities that they select, how much they challenge themselves, and the persistence they demonstrate when involved in music. Students with positive attitudes are more motivated in class and more likely to value music over a lifetime.

**Notes**

8. Janet Outis, “Improving Motivation of Sixth-Grade Music Students through Curriculum Interventions and Teaching Practices” (master’s research project, Saint Xavier University, Chicago, IL, 1994), 55.


13. Ibid., 334.


19. Ibid.

20. Personal communication with Sharon Hunter, May 12, 2009.


Performance Assessment of the Masses in 30 Seconds or Less
Laura Dunbar

*General Music Today* 2012 25: 31 originally published online 25 April 2011
DOI: 10.1177/1048371311406266

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://gmt.sagepub.com/content/25/2/31

Published by:
http://www.sagepublications.com

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What is This?
Performance Assessment of the Masses in 30 Seconds or Less

Laura Dunbar

Abstract
Performance assessment does not have to be a time-consuming ordeal; it is a great way to assess our students’ skills. It is essential to create a rubric that is simple, quick, and objective. This article discusses the process of creating a rubric as well as showing a rubric used by the author in her general music classroom for several years. Differences between assessment and evaluation are also mentioned.

Keywords
music education, general music, assessment, rubric

As a general music teacher, it seemed that time was always against me. I was teaching in a district where I would see my students once a week for a time period of 30 to 50 minutes, so it seemed we were just getting to the “good part” and class would be over. Our grading periods were trimesters, which meant I had to put together grades after observing students in 12 sessions. These grades supposedly reflected each student’s skill level in my class. My first year teaching general music I graded my students based on my perception of their participation. Although it took a couple of years, I finally developed a system of assessment that worked for me; it allowed me to do performance assessments on the spot and give immediate feedback to my students. It also allowed me to assign grades to the students that were based on more than showing up to class, while giving information for more meaningful evaluation of my students’ progress.

When thinking about assessment, it is important to remember that assessment is a measurement: a collection of data about a student’s performance. It is separate from evaluation in which value is assigned to the data (Duke, 2005). A good assessment tool allows the teacher to collect information about what a student can accomplish in a performance setting. This information not only allows for an assessment of the student’s knowledge but also aids the teacher in giving evaluation with feedback to each student while planning the next steps for the class. Assessment is not the end; it is ongoing (Duke, 2005). Assessment is an ongoing process that can be made easier through the use of a rubric.

Although the primary purpose of this article is not to discuss the construction of a detailed rubric, there are many things to consider when building a rubric for any kind of assessment. Teachers should be thinking about how much time it will take to assess student knowledge as well as how it will be measured. Time is an important consideration for performance assessment. A student demonstrating his or her knowledge in a performance setting is a wonderful assessment, but listening to each student can take a large amount of time in a class of 20 or more students. Performance assessment does not have to be a long, arduous process if it is part of the everyday classroom routine. It can even be done in 30 seconds or less.

Why Assess and Assess Often
Performance assessment allows us to advocate for music as part of the core curriculum while assessing the national standards (Chiodo, 2001). In the current economy, advocacy is more important than ever. Music programs across the country are being looked at as a line item on a budget as opposed to an important educational experience. We must show the academic side of our discipline as well as our aesthetic side. Budget decisions are primarily made based on objective outcomes rather than subjective observations (Hanna, 2007). Behavior and participation grades do not reflect student learning in our classrooms; parents and administrators do not get a clear picture of the content taught if these characteristics are the only basis for grades (Leonhardt, 2005). It should never be assumed that other people outside of our subject area know what

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we do. We have to advocate for ourselves in every way possible and that includes providing valid assessments of student learning.

According to S. Scott (2004), “Well-constructed performance-based assessments integrate assessment with instruction—what is taught in the classroom is reflected in the assessment, and what is assessed guides instruction” (p. 17). Good assessment allows a teacher to give specific and detailed feedback about a student’s knowledge while receiving information about the effectiveness of instruction. For younger students, verbal feedback as well as use of modeling and proximity can be helpful in showing students how they are doing. Older students can benefit from their assessment while their performance is still in working memory. Specific feedback given immediately after the performance can aid the student in corrections as well as allowing the teacher to show where that student can work next.

Duke (2005) suggests that all assessments should be planned first. This gives students an opportunity to know and practice exactly what is on the test. Assessment should not be a surprise to students. Rubrics allow students to see the concepts we believe are important while giving them a venue to improve their skill level. A teacher can quickly discover gaps in knowledge or connections in the material and plan accordingly for subsequent class sessions. It will quickly become apparent what each student has learned, what will need review, and what concepts will be ready to start next.

No assessment is perfect. It is difficult to capture all of the amazing learning our students do in our classes in one assessment. The important thing is to “catch it as often as possible” so we can find out how much they know. S. Scott (2004) reminds us to assess often in order to avoid overgeneralizing the results of our assessment. To make sure our students know what we think they know, we must assess each objective more than once. A student having an off day may not be able to clap a set of rhythms in class. The next day could be completely different. Making assessment part of a daily routine gives both the teacher and the students constant and accurate information about progress.

Breaking Down Concepts Into Small, Observable Parts

Performance assessment can be very subjective. An assessment should be objectively and systematically focused on the part of the performance thought to be the most important in that session (S. J. Scott, 2002). Breaking down concepts into objective parts can be the most difficult part of assessment. Musicality is a large concept. Phrasing is a part of musicality that can be broken into objective parts: where to breathe, shaping of the phrase, etc. Once the concept is broken down into smaller, observable pieces, select the ones that will apply the most to the lesson. These parts will be easier to observe but will also allow students to focus on smaller parts as well. Advanced students will be able to do more with those parts and work on more advanced techniques while others are being assessed. Students who are struggling will be able to work on specific portions of the larger concept. Once those portions are achieved, the teacher will be able to model and assign the next steps such as the use of rubato.

Because music educators are trained to listen to and analyze every part of a performance, another difficulty can be evaluating only the small parts chosen for that assessment. When assessing my third grade students as they began reading notation and finding notes on the keyboard, I reinforced but did not assess their rhythm at first. It was their first assignment finding the notes on the keyboard while reading the notes on the page. I assessed their ability to play the correct note based on the notation as well as their ability to play the subsequent notes following the contour of the melody. If the next note is an E and it is higher than the previous note, the student being assessed should play the E to the right of the previous note. As students gained confidence in their note reading abilities, I would stop assessing for notation and contour and begin assessing for steady beat, rhythm, and tempo depending on the song and the abilities of the students.

Options for Assessment Development

There are many options when building a performance rubric or rating scale (see Figure 1 for examples). I prefer a plus/minus system for kindergarten through second grade and a 0- to 3-point system for Grades 3 through 8 because I feel it allows me to collect the data I need to evaluate performance. Duke (2005) suggests using a checklist system of yes or no built with statements that would be shown during an exemplary performance. For example, he would circle yes or no when evaluating a student’s posture; it is either good or it is not. This checklist could have up to 20 yes or no statements to be circled during the assessment. Gordon (1997) describes a rating scale using two or more concepts such as tone or rhythm with five criteria that relate to each concept. He states that using less than five can make the scale unreliable whereas using more than five decreases its validity. In his scale, the criterion for each concept is ordered from least to most difficult. A student playing rhythm patterns might receive a one for playing a familiar rhythm pattern to a steady beat while a student playing a familiar pattern over a polyrhythmic background would receive a five. The important thing is to have a system that works for the person using it while collecting accurate data from the students in the class.

Remember that collection of data for measurement is the goal. Evaluation is applied to the data after it is collected:
two “3s” given during an assessment could be evaluated as an A whereas two “3s” in another assessment could be a C. Evaluation is completed separately.

Rubric Creation and Record Keeping

Creating a strong and flexible rubric takes time and patience. I spent approximately 3 years developing a system that worked for me. I began with kindergarten through second grade because they were difficult to assess on a consistent basis within the 30 minutes allowed once each week for music.

With such a short class time, it became essential to have a system that was quick and accurate. I usually reinforce one major concept visually, aurally, and kinesthetically with three to five activities in each class because of the students’ age and time constraints. Students who catch my attention because they show mastery of the concept by the end of class would receive a plus (+) sign in my attendance book next to the check that shows attendance in class that day (Figure 2). A minus (−) sign would be given to students who were struggling with the concept of the day. The rest of the class would keep their check showing they were in class and were introduced to the concept. These students show competence in their abilities with the concept but lack consistency. If I happen to be assessing two concepts in one session, I write one assessment in the top of the checkbox and the other in the bottom. I then make a note in my grade book which concept was which to give feedback to students and parents. Writing down the assessments of the skill sometime in the middle and then again at the end of class further ensured an accurate record of the day’s class. Attaching these two symbols to records I was required to keep was extremely helpful. When I went to calculate grades, I would decide how many plusses a student would need to be evaluated as “excelling” before I looked at my assessment records and adjust from there for the other levels of evaluation. For example, six or more plusses in a trimester might be “excelling” whereas four or five would be considered “above average” according to our grading scale. If a parent or administrator needed an explanation of the grade, I could give specific details about concepts covered in class and the grades received on a specific day for a specific concept.

Because a music classroom is an interactive environment with continuous movement, it is impossible to see everything that happens during a session. A snapshot of achievement is possible during the monitoring we as teachers do constantly. The system used for my kindergarten through second grade students worked for me because it was adding one more component to records that I was already keeping. If needed, Chiodo (2001) suggests making a seating chart (Figure 3) to help with the speed of writing down grades for the day as well as guaranteeing the correct student receives the correct grade. It is important to make the assessment tool something that is usable, accurate, and quick. Knowing the goal of each lesson and what the students should know by the end of it is important in the assessment process.

For students in Grades 3 through 8, I would pick three or four aspects of the performance that I would observe because it is not necessary to grade every aspect of every performance. It is necessary, however, to have a more in depth assessment rubric because of their age and expected skill level. When my fifth grade classes write a pentatonic melody, the requirements are to use only the five notes in the pentatonic scale, write out the contour of the melody, and write out the rhythms used. I do not grade the phrasing
because this is their first attempt at writing a melody. That does not mean that I ignore phrasing on their individual melodies; it is not part of their grade for this assignment. Although I like to use a 0-to-3 system, a 0-to-5 system could also be used if it will be more descriptive of a student’s performance based on the scope of the assignment and the amount of material. The scale is narrow because it allowed for a quick assessment. This method of assessment allowed me to give immediate feedback to each student on the concepts I selected to observe for an assignment as well as the ability work with each student briefly on any weaknesses in the material. Students work in pairs for this assignment, which cut the amount of melodies to be assessed in half. By the end of a 40-minute class, I have the ability to listen to and grade up to 20 melodies. Having a spreadsheet with the students’ names, blanks to fill in the concepts to be assessed, and blanks to fill in the grades as they are given in a binder can aid in the record-keeping aspect of this assessment. This will allow for the written record to be taken immediately while walking around the room working with students.

**Conclusion**

Performance assessment has been a rewarding experience for my students and me. It has allowed me to see student knowledge and its application in an authentic setting. An assessment does not have to take a long time to administer, but it should show what our students know. An assessment that is simple and quick lets us see our students’ abilities more often while giving needed feedback immediately. Daily performance assessment can give us information that allows us, as teachers, to modify and accommodate lessons specific to the needs of our students. Objective performance assessment can make the assessment quick while allowing for specific feedback. Although no assessment will be able to show everything our students learn, performance assessment can allow us to capture snapshots of our students’ skills as they work on music concepts while guiding the teacher to next steps in instruction.

**Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Funding**

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**References**


Bio

Laura Dunbar has taught ten years as a public school music teacher. She worked three years as a band director for grades 5-12 in a rural Ohio school and seven years as a music teacher for grades K-8 in Sedona, Arizona teaching general, instrumental, choral, and steel drum music. Currently, Laura is a graduate assistant at the University of Arizona working toward a PhD in music education.
INTELLIGENT ASSESSMENT IN GENERAL MUSIC

WHAT CHILDREN SHOULD KNOW AND (BE ABLE TO) DO

by Robert A. Duke

The recent adoption of the National Standards for Arts Education and increasing demands for revised assessment of student accomplishment have the potential to influence positively and profoundly the way music instruction is delivered to children in schools, but the extent to which this potential is realized is in many ways dependent upon the assessments by which the Standards will be measured. Whether designed by state boards, district curriculum committees, or individual teachers for use only in their own classrooms, the assessments inevitably will influence what teachers and students consider most important about music instruction.

Assessments related to the National Standards can do very good things for children (and teachers) by defining with some clarity what children are expected to do with music in and beyond school. But assessments can also perpetuate or even increase the trivialization of music as subject matter by focusing primarily on disconnected, unimportant details and creating unrealistic demands about what must be covered in a given period of instructional time. Trying to squeeze too many ideas, skills, and activities into too little time precludes spending adequate time with any one idea to develop some measure of depth in students' understanding and skill.

Too Little Time—Too Much Stuff

Teaching time is a zero sum game, to borrow the economists' expression, which means that adding time to one topic or activity requires subtracting time from something else. Many recent policy statements in education and most teachers' personal experiences identify time limitations as one of the great impediments to teaching well and accomplishing meaningful goals. Time is as limited as it is precious, and, for many children, time spent in music class is very limited indeed. Choices about what gets time and what does not are perhaps the most consequential decisions that any teacher makes. And it doesn't really matter how much time is available in which to teach. There will always be more to learn than there is time for learning, so whatever gets taught should represent what the teacher believes is most important for students to
learn. But often (and in textbooks, very often) rather than make reasoned decisions about what gets included and what is left out, teachers may attempt to cover everything, but, because of the strictures of time, little of it with any depth. This is not unique to music teaching. In the competition between breadth and depth in all disciplines in education, breadth often wins.

Nearly all music learning involves the development of skills—performance skills, listening skills, writing skills, thinking skills. And any skill development requires consistent, correct repetition over time. A child’s having done something is not the same as that child’s being able to do it again in the future independently. Consider singing as an example. Singing requires practice—consistent, correct repetition. Singing needs to happen a lot. If a teacher’s goal at the end of fifth grade is that children happily volunteer to sing alone or in groups a number of favorite folk songs from the American tradition (and know all the verses) and sing with a pleasing tone and accurate intonation, then children need to sing regularly in school. If the teacher further expects students to be musically literate, then they must not only sing regularly but sing from notation regularly as well.

Now to the extent that students are spending time singing and reading music, they are spending less time doing other things: creating sound pieces with found instruments, playing instruments like the recorder, listening to recordings of orchestral repertoire. Is that OK? Well, if the teacher’s priorities are clear and learning to sing competently and confidently is a principal goal of instruction, of course it’s OK, because the teacher has determined that, at the end of students’ time in music (after fifth grade, for example), the students choose to sing and like it and are good at it.

A child’s having done something is not the same as that child’s being able to do it again in the future independently.

In making a case for more varied music experiences, some teachers might argue, “Well, I can do all the things that comprise music. We’ll sing and play and compose and listen and analyze and...” Can all of these things happen in the limited time available? Possibly. Can all of these activities be addressed with the level of depth required for students to independently apply the knowledge and skills associated with these aspects of musicianship? Absolutely not. Not in thirty minutes every third day.

If a teacher works in an elementary school with a three-day rotation, what is he or she going to teach students in thirty hours of class time each year? There are several choices. One is to expose students to many activities, with little or no opportunity to develop them with depth or connect them in a meaningful way. Or, a teacher may teach children to do a few things really well—so well that students (all of the students) actually become good at them, independent, enjoy them, and perhaps even continue to do them beyond school. This is not to say that students of the teacher for whom singing is a priority will never compose or never play instruments, but these other activities will be woven into the fabric of regular singing. Because there is simply not enough time to do everything with depth, some aspects of musicianship must be given priority and time while others receive less attention.

Even in Math
We in music education have been accused of viewing our colleagues in mathematics with “importance envy,” because mathematics as subject matter seems universally accepted as a vital core component of the curriculum, while music is considered less central to what students need to know. But the problem of breadth overwhelming depth pervades educational practice across many disciplines, including mathematics. Like the arts education community, mathematics educators developed a set of national standards, and the data regarding their implementation illustrate the issue of depth versus breadth.

The first results of the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), the most widely cited assessment comparing the math and science skills of children in forty-one countries throughout the world, including the United States and our major trading partners, reveal once again that eighth-grade students in the United States in mathematics “...are far behind Singapore and Japan which are among the top-scoring nations in the world in both math and science.”1 Unique to the TIMSS were systematic classroom observations of eighth-grade mathematics lessons in Japan, Germany, and the U.S. A total of
231 eighth-grade mathematics lessons taught by a representative sample of teachers in each country were videotaped and analyzed to determine what actually happened in those math classes. The teachers also answered extensive questionnaires about their instructional practices, and experts in the discipline rated the quality of the lessons on the videotapes. Recall that the math scores of Japanese eighth graders are among the highest in the world, and scores of eighth graders in the United States are below the international average.

Observations of mathematics instruction in the United States and Japan revealed striking differences in the way that math is taught in these two countries. Before describing those differences, I ask that you think about some of the so-called common-sense rationales for explaining the differences among students' performances. It has been suggested that Japanese children outperform their American counterparts because Japanese students spend more time in math classes in school each year, Japanese teachers assign more math homework, and Japanese children spend less time watching television. All sound like reasonable explanations. But none is supported by the eighth-grade data from the TIMSS.

What is very different about the students in these countries is the way they spend their time in math classes in school. And one of the most consequential differences is the fact that Japanese eighth-grade math classes cover significantly fewer topics and topic segments than do math classes in the U.S. Less stuff, more depth. In fact, the average numbers of topics and topic segments covered per class in the United States are nearly twice the numbers covered in math classes in Japan. Commensurate with the greater time devoted to each lesson topic, the level of sophistication observed in the Japanese lessons is nearly two grade levels higher than in math classes in the United States. In Japan, 83% of the topics stated were developed in some way during the lesson, and this development included some form of deductive reasoning by students. In the United States, only 22% of the topics stated in the lesson were developed in some way, and none of the United States math lessons observed included opportunities for students to apply deductive reasoning in developing solutions to problems.

It is important to consider that the mathematics community in the United States first set Curriculum and Evaluation Standards in 1989, which were followed by Professional Standards of Teaching Mathematics in 1991 and Assessment Standards in 1995. According to the TIMSS report, "The essence of the recommendations in these reform documents is that instruction should be more than mere mastery of facts and routine skills. It should require students to understand and apply mathematical concepts in new situations." The report goes on to say,

United States teachers believe that they are implementing current reform ideas in their classrooms. When asked specifically to evaluate their videotaped lesson, almost three-fourths of the American teachers rated it as reasonably in accord with current ideas about the teaching and learning of mathematics. They were more than twice as likely to respond this way than...the Japanese...teachers. Teachers who said that the videotaped lesson was in accord with current ideas about the teaching and learning of mathematics were asked to justify their responses. Although the range and variety of responses to this question were great, the vast majority of American teachers' responses pertained to surface features, such as the use of manipulatives or cooperative groups, rather than to the deeper characteristics of instruction, such as the depth of understanding developed by their students.²

The recently released results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress attest to the fact that most children in school are unable to demonstrate the kinds of music skills that all of us would like to see.³ It is also undeniable true that most children who benefit from music instruction in school do not, as adults, demonstrate the types of attitudes, understanding, and skills that we would like for them to demonstrate. Witness the widely acknowledged graying of Ameri-
Teachers may believe, for exams, that students are learning. But learning is an active process. Students learn by what they do, by actively engaging in musical tasks, by using information and skills to accomplish tangible goals, and having the experiences repeatedly. Teachers may believe, for example, that they are "implementing the National Standards," because their students engage in the activities that the Standards describe. But, again, a student's having done something (or, in the lingo of education, a student's having been exposed to something) is not the same as his or her being able to do it independently in the future. To sing, play, analyze, or compose independently and well requires considerable time and repetition.

The recently released results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress attest to the fact that most children in school are unable to demonstrate the kinds of music skills that all of us would like to see.

Write the Tests First

So how can assessments contribute to better preparing students for life beyond music classes in school? How can a teacher develop meaningful, realistic goals that will increase the likelihood that adequate time and attention are given to developing students' musical independence? A helpful first step is to use assessment as a starting place in planning—rather than thinking of assessment only as something that comes at the end—to begin by developing precise descriptions of what students will do to demonstrate that they have learned what has been taught and using assessment as the basis for all subsequent planning of daily instructional activities.

In this way assessment may provide a sense of direction, a sense of purpose, and most importantly, a sense of priority about what students should accomplish in music. If only broadly-stated goals are written at the front-end of instruction, without careful consideration of how those goals will be assessed, then it is possible to include any number of skills and activities, because the goals are written without regard to either the means of determining whether they have been accomplished or the time required to accomplish them. We can say that we want our children to do... well... everything: sing, play, compose, analyze, improvise, criticize. But writing assessments for these goals puts a whole new spin on things. Assessments focus attention, because they require our thinking about a real student walking into a room and actually doing something independently: playing, singing, writing, speaking. It's no longer a matter of what we have done with the student; it's now a matter of what the student does on his own.

There are many ways to evaluate student learning, some of which get to the heart of what's most important while others simply scratch the surface. Our discipline, like all disciplines, comprises innumerable bits of information and skill, any of which can become a part of assessment criteria. We can ask students to fill in the missing note values in incomplete measures, sing a descending minor third, spell triads, and define the word recapitulation, but it would be a mistake to conclude that a student who can obtain the correct responses on a test of these bits will necessarily apply the bits to some meaningful whole in the future.

What's important about this issue is that the kinds of things that appear on tests are the kinds
of things that students, parents, teachers, and administrators come to believe are important. Want to get students' attention about what they're learning? Tell them they'll be tested on it. Want to get teachers' attention about what they're teaching? Tell them their students will be given a standardized test on it. Want to get administrators' attention? Tell them the students in their school will be given a standardized test and the results will be published in the newspaper. Now if tests have this kind of effect on teachers and learners, it becomes especially important that the tests embody what experts (i.e., we teachers) believe are the most important, substantive, and meaningful aspects of the discipline.

If the tests include only disconnected bits, it's not hard to imagine how children will fail to grasp what it means to be a literate, accomplished learner.

As an example, think about how we commonly evaluate what children know about tonality and key. Tests related to this issue most often are composed of items in which a key signature is presented and students are asked to identify the key name or, conversely, the name of a key is given and students are asked to supply the key signature. On many examinations, this is the extent of it. Although there certainly is nothing harmful about being able to say that a key signature with two sharps could be D major, knowing only that is pretty useless. It's the kind of information that Alfred North Whitehead called "inert knowledge"—information that is generally not useful because it's not connected with anything else. Many children who get the correct answer, if asked to explain a little deeper, might say that, "you go up one from the last sharp," or something similar. But the fact that the last sharp happens to be the leading tone in the major key (so if you "go up one" from the last sharp you will have identified the tonic of the major key) is merely coincidence. Knowing this, by itself, is to know nothing meaningful about tonality in common practice tertian harmony. So why is it that many students learn this fact and understand little or nothing else about tonality? Because this is what appears on the test, and because it's on the test, students (and teachers perhaps) come to believe that this is what's important to know about tonality and key. But is it really?

Daniel Koshland, former editor of Science, the most prestigious interdisciplinary science journal published in the U.S., wrote that much of what is stimulating, engaging, and rewarding about the practice of science and math (i.e., doing science and math) is virtually absent in many math and science classes in school. In school, children learn the four ways that ... and the five characteristics of ... and the three things that lead to ... and to write Ohm's Law. And when that's the sum total of your knowledge of science, it is doubtful that you will understand what's so potentially cool about doing science. This is not a new idea. Jerome Bruner articulated the very same point nearly forty years ago.

So it is, often, in general music. Bright, musically sophisticated children enter music classrooms and rehearsal halls in school, ready to "do music," but often engage in activities that are quite unlike what most musicians in real life (including us) would describe as interesting or engaging or embodying the core principles of musicianship. How can this be? It may be, at least in part, because we have not planned clear and explicit assessment criteria—criteria that convey a vision of our students as accomplished learners.

Musical Meaningful Assessment

So how do we change this? By changing the nature of the assessments themselves. In general, the more compartmentalized the assessment tasks and the less these tasks involve the application of knowledge and skills in the practice of genuine musical behavior (performing, listening and explaining, creating), the less likely it is that students will come to develop skills that will persist
Beyond school. Meaningful, intelligent assessments involve students actually behaving musically in ways that real people do in real life beyond school.

One of the greatest impediments to our thinking creatively about this process is that we’ve all gone to school ourselves. And through our school experiences, we’ve developed habits of thought that do not necessarily lead to our focusing on the core principles of our discipline. This is not unique to music instruction. It pervades public education in every field of study. We often learn disconnect ed minutiae about math or science or social studies, wondering how anyone could possibly find this stuff interesting.

If assessments are to be useful, they must comprise students’ actually doing with music the things that teachers believe are most important, whether singing, playing, composing, or writing or speaking about music. They must involve students in active tasks that are just like what we hope children will do with music beyond school. Within this frame of thinking, vocabulary tests are replaced with brief writing or speaking assignments that focus on using music vocabulary, because knowing the definition of a word is not the same as using it to express ideas. Listening and reading assignments are evaluated with informal discussions or brief essays in which students describe what they know and use the information to communicate with others. Tests of naming note values or counting rhythms are replaced with students’ performing from notation.

**Goals = Activities = Assessment**

The National Standards provide an excellent starting place for making decisions about our vision of students as accomplished learners. But I would like to offer the following edition in the subtitle of the Standards document: Replace “what students should know and be able to do” with “what students should know and do.” Now this may seem at first like ivory tower hair splitting, but deciding what students should be able to do is consequentially different than deciding what they should do.

In our own experiences as learners there are many things that we know about and many things that we’re able to do that are not part of our ongoing life experience. Think of the large proportion of the literate population of the United States who do not read for pleasure—ever. Consider this in light of the countless hours, dollars, and efforts devoted to teaching children “to be able to read.” I doubt that most language arts teachers are satisfied with the absence of reading as a central part of most adults’ lives. So what’s the problem?

Perhaps amidst all our efforts to teach students to be able to read, we failed to teach many of them to read independently—to like to read or to choose to read or to want to read. How could we miss this? Perhaps it’s because we began by thinking about what children need to know first, second, third, fourth, and so on, rather than beginning with a clear and vivid image of our students as accomplished learners, as adults in their own time, choosing to read as a means of gathering information, as a means of learning new ideas, as a means of experiencing vicariously the lives of others, as a means of finding humor in the human condition, all the things that reading can bring.

To think differently about planning music instruction, consider beginning with a vision of students as accomplished, literate, inquisitive, skilled, thinking musicians. What does that vision look like? If we take the time to actually describe accomplished learners with some precision—again, not in terms of what they’re able to do, but in terms of what they do with music—and if that description is sufficiently explicit, then we have defined simultaneously not only the assessment criteria but the goals of instruction and the nature of the daily class activities as well. All in a single stroke.

We’ve all heard the often espoused adage that “teaching for the test is a bad thing.” But this is true only if the test is a dumb test; that is, if the test fails to address the most meaningful, important, and substantive aspects of the discipline. If the test does in fact embody the most important, meaningful, and substantive aspects of the discipline, then I would argue that teaching for the test is precisely what we should be doing every day, because “the test” (i.e., the assessment criteria) and the objectives-goals-outcomes (depending on which decade you completed your undergraduate studies in education) are the same thing. But all of this rests on the premise that the test reflects our vision of students as accomplished learners. If it does, then we have taken a very big step toward clari-
fying our expectations for our students and for ourselves and have defined what needs to happen in class every day.

If the assessment criteria reflect the application of knowledge and skills, then we can plan our daily activities to make certain that students practice the assessment criteria every time we meet them.

This way of thinking about assessment shifts the emphasis away from the activities that take place in general music and the repertoire that is performed in choir, band, or orchestra, and toward the fundamental skills of intelligent, literate, musicianship that all of us intend for our students to learn. The point of our instructional practice is not, after all, to teach students to perform a particular piece or to participate in a given activity. The music repertoire and instructional activities are only the experiences through which we develop knowledge and skills that (hopefully) will be applicable, meaningful, and useful beyond school. It is these lifelong musical and intellectual skills that teachers are working hard to develop, because they form the basis of what students will take with them when they leave school.

If the assessment criteria reflect the application of knowledge and skills, then we can plan our daily activities to make certain that students practice the assessment criteria every time we meet them. Think of how this may change the way we evaluate what we’re doing. It permits us to examine every day how the experiences that we provide our students are connected to deep understanding, competent, confident performance, and lasting appreciation of a profound form of human expression.

Notes
Including Special Learners: Providing Meaningful Participation in the Music Class

By Victoria S. Hagedorn

Victoria S. Hagedorn is a music teacher at Walsingham Elementary School in Pinellas County, Florida.

It is common practice for music educators to be responsible for teaching students with special learning needs who have been included in the general education classroom. According to Sobol, “Music educators need to be sure that if a student is mainstreamed into the music program, all accommodations applicable to the program are met for successful inclusion” (2001, p. 9). But how do music teachers know if they are providing meaningful instructional experiences for these children?

Hammel suggests that one of the top ten considerations for students mainstreamed in the music program is for the music educator to access Individual Education Plan (IEP) summaries or profiles on all special learners in their classes (2004). She further advises the music educator to ask a special education staff member to assist with reviewing the profiles and navigating around the alphabet soup of acronyms associated with special education. In addition, she recommends that the music teacher review the behavior management plans in place for the special-needs students, as well as what curricular adaptations are suggested on the IEP along with how the students can best participate (e.g. alone, with an assistant, with a peer). Following are a few questions to guide the music educator toward providing meaningful musical experiences for special-needs students in their classrooms.

What is the IEP?

The IEP is a planning document that guides placement decisions and instruction for students with disabilities. The IEP describes in writing the student’s strengths, areas in which the child may need special assistance, the educational goals for the student, and objectives the child must attain to reach those goals. Further it provides information about who will assist the student in successfully completing his or her goals, services that must be provided to the student, ways the child will take part in the general education program in the school, a date when such activities will be completed, and how the plan will be evaluated.

Adamek (1998) stated that while the procedure for actually writing the IEP varies among school districts, these mandates must be met:

1. Assessment information about the child’s current level of functioning
2. Long and short term goals and objectives for the student
3. Plans for initiating services and the duration of each
4. Plans for providing specific educational services and to what extent the student will be involved in general education
5. Criteria for evaluating the student’s progress.

“All professionals who are involved with the student are expected to participate in some level on the written plan and/or at the annual evaluation meeting” (Adamek, p. 8).

How will I implement student participation from the IEP?

First, the music teacher will need to gather information about the student and organize it in an effective way. Start with the IEP and create a student profile (see figure 1). This would be the appropriate time to ask another colleague for assistance in reading the IEP, as suggested by Hammel (2004).

Second, focus on how the IEP learning priorities can be fit into instruction throughout the day. In the case of the music classroom, one can create a list to see where the learning needs of that child can be met within the music curriculum. Third, plan your instruction to meet the child’s learning needs. You will need to decide how the student will participate and provide the necessary accommodations or modifications to the music curriculum. Finally, you will want to evaluate the impact of the student’s participation in the music program by assessing and documenting student progress (see figure 2).

An example

There are a variety of ways to structure a student profile, but for the purposes of this column we will use one developed by Beech and colleagues (2002) as seen in figure 3. The student, “Susie,” is a primary-age child with special learning needs. She is mainstreamed or included full time in a general education class and comes with that class to music each week. A review of her IEP reveals that she needs to increase her language skills, increase her visual understanding (identifying letters, etc.), improve her fine motor skills, be provided with age-appropriate activities, and be encouraged to view and enact social skills.

How can we accommodate her general learning goals during music instruction? She will need modeling of music activities to participate. Therefore, the teacher will have to demonstrate through gestures, pictures, and movement the tasks Susie is to complete. The music teacher will find it necessary to provide opportunities for repeated instruction. For example, the teacher will want to repeat directions and song material and give many practice opportunities for playing the classroom instruments. It may be necessary for Susie to have her hands positioned by the teacher for her to hold instruments or other manipulatives. She may require hand-over-hand assistance from the teacher in playing classroom instruments. The teacher will want to think about and choose an appropriate peer who will model good social skills to sit next to Susie. Susie and the teacher will communicate through pictures and gestures as she approximates words and verbal language.

How will I know if the instruction I am providing is meaningful?

Applying the rubric from figure 2 (Beech, et al. 2002), we can see that Susie is participating successfully based on information gleaned...
from the IEP. She is learning priority skills in the music setting, which occurs naturally for all kindergarteners. Susie is interacting with nondisabled peers, and her learning goals are meaningful in the music context. Furthermore, she is participating in various groupings (whole-class, partner, individually) and has been provided accommodations to help her participate, such as assistance via pictures, gestures, help with manipulating objects. (See figure 4).

Applying the scoring rubric, we see that Susie scores in the 3–4 range. This indicates that she is actively engaged in learning at the kindergarten level and is making progress towards her IEP goals and objectives. She is meaningfully participating in the music program at this time.

Summary

With some extra work on the part of the music teacher, students with special learning needs can have meaningful experiences in the music classroom that can be verified. It does take extra effort on the part of the music educator to research the student’s IEP and make the profile, but the child as well as the teacher will benefit from such an undertaking.

References


Figure 1. Student profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Teacher:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Priorities (goals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student strengths/interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations/Modifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior support strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Rubric indicators

To what extent does the student’s instruction ensure meaningful participation? Indicate the degree to which each of the indicators is observed by marking the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaningful Participation Indicators</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Infrequently</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The student’s participation reflects information from his/her IEP and other sources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The student is learning IEP priority skills throughout the day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Skills are learned in setting in which they would naturally be used.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The student has opportunities to interact/learn with nondisabled peers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The learning goals are meaningful for the student now and in the future.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The student participates in varied instructional groupings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Accommodations/modifications are provided as necessary.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The student is actively engaged in learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Activities/materials are age-appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Student progress towards IEP goals/objectives is measured and documented on a regularly scheduled basis.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- If most boxes checked are in columns 0/1, there is little evidence of meaningful participation.
- If most boxes checked are in column 2, you need to think how you can increase the degree of meaningful participation.
- If most boxes checked are in columns 3/4, the child is participating meaningfully in instruction.

### Student Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Susie</th>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Classroom Teacher:** Mrs. XYZ

### Learning Priorities (goals)
- Increase language skills
- Increase visual understanding (id. letters, musical notation)
- Improve fine motor skills
- Provide age-appropriate activities
- Work on social skills

### Student strengths/interests
- Friendly
- Motivated
- Cooperative
- Imitative

### Accommodations/Modifications
- Provide modeling to the student
- Provide repeated instruction
- Assist in positioning in order to hold instruments
- Seat next to appropriate peer
- Give hand-over-hand assistance as needed

### Behavior support strategies
None listed on IEP

### Communication
- Uses some PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)
- Uses gestures
- Approximates words

### Health/Other
- Comes from family that speaks a language other than English

Adapted from Fisher, Frey, and Sax, 1999, *Inclusive Elementary Schools* for the Meaningful Participation Workshops by the Florida Department of Education.
### Figure 4. Rubric for "Susie" in music class

To what extent does the student's instruction ensure meaningful participation? Indicate the degree to which each of the indicators is observed by marking the appropriate box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaningful Participation Indicators</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The student's participation reflects information from his/her IEP and other sources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The student is learning IEP priority skills throughout the day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Skills are learned in setting in which they would naturally be used.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The student has opportunities to interact/learn with nondisabled peers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The learning goals are meaningful for the student now and in the future.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The student participates in varied instructional groupings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Accommodations/modifications are provided as necessary.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The student is actively engaged in learning.</td>
<td></td>
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*If most boxes checked are in columns 0/1, there is little evidence of meaningful participation.*

*If most boxes checked are in column 2, you need to think how you can increase the degree of meaningful participation.*

*If most boxes checked are in columns 3/4, the child is participating meaningfully in instruction.*

The Call for Accountability
Douglas C. Orzolek
Journal of Music Teacher Education 2012 22: 3
DOI: 10.1177/1057083712452260

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://jmt.sagepub.com/content/22/1/3

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>> Version of Record - Sep 13, 2012
What is This?
The Call for Accountability

Douglas C. Orzolek¹

You are likely aware that the Society for Music Teacher Education (SMTE) and the *Journal of Music Teacher Education (JMTE)* have recently celebrated their 30th and 20th anniversaries, respectively. In thinking about the columns that I will write for the upcoming issues of *JMTE*, I spent some time reading the earliest issues of the journal as a means to reflect on the kinds of things that were of concern at the inception of the organization and its main means of communication. It was quite interesting to learn that some of the issues that we face today are quite similar to those of yesteryear. In the very first issue of our journal, Irma Collins (1991) wrote,

This new journal can and should act as a forum for philosophical inquiry into these and other issues that daily surround us in higher education. With greater attention given to thinking and writing, we can become true scholars of music education, not just practitioners. (p. 1)

With that in mind, I plan to use my space in the *JMTE* as an opportunity to provide a snapshot of the problems we are confronting in this day and age.

One of the largest issues of the day is the general crusade for accountability in education. Of course, today’s accountability movement in schools is part of a much larger movement toward greater responsibility, liability, and culpability in all aspects of our world—government, businesses, entertainment, sports, basically everything. An analysis of the derivation of that call suggests that much of the trouble may have begun in various sectors of the business world, but it has carried over to nearly every other facet of our lives.

Finding a specific definition of accountability is very difficult, yet there seems to be general consensus that purpose of accountability is good and helpful. When describing accountability in the business world, we often hear about models that involve setting goals and objectives, determining how to meet the goals, listing the resources that will be needed, and describing specific outcomes if those goals are met or unmet. In every instance, the communication of each and every aspect of the accountability plan must be communicated to all those involved. In addition, employees are provided the

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opportunity to question any of the disparities that exist in the plan. Once the process has been completed, there should be some sort of report related to the project.

When we consider the call for accountability in education, some of those very same themes and ideas have been sounded. But, the very complex nature of teaching and learning makes accountability in schools much more complicated than a simple report. For one thing, too many in the education workforce have not had any say in the policies that have been developed to “improve” education. And, of course, any educational policy or business model cannot take into account the complexities of learning and teaching in our schools. As a close friend always reminds me, “We don’t teach widgets, we teach people. Business models can’t work in schools.”

We are all aware of the trends and paths that accountability in education has taken over the past few years. As a means to hold schools accountable for student learning, tests are given to students and those scores were subsequently reported out to the public. That approach has created a firestorm of criticism of the education community since the test results did not produce the desired results. However, the use of high-stakes testing is also coming under condemnation. Diane Ravitch (2011) addressed this issue well when she said, “testing should be used for diagnostic purposes, to help students and teachers, but it has turned into a blunt instrument that is used to reward and punish teachers and schools.” Ravitch goes on to outline that the results of this accountability system have merely given fodder to those who call for the application of a more business-looking accountability system for education. What they forget is that the tests were designed to measure whether or not a student was reading at the proper level, not whether or not the school is failing.

Current trends in K–12 school systems seem to be pointing the finger toward the development of teacher evaluation systems as yet another means to hold education accountable for our efforts. There are all kinds of assessment and evaluation tools being espoused as a means to negotiate these waters—value-added models, observational instruments, the collection of student materials as evidence of student learning, self-reflections, and internally developed instruments. These measures or some combination of them, may provide us with some information about a teacher’s impact on learning in their classrooms, but as Janet Barrett (2011) noted, these measures lack the moral dimensions of teachers’ work, the mutuality of teaching and learning, the contextual conditions that constrain teachers and sometimes provoke them to respond, the methodological complexities of measuring and judging quality, and the ways that prevalent belief systems skew our conceptions of quality teaching toward certain dimensions over others. (p. 2)

Many of our SMTE members have become deeply entrenched in the teacher evaluation movement that has become prevalent across the country. There is no doubt that the issues surrounding teacher evaluation are complicated and constantly evolving. For its part, SMTE has been maintaining a teacher evaluation portal on its website that includes resources and updates on current models from across the country. In addition, both the 2011 Greensboro Symposium and the 2012 NAfME Conference featured
discussions about music teacher evaluation. And, in the coming years, it is likely that SMTE will engage in some of the actions suggested by immediate past chair, Janet Barrett (2011). For example, it may be important for SMTE to develop a new ASPA (Area for Strategic Planning and Action) aimed at looking at music teacher evaluation. Furthermore, we have all come to understand and realize that the assessment of student learning in music is very complex. Our organization will likely need to work with others to continue to develop more understanding of this complex facet of our work.

The call for accountability, however, has recently extended beyond the evaluation of K–12 educators. As I am sure many of you have experienced, institutions of higher education are also being asked to describe how learning takes place on their campuses. And, as was the case in our K–12 programs, numerous ideas about how to determine the successes and failures of a college education permeate the discussions. To be fair, however, much of this call is because of the ever-increasing costs of higher education, but it appears that colleges are heeding the request. In his recent New York Times opinion piece, David Brooks (2012) suggests that higher education is “not reacting to the idea of testing and accountability with blanket hostility,” but rather it “embraces the idea of assessment.” Furthermore, Brooks suggests that higher education needs to seek and find a way to “enact it in a way that’s real and transparent to outsiders.” There are more questions as to what and how those assessments might be used, but it is clear that the higher education community will be working on this for years to come.

At my own institution, the accountability movement is active and thriving and requests for information about student learning are regularly appearing in my inbox. But, I believe it exists in a healthy environment that allows professors the space to investigate our successes and failures as a means to better our work. Many of our departments have developed a system to investigate learning through review of student artifacts, tests, surveys, external accreditation, and feedback from external evaluators. Currently, all of that information is gathered and analyzed as part of a “voluntary” accountability approach wholly aimed at helping us to clarifying our goals and objectives. In addition, throughout the process we are asked to consider two questions: What do we want students to learn? And, how will we know when they have learned it well? To date, we have not developed a good means to report our findings, but the reflection and analysis of our work has already caused many of us to make changes within our course offerings and degree programs. Our leadership has made the development of a reporting mechanism a major priority for the upcoming academic year.

And that perhaps is the biggest challenge of the accountability movement—finding a means to report and disseminate our results and findings about learning. In some cases, some of those asked to provide a report offer all sorts of reasons for not measuring and reporting progress or regression. Some of those include the fact that “success will be self evident”, or “it is too difficult to measure”, or “we don’t have the resources or ability” or, my personal favorite, “it can’t be measured.” I am hopeful that models will be developed in the coming years that will help us articulate and educate others about all of the good work that is done in our settings. And, I find it quite likely that many of those models will stem from those involved with teacher preparation since we are already entrenched in examining the work of our students very carefully.
For music teacher preparation, the call for greater accountability is happening on top of what is already a very complex labyrinth of tests, standards, disposition assessments, performance assessments and hurdles that need to be negotiated on the way to developing high-quality music educators. We have all been engaged with incorporating pieces of these requirements into our courses, amending coursework and projects, and modifying our personal approaches to assist our students in their preparation to meet them. With that, music teacher educators have become innovative, flexible, and more active in the policies that are the origin of the accountability. But, we too will need to find ways to report the good work that profession is doing.

As Eunice Boardman (1992) reminded us, our organization, SMTE, was intended to be a “forum for the identification and solution of common problems among the constituency.” I have no doubt that the accountability movement and the reporting mechanisms involved with it will rise to the forefront of our concern list. And while it is likely to test our patience and force us to question many of the things that we have done for years, I believe that the reflection and thinking that we will do will help advance the profession. For its role in this movement, SMTE will need to ensure that it continues to support the needs of its members by creating opportunities for member to engage in critical and discerning thought about the evolution of music teacher education.

Charles Leonhard (1991) wrote, “Music teacher educators are the elite in the profession and bear ultimate responsibility for progress in education.” Although some may find that to be a bit arrogant, I couldn’t agree more. I have seen it in the research, writings, and presentations of our colleagues. I have found it in the amazing work done by our ASPAs. I see it in the work presented by our graduate students during our conferences. And, I see it in the astonishing efforts put forth by the SMTE board. While I have a deep appreciate for all of our board members, I do wish to extend my sincere appreciation to Margaret Schmidt, David Rickels, Paul Doerksen, and Susan Conkling who are completing their terms as of July 2012. In addition, Linda Thompson completes her term as past chair. Linda’s presence and leadership will be missed, but she has worked hard to ensure that SMTE’s efforts will continue to strive forward. Thanks to all of you!

References
As Henry Ford said, "Thinking is hard work; that's why so few people do it." Teaching people to think is not only hard work, it is a challenge that experts say may be made more difficult with lecture presentations and authoritarian teaching styles. While college professors may expect their students to think reflectively, few may be aware that traditional higher education teaching practices may inhibit student development in reflective thinking. Many college freshmen believe that problems are well structured. As Schon asserts, however, and as many teachers know from experience, the world of the practicing teacher is fraught with complexity, uncertainty, and conflict. Problems in today's classrooms are not well structured. Thus, for those of us who prepare students to enter the "swampy lowland where situations are confusing messes incapable of technical solution," traditional higher education teaching practices need to be supplemented with those that encourage student inquiry and the development of reflective thinking.

**What Is Reflective Thinking?**

Dewey defined reflective thought as "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends." Thinking involves logical problem solving that begins with perplexity and ends with a reasoned solution. Perplexity prompts the question and shapes the definition of the problem.

Ennis, who advocates nurturing dispositions and abilities related to the
development of thinking skills as early as elementary school, embedded the term "reflective" in his definition of critical thinking: "Critical thinking is reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do." Paul stated, "Critical thinking is thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better." Nosich interpreted Paul's comments as follows:

What then is the critical thinker for Paul? It is someone who is able to think well and fairly not just about her own beliefs and viewpoints, but about beliefs and viewpoints that are diametrically opposed to her own. And not just to think about them, but to explore and appreciate their adequacy, their cohesion, their very reasonableness vis-a-vis her own. More, a person who thinks critically is not just willing and able to explore alien, potentially threatening viewpoints, but she also desires to do so. She questions her own deeply held beliefs, and if there are no opposing viewpoints ready at hand, she seeks them out or constructs them herself.

Confronted with observations that are at odds with their current understandings, thinkers grow puzzled or confused. In this state of confusion, independent reflective thinkers pose questions and begin to explore. Often when students are confused, however, they turn to experts to clear their confusion. How can experts turn student confusion into puzzles that students want to solve, especially when solving puzzles necessitates a process of inquiry that students have not experienced? In bringing their students to a belief that perplexity, confusion, and puzzlement are important precursors to interesting intellectual activity, teachers of reflective thinking focus on improving the quality of student inquiry.

Developing Reflective Thinking

Based on interviews conducted with Harvard undergraduate males, Perry proposed a scheme of intellectual and ethical development that reflects student perceptions of their teachers' roles and their roles in the learning process. Perry's model defines four categories that describe qualitative differences in students' epistemological growth.

Stage 1: Dualism. Perry's model describes students at the first stage of development as dualists. Convinced that a right answer exists, they turn to authority for the answers. Their world is one of polarities: good or bad, right or wrong, and black or white. Their tolerance for ambiguity is limited, their
reading is literal, and their reliance on authority is absolute. Given this perspective, Knefelkamp and Slepitza suggest that students at this level need plans that are simple and straightforward, for they lack the intellectual ability to analyze and synthesize. They require emotional support as they rely less on authority and more on themselves. Trust must be established between teacher and student and the environment made safe so the student’s courage is sufficiently bolstered. Speaking metaphorically, students at this level do not need a driver, but they do need a road map, a compass, and a number to call.

Stage 2: Multiplicity. Still intolerant of ambiguity, the greater profusion of choices at this stage often induces greater anxiety and confusion in students. While less reliant on an authority for the answer, these students continue to require emotional support from their teachers in their process of inquiry. Knefelkamp and Slepitza found that the locus of control remains largely external for students in this stage of their development, but as students are pressed to explore views on issues that are different from their own, they eventually become less rigid and less egocentric.

At this stage in their development, students need to be encouraged to find alternative views to their own. Evidence should be sought in support of their own and others’ views so the validity of each can be evaluated. Because the task of seeking and evaluating multiple views requires analysis and synthesis on the part of students, teachers may have to assist the students’ management of this complex task. The task may need to be broken into smaller parts to be performed sequentially. The teacher may need to help the students organize a systematic evaluation of multiple views.

Stage 3: Relativism. Relativism describes Perry’s third stage of intellectual development, the level at which the locus of control moves inward and students learn to analyze alternative views objectively. Not only are they able to explore alternatives, they seek to understand and examine them. No longer dependent upon the teacher as authority or the teacher’s plan as authoritative, students at this stage are more comfortable with teachers as guides. Teachers sustain the students’ process of inquiry through interactive dialogues often initiated by the students.

Stage 4: Commitment within Relativism. Gradually, the skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation learned during relativism are refined as students accept a point of view supported by evidence found during their process of inquiry. At this stage, teachers are merely facilitators in what is, by now, an independent learning cycle. What results is “constructed knowledge,” the most sophisticated “way of knowing” among Belenky’s five epistemological categories (silence, received knowledge,
subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge. Both Perry's and Belenky's frameworks provide guidance for the teacher interested in the development of reflective thinking skills. As guides for educational practice, Perry's and Belenky's models for intellectual development allow teachers to form expectancies about the behavior and needs of their students based on qualitative differences in thinking at each of the developmental levels.

Informed by Perry's initial conceptualization of a developmental sequence in reflective thinking, Kitchener and King posit a reflective judgment model for adult intellectual development. King asserts that the development of reflective thinking in students is directed by four assumptions about the process of learning:

Assumption 1: Individuals interpret their experiences, and their constructed understandings inevitably reflect their epistemic level.

Assumption 2: Meaning making matures over time if students interact qualitatively with subject content.

Assumption 3: The quality of an interaction will determine the degree of intellectual development.

Assumption 4: Intellectual development is not linear, but fluctuates in response to the learning environment.

Therefore, when a subject is taught in an authoritarian manner and the problems considered are irrelevant to the students' lives, students learn to be intimidated by the subject matter, and development slows. The progression of development is contingent upon finding a match between the student's current level of intellectual functioning and the nature of interactions offered within the classroom environment.

When a subject is taught in an authoritarian manner and the problems considered are irrelevant to the students' lives, students learn to be intimidated by the subject matter, and development slows.

Implications for Teacher Education

A move to methods of teaching more conducive to the development of reflective thinking in large teacher education universities will require institutional support in a spirit of collegiality. For instance, the leadership at our institution has offered faculty seminars with Donald Schon, Pat King, and Jesse Goodman, as well as with other authorities in the field of reflective thinking practice. The community of interested faculty is growing on our campus, linked by common ideals, electronic mail, and research interests. Together, we are seeking ways to provoke student-initiated inquiry within large groups traditionally designed for lecture presentations. Our students read outside of class and speak to us through their journal entries. Classtime is used to discuss issues raised in journals, to try out teaching ideas in a relatively nonjudgmental laboratory setting, and to practice self-evaluation following a clinical experience.

In a class designed for “reflec-
tion-in-action," upper-level undergraduates in music education learned Indonesian and African music through participation in university ensembles, reflected on their experiences as learners, and, on that basis, planned their teaching approaches with elementary children. After the learning phase in which the students reflected upon their strategies for mastering the music, students wrote teaching plans based, in part, on the way they had learned the musical material. In the teaching phase, they piloted their plans at a neighboring school that cooperates with the university in innovative projects such as this. After each field visit, the undergraduate students and the professor met together to evaluate their progress and to revise or refine the plan before their next visit. At the end of the Indonesian unit, the elementary children visited the college and played a Balinese gamelan with undergraduates and graduates in music education and ethnomusicology. The culminating activity in the African unit was a school visit by members of the university African drumming ensemble who taught the school children to dance the gahu from Ghana. When the college ensemble appeared at the community arts festival, many of the elementary children attended and danced with members of the community.

Conclusion

Didactic teaching styles place the teacher in a role of authority and may inhibit students' development as reflective thinkers. By contrast, teachers in classrooms designed to encourage the development of reflective thinking move from the center to the periphery as the students' locus of control moves from external to internal. Teachers of reflective thinking, conscious of developmental levels and of the particular organizational and emotional needs of their students at the different levels, focus on improvement of the quality of their students' process of inquiry. These teachers guide and expand, question and support, and challenge their students in order to produce self-reliant, reflective future teachers.

Teachers of reflective thinking, conscious of developmental levels and of the particular organizational and emotional needs of their students at the different levels, focus on improvement of the quality of their students' process of inquiry.

An important assumption held by teachers of reflective thinking is that knowledge is constructed by students, not given by teachers. A teacher education class that builds reflective thinkers offers students the freedom to define their own problems, to reflect upon and discover their own solutions, and to test their solutions without fear of reprisal should the solutions prove faulty on the first try. Successful teachers thoughtfully define problems, spontaneously generate solutions, and satisfactorily evaluate them. The mark of success in such a teaching laboratory is not the most perfect musical product.
When a student can articulate problems, generate strategies for solutions, and evaluate solutions, he or she is practicing the sort of "on the spot reflection and experiment" that Schon espouses.

but the most thoughtful musical experience for all participants. When a student can articulate problems, generate strategies for solutions, and evaluate solutions, he or she is practicing the sort of "on the spot reflection and experiment" that Schon espouses. 19

What results is a transformation in students from passive recipients to active participants.

Notes


4. Schon, 42.


12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.


17. Kurfiss, Critical Thinking.


Growing as a Professional Music Educator
Phillip K. Hesterman

*General Music Today* 2012 25: 36 originally published online 19 January 2012
DOI: 10.1177/1048371311435274

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://gmt.sagepub.com/content/25/3/36

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>> Version of Record - Feb 24, 2012

OnlineFirst Version of Record - Jan 19, 2012

What is This?
Growing as a Professional Music Educator

Phillip K. Hesterman

Abstract

Education is a lifelong adventure that is ever-changing and active. Educators continually adapt their practices to meet the needs of an ever-changing population of children flowing through the schools. It is advantageous for teachers to be committed to lifelong learning for their own professional and personal development. As a novice teacher becomes more adept in the profession, new reflections and new perspectives can bring into focus additional ways to improve one’s teaching, classroom demeanor, and the like. Professional interactions with other teachers are important for the music teacher to facilitate a dialogue for growth for the music teacher. Teachers who are learners throughout their careers realize that they are not the source of all knowledge pertaining to music. Good teaching practices are defined according to current educational thought, especially when the educator incorporates learner analysis and reflection into teaching and not only the acquisition of knowledge and imitation.

Keywords

lifelong learning, music teacher education, professional development, recruitment and retention

The marks on the hall closet door recorded the height of the children from kindergarten through their senior year of high school. Visiting grandparents were often heard exclaiming through the years, “Oh, how you have grown!” The visible marks on the door were records of the children’s growth, and the visual observations by grandparents were a recognition that the children had changed in appearance since the grandparents’ last visit. Growth as a professional music educator is not recorded by marks on a door, nor can the casual observer look at a music educator after a particular professional growth experience and exclaim, “Oh, how you have grown!” Growth in a professional music educator is usually measured in the results brought forth in the classroom with the students. This article will show various ways that music educators can experience professional growth activities that feed their professional selves and benefit their students.

Preservice Teachers and the Undergraduate Program

Preservice teachers experience growth through their college methods courses, various practicum experiences, and student teaching. As new teachers establish themselves in their careers and schools, they develop into more mature educators. It might seem unrealistic for new teachers to take advantage of professional growth opportunities, since they have recently completed 4 or 5 years of undergraduate education. Just as a young child does not stop growing in the early years, novice teachers will find that professional growth is possible and necessary.

Experienced teachers play an important role in modeling how a person grows as a professional music educator. At one time, these veteran teachers were themselves the preservice teachers and the new teachers. How did these veteran teachers become the master teachers they are today? They grew through the years, integrating ideas into their teaching that they learned along the way. Growth prevents stagnation and opens doors of renewal and opportunity throughout a teacher’s career.

It would be naive to assume that all experienced teachers are master teachers and that all mentors are good mentors. Although there are those who believe master teacher awards and years of service make an educator a master teacher, I would propose that the definition of a master teacher is based on intangible qualities. Among those intangible qualities would be mastery of classroom management, exceptional communication skills, putting students first, and holding high expectations of themselves and their students. True master teachers incessantly

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DOI: 10.1177/1048371311435274
http://gmt.sagepub.com
pursue opportunities to improve themselves as professional educators.

As undergraduate music education majors plot a route through courses in music, education, and teaching methods, they might wonder what connection this program will have with the professional person that they will become in a few short years. Undergraduate music education programs seek to relate the content of the courses offered to the so-called real world of the classroom, not only preparing preservice educators for the day-to-day activities of a teaching job but also imparting intangible understandings of life as an educator.

Collegiate music teacher education programs attempt to provide students with a variety of experiences from which they can formulate their own understandings of music, education, and music education. With appropriate guidance, prospective teachers learn how practice arises from theory, belief, and educational philosophy. An underlying connection should exist among the undergraduate music education courses in the best-case scenario, so that there is a focus on authentic musical practice and authentic music learning processes and on the understandings that underlie and facilitate the practice and process (Wiggins, 2007).

Jean Lave, a social anthropologist and social learning theorist, along with Etienne Wenger, an educational theorist and practitioner, developed the principle of legitimate peripheral participation, which is the key principle behind a learning theory titled situated learning. Lave and Wenger based their theory on case studies of how novices gain knowledge in various occupational groups that are not customarily set apart by formal instruction. Lave and Wenger propose that legitimate peripheral participation is the key. The case studies included traditional midwives in Yucatan, tailors in Liberia, butchers in supermarkets, and quartermasters in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Using the theory of situated learning, the idea of apprenticeship for preservice music teachers takes on a new appearance. Such an apprenticeship could be in the form of a practicum experience or student teaching. Teacher preparation that includes a significant amount of field-based experiences, especially in the early stages of learning how to teach, can pay great dividends for the undergraduate student. It should be noted, however, that there is no magical formula that can guarantee success for every undergraduate student. Situated learning consists of access to exemplars of music-teaching practice, engagement in productive music-teaching activities, and collaborative reflection. The idea is not that the preservice teachers are to perfectly replicate the teaching style and practices of the experienced teachers; rather, preservice teachers are to take what they have learned and transform it for use in their own classrooms. Each preservice teacher is unique in personality and teacher traits. As a result, preservice teachers’ success will depend on their ability to incorporate and adapt the experiences of situated learning into their own teaching.

By maintaining the status quo of music education and the education of future music educators, a connection with the changes that are occurring in education will not be preserved (Conkling, 2007). To teach in the manner we were taught does not achieve adequate results because our teachers taught us according to what worked for that time and place in history. It takes effort to change the status quo, even as it takes determination to advance oneself toward becoming a master educator.

Imagine this scenario: Tom, a freshman music education major, wishes to teach high school choir because he had a charismatic high school choral director. Julie, another undergraduate student, sees herself teaching middle school band, inspired by the teacher she had at that level. A third student, Noah, has a knack for working with young children, and he desires to be an elementary music teacher. Do these students and others like them have what it takes to be a professional educator? To be effective as professionals, future music educators should examine their beliefs about why they wish to become music teachers. Do they only want to be like the music teacher they had in elementary school, middle school, or high school? Most often, prospective teachers had a model teacher in their earlier years who encouraged them to become music educators some day, growing into a profession and perhaps becoming model teachers themselves.

For Tom and Julie, modeling themselves after the teachers they revered is not inherently bad. Noah’s ability to work with young children is laudable, and he is aware that there is more that he must learn to be an elementary general music teacher. Tom and Julie are individuals and bring their own abilities to their undergraduate teacher programs. For Tom and Julie to think that they will be exactly like their exemplars is not practical. Tom and Julie will develop their own individual styles of teaching, flourishing in their respective fields.

During the undergraduate years, these individuals will discover the reasons why they want to become music teachers and whether or not they have the abilities to perform as a professional educator. Through undergraduate classes, various teaching practices, and student teaching, these future educators will have opportunities to uncover their beliefs, examine them, reflect on them, and refine them. Venturing further into their learning and challenging what they have done to evaluate its worthiness for continued practice will assist undergraduate students and experienced teachers in keeping their teaching fresh and current (Thompson, 2007).

Music educators are not shaped simply in the undergraduate institution. The successful music educator will be consistent in his or her execution of excellence. Since
knowledge is the cornerstone of excellence and, ultimately, success, it is befitting that the music educator be in search of new knowledge at all times. Education for the music educator does not end when the undergraduate degree is granted; rather, lifelong learning should be a major building block in constructing the educator’s career.

Lifelong learning can be fostered through involvement in organizations that exist for undergraduate music students, such as the collegiate branch of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) and the American Choral Directors Association, and involvement in music societies such as Sigma Alpha Iota, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, Kappa Kappa Psi, and Tau Beta Sigma. Involvement in professional organizations at the collegiate level sets a standard to be followed by undergraduate students that can carry over into their professional careers. Additionally, colleges and universities are finding new ways to meet the development of preservice music educators through new course offerings that are prototypical and yet malleable, shaping future educators for lifelong learning.

### Moving Into the Profession

Kayla, a young teacher in her first year as a high school choral director, must deal with school district “red tape” so that she can order new music for her choirs. Rob, a new middle school band director, does not know what to do with his unruly seventh-grade trumpet players. Melissa, an elementary music teacher, does not know how much money she should really spend for new Orff instruments for her classroom. As these individuals move from the safe boundaries of their undergraduate institutions into the field as professionals, they are often overwhelmed by the numerous tasks and requirements of being professional educators. Faced with budgets, classroom management, selecting repertoire, writing lesson plans, designing classroom procedures and routines, and a plethora of other tasks, a question that might come to mind in many new teachers is, “Was I supposed to learn this in college?”

Given that teaching can have a steep learning curve, new music educators might feel that they were not served well by their college education. Although faulting the undergraduate institution for their lack of confidence and feelings of unpreparedness might be a natural response, these novice educators will learn quickly that the first year of teaching can be the most intense year of all. Music has its own peculiar nuances in education. Teacher education programs cannot adequately prepare an individual for every situation that will be encountered during a career in education. The preparation that music teachers receive during their undergraduate years provides the future educators with a basic set of teacher tools that serve as a foundation on which the teacher’s career may be built. Teaching is an art, and a new teacher will learn the finer details in time through experience. New teachers customarily have a time of adjustment while they learn what is necessary to perform as a professional educator.

Some teachers new to the profession discover that they are not well matched for teaching and subsequently leave the profession within the first few years. Leaving the profession or changing school districts are the two most common ways in which new educators choose to deal with the adjustment to life in the professional world (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). For some, the adjustment to professional life is easier than for others.

Although it might be beneficial to have a checklist of characteristics that are to be developed in order to be a successful music educator, such a list does not exist. The true character of the teacher is discovered through observing him or her in action in the classroom and through conversations wherein the accurate nature of the individual can be disclosed. Administrators and those who are charged with evaluating teachers, student teachers, and students in practicum experiences will realize that dialogue is a valuable tool in appraising the individual.

What kind of abilities should be seen in a new or prospective educator? Several desirable qualities that should be seen in a new or prospective music educator include knowledge of curriculum areas and the learning context, the ability to plan for students’ learning, classroom management, assessment and evaluation of students’ learning, evaluation of one’s own teaching, and professional relationships and qualities (Moore, 1996). Teaching characteristics such as these cannot be adequately developed solely in music education methods courses because of time constraints. Growth in these areas takes place not only through music education methods courses but also through life experiences that an individual teacher accumulates. The efforts put forth by the new teacher toward improving their teaching characteristics and teaching skills will accrue dividends toward becoming a more established music educator on their way toward becoming a master teacher. A few infrequent deposits into the teacher’s bank of tools and repertory of skills will not accrue the dividends that could occur with systematic work in the journey toward mastery.

Attending conferences sponsored by professional organizations is a good starting point and can provide necessary networking opportunities for the novice teacher. Engaging in reflective practice along with connecting with an informed mentor can prove helpful in refining teaching skills, classroom management, and lesson preparation and delivery, among others. When teachers mentor one another, the mentor and the mentee benefit from the exchange of ideas and information (Haack,
2006; Tillman, 2003). Connecting with other teachers, especially other music teachers, is mutually beneficial. For those music teachers separated by distance from other music teachers, the use of various social networking tools, including Skype and Facebook, can develop virtual networks for professional interaction.

The Definition of a Music Educator
The impact of self-efficacy on teaching style plays a definitive role in the shaping of a music educator. Self-efficacy deals with educators’ concept of their own competence rather than how truly competent they are at teaching. It refers to people’s beliefs about their abilities to achieve in a specific domain. It can be explained this way:

Self-efficacy has to do with self-perception of competence rather than actual level of competence. This is an important distinction, because people regularly overestimate or underestimate their actual abilities, and these estimations may have consequences for the courses of action they choose to pursue or the effort they exert in those pursuits. (Tschanne-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 211)

Self-perceptions of teacher efficacy will ultimately influence student performance and the school’s impact to serve its students. These self-perceptions, either high or low, will yield either positive or negative long-term results, depending on the individual teacher’s self-perception.

James, a first-year choir director in a moderate-sized school district, always thought of himself as the embodiment of good choral pedagogy—fully versed in choral methodology, possessing a great baritone voice, and able to control any classroom situation. James’s confident presence in front of his choral ensembles provided stability and control for his students. Although he was a first-year teacher, many of his students felt that he was more experienced because of the way James presented himself. Although James would be the first to acknowledge he had much to learn during his first year of teaching, his determination to be an exceptional choral teacher charted his course for success.

Individuals occasionally have ambivalent conceptions of themselves as teachers because of lack of feedback, reinforcement, constructive criticism, and correction from cooperating teachers, administrators, and mentors. Some individuals hesitate to deviate from their ingrained teacher behaviors because of previous experiences, fearing that departure from what they see as “normal” might be too far afield. As educators become more discerning in their choices of external models, they will learn to differentiate themselves from the external models that they have absorbed but do not wish to follow any further.

Teaching, and the effort to improve it, involves the whole person (Andrews, 1978). When teachers are able to appropriately identify their strengths and weaknesses, they can maximize their effectiveness through their strengths, while taking proper measures to improve their weaknesses. Growth is a key to flourishing.

Teachers who are also learners realize that they are not the source of all knowledge pertaining to music. Good teaching practices are defined according to current educational thought, especially when the educator incorporates learner analysis and reflection into teaching and not only acquisition of knowledge and imitation. John Dewey, an American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer, proposed the idea of flexible purposing that still has implications for today’s music educators (Dewey, 1938/1963). Flexible purposing allows the teacher to know when to explore new interactions and when to shift strategies that will still accomplish the overall goal. Elliot Eisner (2004) explained flexible purposing this way:

Flexible purposing is opportunistic; it capitalizes on the emergent features appearing within a field of relationships. It is not rigidly attached to predefined aims when the possibilities of better ones emerge. The kind of thinking that flexible purposing requires thrives best in an environment in which the rigid adherence to a plan is not a necessity. (p. 6)

Rigid adherence to a preconceived plan or to a prejudicial view of what a teacher is and does is not healthy for the profession. Teaching with the assistance of record players and filmstrip projectors worked in the past, while teaching with mp3 players, YouTube videos, and interactive video is currently more commonplace. Our educational practices change in relation to the fluctuations in our culture and society. Master teachers will desire to stay current with cultural and societal fluctuations and adapt their teaching style and presentation accordingly. Specific kinds of professional growth opportunities that could be beneficial would include training in Orff Schulwerk and the Kodály method for general music specialists, choral music techniques for band teachers who find themselves teaching choral music, and instrumental music techniques for choral teachers who find themselves teaching band, in addition to education in current technology for use in the music classroom.

Beyond simply attending state music educators annual conferences, experienced music educators may well share their expertise by presenting at a music educators conference or by leading a workshop at the local level. Preparing for a conference or workshop presentation can be a significant professional boost. Involvement with specialty-specific organizations, such as the American Orff Schulwerk Association and the Organization of American Kodály Educators, can bring new insights to the music educator.
When music teachers are able to observe clinicians or other music teachers, ideas may be gleaned for use with students back home. The sharing of “things that work” is helpful for conference and workshop presenters and attendees alike. Numerous teachers attend workshops or conferences looking for ways to improve their instructional techniques.

Music specialists are usually isolated in what they do, and they are often unable to have a constant conversation with the teacher next door about what they are doing. Networking with colleagues at conferences and workshops and at the local level remains an important element for music educators beyond their novice years. Involvement in the profession is key to staying invigorated in teaching. It is necessary to make connections with other people in order to have resources beyond oneself. As mentioned earlier, social media have made it easier for people to connect across the miles. Connecting with nonmusic educators is also helpful in alleviating the isolation felt by many music educators in rural areas.

The Distinct Role of Veteran Educators

Experienced teachers are often asked to serve as mentors for new teachers in their building or district or as supervisors of student teachers and music education practicum students. In a best-case scenario, using the talents and skills of experienced master teachers for the good of others is necessary for teacher retention and to promote the continuance of the profession of music education. Regrettably, there are mentor teachers who assume the title of mentor only because they are expected to fulfill that role in their school and not because they are gifted master teachers. Healthy mentoring is a process whereby an experienced master teacher is able to assist preservice and new teachers toward professional growth. Although preservice teachers and teachers new to the field often times think that their undergraduate degree is (or will be) the final seal of approval on their profession, these novice educators ought to be challenged to think about expanded ways of engaging in music and in pedagogy beyond the undergraduate degree.

By encouraging preservice teachers to go beyond their initial ideas about teaching and learning in music, mentors will not only transmit their knowledge to the mentee, they will also challenge the prospective teacher to challenge what has been done in music education and to find better ways of teaching and learning. It takes a great deal of courage for a teacher to work at the edge of their comfort zone. The educational theorist and arts philosopher Elliot Eisner (2005) describes this as seeing one’s work “as temporary experimental accomplishments, tentative resting places subject to further change.” (p. 6) Working in this manner exposes teachers and demonstrates their vulnerability as they stretch for a deeper way of engaging in teaching. The prospective or new teacher is encouraged to strive to improve the teaching profession via various professional growth opportunities and to take the initiative in seeking such opportunities as an attendee or as a presenter (Campbell & Brummett, 2007). The astute veteran teacher-mentor will be active in attending conferences and serving as a presenter, thereby giving a positive example for the mentee to follow.

The perceptive music educator keeps up with the changing musical culture in society to make teaching and learning relevant to today’s culture. Music education has faced challenges from various factors, including budget cuts and the emphasis placed on reading and mathematics testing through various legislation and government actions. Music educators also perform the role of their programs’ advocates as they promote their programs and demonstrate the relevancy of their programs to the public.

Unfortunately, there are teachers who continue to teach in the manner they were taught. Since music is experienced and made in somewhat different ways than in the past, some teachers feel threatened because they and their curricula have not kept pace with the changing times. Professional growth and development for music educators can be employed to assist teachers in the field so that they may keep current with trends in music education (Kratus, 2007).

Although teaching will be difficult from time to time, the well-informed music educator will assume responsibility for his or her own success. Although the music educator might be the only music educator in the district, there are other educators in the school and in the district who play significant roles in the educational endeavors of the schools. Assistance can be sought from veteran teachers in all disciplines. Mentoring a novice teacher or a student teacher requires veteran teachers to know what works in a classroom, thereby requiring the mentor to reexamine the reasoning behind what is taught or done. Reading research-based articles regarding current practices in music education can be helpful in shaping the music educator’s knowledge of best practices.

Keeping current with best practices can assist music specialists in staying invigorated in their teaching. Specifically in the Midwest, Burrack and Bazan (2010) noted comments from 46 Nebraska music teachers regarding the areas of professional development they most desired, providing ideas for future examination on professional development. Topics suggested for professional development included activities for singing in tune for young children, arranging, assessment, band techniques, classroom methodology, current trends and practices, discipline (classroom management), elementary rhythm and note-naming games, history training, instrumental conducting, movement
within the vocal rehearsal, orchestral conducting, physiology of the voice, preparing music without an accompanist, private voice instruction techniques, repertoire suggestions, string pedagogy, student engagement, student recruitment and retention, swing choir ideas, teaching the current curriculum in less time, technology, vocal development at various levels, vocal warm-up activities, vocal pedagogy, woodwinds pedagogy, and working with beginners in instrumental music. Practicing music educators could develop professional development topics such as these for local school district workshops or music education conferences. It would be fitting for organizers of workshop and conference organizers to offer sessions aligned with areas of professional development most desired by music educators in order to enrich these areas.

The Value of Experience

There is no “easy” button that can be pressed at the onset of the teaching career that will make for smooth sailing throughout a person’s years of teaching. Effective teaching, curriculum writing, and program development are not accidental. Having 25 years of experience is a great milestone, especially when the 25 years are years of varied experiences and determined efforts accomplished through planning, creativity, and motivation of self and students. Conversely, there are teachers who have been teaching 25 years, but, in effect, they have repeated the same year 25 times. This lack of growth is unfortunate for them but certainly more so for their students.

Veteran teachers, new teachers, and preservice teachers who persistently seek to grow as educators will reap many benefits, as will their students. Positive attitudes and a willingness to embrace new ideas and methods will afford great dividends in professional growth to teachers of all ages. Teachers who aspire to be the kind of teacher they would want to emulate will evolve into exemplars. Preservice teachers who see college graduation as a true commencement, the beginning of a challenging yet rewarding career as a music educator. They will be the teachers of the future who will continue to grow with their students and will make a lasting impact on their students, on their communities, and on the honorable profession of education.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Examining Progress across Time with Practical Assessments in Ensemble Settings

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*Music Educators Journal* 2012 98: 49
DOI: 10.1177/0027432111435276

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://mej.sagepub.com/content/98/3/49

Published by:
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http://www.sagepublications.com

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What is This?
Examining Progress across Time with Practical Assessments in Ensemble Settings

Abstract: This article provides the rationale for effective music assessment that tracks individual progress across time and offers examples to illustrate assessment of a range of music-learning goals. Gauging progress across time helps students become more mastery-oriented, while showing more effort and positive attitudes. As instruction and assessment become more focused on individual students, practices such as private lessons within the group setting and individual performance assessment emerge. Examples based on current strategies used by practicing teachers illustrate these practices.

Keywords: assessment, instruction, performance, progress

What essential skills do preservice teachers need to be able to assess their ensemble students effectively and fairly? Although our expertise is in different fields—one of us is a music educator and the other is an educational psychologist—we both have experience working with future music educators. In this article, we provide a rationale for effective music assessment that tracks individual progress across time and offer examples that illustrate assessment of a range of musical goals using best practices.

Importance of Assessing Progress

One of the most powerful motivators we have seen in classrooms—for teachers as well as students—is concrete evidence of student progress. Our observations dovetail with thirty-five years of research demonstrating that articulating goals energizes learners and provides them with direction.1 Furthermore, concrete feedback on progress toward those goals enhances motivation and learning by providing opportunities for needed adjustments in efforts to reach the goals.

Gauging progress toward goals is also important to help students focus on their own learning more than simply on their grade or on comparing themselves to others. Research has shown that even in our competitive society (and classrooms), teachers can help their students become more mastery-oriented and less centered on comparisons to and judgments of others. Such practices produce students with more positive attitudes about learning who are willing to attempt challenging tasks and exert more effort.2 Classroom assessment strategies stressing individual improvement across

by Lorrie S. Crochet and Susan K. Green

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Two university faculty members explore assessment practices that help educators document individual progress in music learning in the classroom and rehearsal hall.
time and emphasizing the importance of student effort are a key facet in eliciting this kind of motivation from students.\(^5\)

Our teacher education program and many others capitalize on this research about the value of progress monitoring by requiring teacher candidates to complete an “internship work sample” (IWS). During student teaching, the teacher candidates design goals for a music unit that generally lasts one to two weeks. The candidates measure student understanding and skills before the unit, they teach the unit, and then they measure gains in student understanding and skills after the unit. A typical music unit could address a particular musical element (e.g., form, style, texture) or a music composition to be performed by an ensemble, including all of the musical skills necessary to give a high-quality performance of the selected composition.

**Teacher-Centered Instruction**

We have found that our music education students have difficulty devising practical and useful assessments that track individual progress across time. They and their mentor teachers, especially beyond the elementary level, focus primarily on the musical performance of the larger group. Typical large-ensemble rehearsals tend to become teacher-based and reactive.\(^4\) The director detects an error, stops the group, announces the error, and begins again with the whole ensemble either from the beginning of the current musical selection or at the nearest rehearsal number. The teacher addresses the individual or small section responsible for the error. Out of frustration, teachers often assign playing tests to resolve individual performance errors. We have found that this type of performance assessment produces fear and anxiety rather than an opportunity for students to become better musicians.

Many teachers see insurmountable barriers to implementing more effective assessment of individual progress. These barriers include performance pressures, large numbers of students in music classrooms, poor teacher-student ratios, and time limitations.\(^5\) Beyond the typical error correction in rehearsals just described, instruction and assessment tend to focus on the whole group, with the teacher directing and making decisions.\(^6\) Common ensemble and class assessments include unison tizzling (sizzling, hissing, buzzing), counting aloud, clapping, and chanting rhythms and syllables. Such assessments may help improve the group performance, but they cannot provide a systematic measure of individual student progress. As instruction and assessment become more focused on individual students rather than the group, other approaches are needed.

**Student-Centered Instruction**

Because the IWS requires individual data, instruction must become more student-centered. When we began this process, the music faculty decided that recording the entire ensemble and listening as an adjudicator to solve large-ensemble problems would address the assessment requirement. But the need to document individual progress compelled us to look at student-centered assessment and instruction. The teacher can no longer listen from a distance and hide errors to make the large ensemble sound better. We must focus on individuals and their improvement over time. As an added benefit, improved performance of individual students should also result in better overall ensemble performance and higher motivation.\(^7\)

Moving from teacher-centered classrooms and assessments toward student-centered classrooms and assessments has become the goal. As instruction and assessment become more focused on individual students rather than the group, practices such as (1) private lessons within the group setting and (2) individual performance assessment emerge.

**Private Lessons, Group Setting**

Ideal music instruction, whether in a general music classroom or a secondary large ensemble, can be viewed as a private lesson within the group setting. Individuals should be contributing artists in the process of a musical creation.\(^8\) The responsibility of teaching individuals should far outweigh any large-group assessment. The private lesson within the group setting exemplifies a more student-centered mindset. In addition to being proactive rather than reactive, it offers students the opportunity to (1) make musical judgments, (2) think critically, (3) become more invested in the ensemble’s musical product, and (4) become more interactive in the daily process of music making. Students assist with error detection and offer solutions to problem areas within the music. Instead of framing playing tests as punishment for lack of preparation, they can be viewed as part of the process of preparing for a performance or learning about music. Students identify and discriminate errors in style, balance, attacks, releases, and note and rhythm errors through recorded examples of the ensemble or during daily rehearsals.

The teacher guides the students to success. Students in the class are taught that each will be given individual focus, but that in the music classroom, it takes place in front of the ensemble or class. All students in the group are expected to respond to the teacher just as they would in a private lesson (verbally and with eye contact). All students should come to class with the understanding that they are part of a musical creation and that it is an ongoing process that will result in a performance, which may or may not be better than what they produce in the rehearsal hall.

If an error is made by an individual, the teacher should use that moment as a teachable moment for the entire group. Students can be taught that errors are not bad. Instead, errors benefit everyone in the ensemble by allowing the teacher the opportunity to teach. Students respond well to the thought that musical performances are never perfect, and that because performers are not computers, they should expect errors. Musicians strive for perfect technique, but every great performance is marred by error even though the error may be too small for most listeners to detect.

Students can be encouraged to use critical listening as they participate in the assessment of problem excerpts in the music being rehearsed. Directors should
begin this process by identifying problem areas in the group’s performance and questioning students. The following scenarios demonstrate informal assessment strategies.

In measure 51 of Frank Ticheli’s *Sanctuary*, the melodic line is to be played by Alto Saxophone I and Horn I and II. The part is marked to be performed *nobly* starting at *mezzo forte*. This beautiful melody sings forward through several dynamic levels, including three crescendo/decrescendo phrase markings. Using the private lesson within the group setting model, the teacher would ask the saxophone and horn sections to perform the passage with the expectation that all players in the ensemble would be listening critically. After the excerpt is played, the teacher would question the listeners with such questions as “What is the written dynamic of this excerpt?” “How many crescendos did you hear?” “Did the horns move with the alto saxophone?” “Did you hear any intonation problems?” and “How would you perform this excerpt more musically?” This type of interactive rehearsal allows all students in a large ensemble to be actively engaged throughout the rehearsal and trains their ears to discriminate.

When performing the first four measures of Ralph Vaughan Williams’s *English folksong Suite*, third movement, “March,” the woodwinds may have difficulty matching articulations. To solve this problem while teaching each individual, it is necessary to identify the section or players performing the passage with the desired style, and then ask all students to identify which section(s) meet that desired standard. If the problem persists, the excerpt can be further isolated so that the students can hear the problem and resolve it.

Systematic assessment of individual progress can be woven into this process using simple rubrics, checklists, or rating scales. For example, using the rating scales in Figures 1 and 2, both teacher and students could rate aspects of a performance of an excerpt at several points across rehearsals to document progress and see gains over time. Similarly, a director can anticipate a specific place in a piece that may be problematic for each section (e.g., making sure all sixteenth notes are even in a sixteenth-note run for the clarinets) and then design a brief rating scale to use at two different points across the period of preparation for a piece. Comparison of ratings by both instructor and individuals within

### FIGURE 1

**Rating Form for Key Element of Quality of an Excerpt from Sanctuary**

Ticheli—“Sanctuary” Excerpt, measures 51–57

Circle the number that describes the performance on each characteristic listed for Alto Saxophone I and Horn I and II, where 1 is needs significant work and 3 is exemplary.

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each section can yield important data for discussion, evaluation, and further instruction. The instructor may need to take a few minutes of class time or find an alternate sectional time to slowly practice the problem area with the clarinets. The difficulty may be a result of errors in fingerings, tempo, pulse, or rhythm, and the student may be practicing the error instead of solving the problem. Many times, directors will identify the error but leave out the critical step of teaching how to resolve the error.

**Individual Performance Assessment**

Noting an ensemble’s progress as students prepare a piece for a performance is one important element of examining musical progress that benefits student and teacher. In addition, the need to observe and track individual students’ increasing skill and musical understanding as they progress through a music program across time is the second key element.

A key element of individual progress over time is skills development for solo and group performance. Assessment tools for individual progress may include recorded excerpts and using SmartMusic or a combination tailored to instructional needs.

An example of the use of recorded excerpts comes from Beverly Laney at South Pointe High School in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Laney determines the music excerpt to be assessed in a choral class on a given day. She informs the students that they will be recording this excerpt so that they can prepare outside of class. She distributes eight handheld recorders and labeled blank cassette tapes. The ensemble sings the material to be assessed, and eight students record their performance while participating within the group. The recorders are then passed to other members of the ensemble, and this continues until all students have had the opportunity to record the excerpt. Using the recorders allows students to sing freely and eliminates performance anxiety that may be caused by singing alone in front of their peers. The students hand in their cassette tapes after all students have recorded, and Laney listens to the excerpts and assesses them using a performance rubric. This type of individual assessment allows for each student’s musical growth in the areas of voice quality, diction, technical development, and intonation. Laney mentions that these recordings offer her students “virtual voice lessons” within a group setting. The choral classes at South Pointe record once or twice during each nine-week grading period. Laney finds that assessing sight-reading with the same process works well. She does note that it is necessary to change to a different sight-reading excerpt or line each time the recorder is passed. In response to the concern that she must listen and assess student cassettes outside of class, Laney says that she would rather listen to music than grade papers like teachers in other disciplines.

To take this idea one step farther, music teachers can design a standard yet simple rating form to be kept in a folder that could be kept across time, documenting individual student progress across semesters and even years on the basis of recordings such as Laney’s. Such documentation can be energizing for students and teachers to see progress beyond a single piece or short-term effort. See Figure 3 for an example.

Beverly Laney also offers an individual assessment for general music classes or lessons that can be assessed by answering true or false, or by making a choice between two options. Examples of these units include learning about one’s performance instrument (instrumental or voice) or music theory and history. Promethean Interactive Whiteboards allow music teachers to use voting clickers within the ensemble or class. Each clicker can be assigned a student name or set up for anonymity. Laney uses the clickers to guide her instruction, so she chooses for

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**FIGURE 2**

**Rating Form for Key Element of Quality of an Excerpt from The Hounds of Spring**

*Reed—The Hounds of Spring Excerpt, measures 16–22*

Using the following scale, please rate the woodwinds’ ability to play the sixteenth notes with rhythmic clarity.

1 = numerous individual errors (uneven or incorrect notes)  
2 = few individual errors (uneven or incorrect notes)  
3 = clear with a steady beat by all players

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Rubric:
1 – Student performs with more than 5 errors and with an immature level of musical expression based on years/months of experience.
2 – Student performs with 3–5 errors and with an inconsistent but more mature level of musical expression based on experience.
3 – Student performs with 0–2 errors and with a consistent and mature level of musical expression based on experience.

Performance fundamentals—posture, instrument-body relationship, hand position, posture, characteristic tone quality (resonant with clarity, enunciation)
Note Accuracy & Intonation—correct fingerings, pitches, and marked articulations, intonation in all playable/singable ranges
Rhythmic Accuracy—performance of printed rhythms, pulse stability, and tempo
Musical Interpretation—phrasing, style, dynamics, attacks, releases, shape
students to remain anonymous. The class views the results on the whiteboard in a pie-chart format.

Mike Doll, former band director at Rawlinson Road Middle School in Rock Hill, South Carolina, uses SmartMusic technology. This relatively inexpensive software allows students to record an excerpt given specific directions. It also makes a digital recording of the music for the student to review before submitting his or her score. Doll can look at the assessment score and offer additional feedback on other musical elements, such as dynamics, intonation, and style, from the recording that is submitted. He can also make written comments, which can be viewed by the student or the parent by logging in to the SmartMusic Gradebook. In addition, SmartMusic provides a record of the time spent practicing the example and the tempo that was achieved. Doll reports that SmartMusic technology has been “the biggest change in the way I teach in fourteen years, and it permeates everything I do.” Doll uses SmartMusic assessment tools for scales, all-state band preparation, method book assignments, and preparation of large-ensemble music. The program has improved to the point that it can serve instrumental music students at all levels. Numerous concert band compositions, solo accompaniments, and skill-building exercises, as well as more than twenty band and string method books, are included, all with accompaniment and all with assessment. In addition, SmartMusic has the capability to allow any composition that is written using Finale software to be converted into a file that can be used for assessment in SmartMusic. This feature is useful for high school marching band arrangements, all-state band preparation, and concert band compositions that are not currently in the SmartMusic library. If the composition is not in SmartMusic, but you have a recording of it, you can simply import the recording to be used for practice and recording purposes with your students.

Doll chose Richard Saucedo’s “Flight of the Thunderbird” for performance with the eighth-grade band. SmartMusic has two “Flight of the Thunderbird” performance assignments specific to each instrument. Doll has set up the Gradebook portion of SmartMusic, and the students enroll in the appropriate class as users. Doll sends the assignment to each student in the band, and the student pulls up the assignment that is an excerpt with instructions for “Flight of the Thunderbird.” The student records the excerpt at the tempo established by Doll either at home or during band time in one of two practice rooms. Students can practice and record the excerpt until they are happy with it, then submit their work to Doll. He is able to listen to the recorded excerpts within a recording of a complete ensemble.

In terms of tracking individual student progress across longer periods than a single piece, SmartMusic provides opportunities for analysis and archiving individual student progress in a relatively efficient manner that is useful for student and teachers. There is a portfolio within SmartMusic to archive examples of student performance over time. Students can be tracked from their entrance into the music program in sixth grade until the time they exit the program in twelfth grade with recorded examples of their performances.

Of course, a program such as SmartMusic is only one component of an effective music program. Teachers must offer students not only written feedback or scores through technology but opportunities for students to work with the teacher for brief periods of interaction to guide them toward their performance goals.

Engaging Students

As we have explored ways to look at individual progress, we have been able to encourage our student teachers to do so as well. One intern recently designed an IWS around Robert Sheldon’s “Eagle Mountain Overture,” in which he focused students on improving articulation. His assessments included peer critiques of specific articulations within instrument groupings and instructor’s evaluations before the unit and after the unit on each student’s performance of articulations required in the composition.

Teaching at all levels for most music instructors has always included engaged student involvement and interaction. The responsibility of teaching preservice teachers, and specifically, the IWS, has clarified our thoughts and subsequently our instruction concerning assessment with our students, both in the ensemble setting and in the classroom. It has enriched our thinking about quality assessment that enhances individual musical skills related to performance as well as to music appreciation and discernment. Helping our teacher candidates focus on these issues makes them better music educators. They also learn to foster progress and greater love for music among their students.

Notes

Assessment in Instrumental Music: How can band, orchestra, and instrumental ensemble directors best assess their students' learning? Here are some evaluation tools and techniques to consider.

Thomas W. Goolsby

Music Educators Journal 1999 86: 31
DOI: 10.2307/3399587

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://mej.sagepub.com/content/86/2/31.citation
Assessment in Instrumental Music

How can band, orchestra, and instrumental ensemble directors best assess their students' learning? Here are some evaluation tools and techniques to consider.

BY THOMAS W. GOOLSBY

The increasing emphasis on assessment in school districts across the United States has created greater demand for methods of assessing instrumental music programs. Although most music educators recognize that frequent evaluation is an essential component of effective teaching, new mandates and public concerns regarding accountability are additional reasons for band and orchestra directors to expand their use of assessment in ensemble settings.

While increasing systematic assessment initially may seem to be an activity that requires more of a conductor/teacher's precious time, it is most likely an activity that eventually will save time. All too frequently, band and orchestra directors rehearse music for concerts and find themselves repeatedly reminding students of similar performance rudiments for each musical selection. This practice alone should indicate that maximum learning is not taking place. The issue of "transfer of knowledge" is one of the several concerns addressed through evaluation. Creating musicians should be the goal of all band and orchestra teachers—and better musicians will prepare musical selections with far greater ease than students who remain unsure of what is expected of them.1

Types of Assessment

Four types of assessment can be used for evaluation in the instrumental classroom in a relatively straightforward manner; these are placement, summative, diagnostic, and formative assessments. Band and orchestra directors are already familiar with placement and summative assessments, even if they don't identify them as such. Placement assessment includes auditions, challenges, and seating assignments, all aimed at determining a student's abilities in order to properly place the student within a program. Summative assessment includes concerts, festivals, recitals, and other events where the final "product" of the group's learning is publicly demonstrated and evaluated.

The other two types of assessment are usually integrated more closely with day-to-day instruction. Diagnostic assessment is used to determine where learning difficulties exist. While test and assessment writers in mathematics, language arts, and science currently struggle to develop valid and reliable assessment instruments for diagnostic evaluation, instrumental music teachers are already masters of this type of evaluation. Every time a band or orchestra director steps on the

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Formative assessment is concerned with regular monitoring of students to make sure that learning is taking place.

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podium or stands in front of the class, the majority of the teaching events are devoted to identifying problems in learning and then providing a remedy (or at least a quick fix). The most obvious and frequently used tool for diagnostic assessment in instrumental music is error detection.

Whereas diagnostic assessment is concerned with identifying learning problems, formative assessment is concerned with the regular monitoring of students to make sure that learning is taking place. Band and orchestra directors often make the erroneous assumption that if no errors are identified during a rehearsal, then the students must be learning. Research in measuring the feedback provided to students in relationship to what the teachers ask of the students indicates that, during the vast majority of rehearsals, students have no way of knowing whether they are accomplishing what is expected of them. This sense of accomplishment can come only if students are aware of the specific goals of the rehearsal or class—often a secret known only to the director.

Without formative assessment, we have no way of knowing if the students are simply learning our parameters for tolerance of mistakes, or if they are learning something about music. In our rehearsals, we frequently remind them how to execute articulations, dynamic markings, phrasing, and so forth. Doesn't the mere fact that we must remind them so frequently indicate a lack of learning? If time were spent on formative assessment—to ensure that students are learning what we would like them to know—then the concert selections could be prepared with much greater efficiency.

It would follow that one requirement for effective formative assessment is the students' clear understanding of what they should learn. Periodic evaluation of these objectives and goals is used not only to monitor their learning, but to reinforce them in the students' minds.

Checkpoints and Checklists

There are many measurement tools available to help instrumental teachers evaluate their students' work. For beginners, instrumental music teachers can select specific selections in the method book as checkpoints for individual achievement. Without applying pressure or creating anxiety, the instrumental director can establish an atmosphere of cooperative learning in a beginning band or orchestra class by giving students many chances to play solo for the teacher and their peers. Such solo opportunities provide the teacher with the means to assess individual progress, especially for aspects of good tone quality, and they also help young players work toward reducing performance anxiety.

Criteria may vary from piece to piece but always should include tone quality.

Another assessment tool used successfully with intermediate and high school instrumental classes is the checklist. Especially at the high school level, where the ensemble may comprise three or four grades in one class, a band or orchestra director can devise twelve to fifteen sequential checklists to be completed quarterly by students and reviewed by the director. These checklists may include technical exercises, solo or small-ensemble selections to be learned, written assignments (including theory or composition exercises or written essays on historical themes or individual composers), listening assignments that include written reviews, and reading assignments. Creative directors who are aware of long-term goals for their ensembles will come up with many additional ideas for what may be included on such checklists. The increasing accessibility of computers and software programs for music education will enhance this type of individual assessment, which is aimed at guiding learning.

Worksheets

Beginners through intermediate instrumentalists can also be assessed through a variety of worksheets and homework assignments. Directors can easily create worksheets to parallel their goals and objectives and reinforce what they are teaching in class, especially at the middle school or junior high level. Worksheets or elementary theory books are frequently used by private piano teachers. Such worksbooks are inexpensive and can be used to provide instrumentalists with a working knowledge of theory that can form the basis of improved sight-reading, including knowledge of such musical elements as key signatures, rhythms, intervals, structural chords, counterpoint, and voice-leading.

Worksheets can also be used to assess basic aspects of music notation, which we often assume the beginning student has learned, when many are actually learning the simple tunes by ear. Worksheets designed by the teacher can be creative and can help both student and teacher assess students' knowledge of dynamic markings, note values, pitch names, expressive markings, articulations, music terminology, and time and key signatures.

Commercially available elementary theory workbooks can also be purchased for each student and can be used to assess students' knowledge of such concepts as intervals, simple chord structure, scales, and even chord relationships. Examples of this type of individual workbook include Theory Worksheets for Beginning Band by Denise Gagne (J. Weston Walch), Ready-to-Use Music Activities Kit by Audrey J. Adair (Parker Publishing), Basic Music Theory by Audrey J. Adair (Parker Publishing), Workbook for Band by Forest R. Etling (Highland/Etling Publishing), and Basic Music Theory for the Beginning Band Student by Frank Campise (Barnhouse).
Audiotape Recordings

For members of intermediate and high school ensembles, assessment of individual progress can be enhanced by having students prepare and submit audiocassette tapes of their own performances. Through careful planning, experimentation, and refinement of study material, students can be guided through a five- or six-year curriculum of performance assignments at their own individual pace and ability level. Instrumental teachers can select musical exercises and solo literature to enable students to demonstrate technical proficiency and expressive performance of music selected from the most appropriate and best literature for each instrument—including concert selections.

Specific objectives and criteria for scoring the tapes are required. Criteria may vary from piece to piece but always should include tone quality. If students are asked to provide tapes on a staggered basis and the director is willing to spend two hours per day evaluating audiotapes (including the weekend), then as many as 180 students can submit twenty-minute tapes each month. For the largest of music programs, this would enable an individual assessment of each music student every six weeks; for smaller programs, it might permit assessment every four weeks.

In programs where this sort of assessment has been implemented, one of the first surprises for the director has been the discovery that many students do not know how to practice. This and other types of formative assessment often reveal the inaccuracy of many of the assumptions we make as teachers.

Two outstanding band directors in the Pacific Northwest use the audiotape technique in different ways. Both directors plan a series of technical and lyrical exercises that span a student’s three years in the band program. Jim Rice, band and orchestra director at Woodinville High School in Woodinville, Washington, collects cassette tapes from individuals by section on a weekly basis (evaluating by section allows him a better reference for evaluating tone quality). In two of his bands, clarinets, flutes, saxophones, double reeds, trumpets/percussion, and low brass/horns submit tapes on a weekly basis. All assessment tapes are collected on a single day and returned the next week with written comments as another group of tapes is collected. Rice evaluates approximately thirty fifteen- to twenty-five-minute tapes per week over a six-week period (including orchestra). He is extremely detailed in his written evaluations, commenting on the performer’s strengths, areas that need improvement, areas that have improved (from his detailed records kept for each student), and aspects that require attention; he also makes specific comments on tone quality. For those students who seem to have difficulty improving tone quality, he schedules individual lessons during lunch, free periods, or before or after school to observe embouchure and breathing, check equipment, and provide individual instruction to help his players improve their sound. Students are allowed to record their tapes at home and submit them every six weeks. Rice also provides a practice room equipped with a recording machine for those students who are unable to make recordings of good quality at home or for the older students (some of whom may have an eye toward a college music major) who are striving for the best possible sound. These records of individual student progress are used for determining grades and assigning students to one of the two bands.

Susan Monroe, a band director at Cascade Middle School in Auburn, Washington, has spent the last five years refining a program in which students at three levels are given sequential assignments to record during class periods; these assignments include études, solos, technical exercises, and concert selections. Without disrupting the rehearsals, students quietly go to her office and record as much of their assignment as they have prepared. Usually four students are able to complete the task during each rehearsal. Records of overall progress are posted on a board in the rehearsal room and serve as the basis for seating assignments (changing on an almost daily basis). Students are provided with detailed written comments addressing notes, tone quality, rhythm, articulations, intonation, and expression/phrasing. This technique of effectively using class time allows Monroe to assess each student approximately every three weeks. For those students who are stymied by obstacles, arrangements are made for individual lessons before or after school. Monroe also
Figure 1. Student Self-Evaluation Form

**Ensemble Performance Critique**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME:</th>
<th>Selection Performed</th>
<th>Section of Selection</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLASS:</td>
<td>Date ________ (first evaluation)</td>
<td>Date ________ (second evaluation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments on how I sound within the ensemble:</td>
<td>Comments on how I sound within the ensemble:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments on how the entire ensemble sounds:</td>
<td>Comments on how the entire ensemble sounds:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could I improve the ensemble?</td>
<td>How could I improve the ensemble?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could the entire ensemble sound better?</td>
<td>How could the entire ensemble sound better?</td>
<td></td>
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Score for being SPECIFIC: __________  
Score for RELATIONSHIPS: __________  
Score for SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS: __________

*Note: This form is based on a Domain Project form, Harvard Project Zero's Arts Propel Assessment Profile.*
spends time during each full rehearsal reminding students of the importance of sound quality and how it is influenced by such skills as correct posture, breathing, and embouchure. She makes frequent in-class assessments of these basics.

Rice and Monroe both advocate two simple principles that are well known to instrumental teachers everywhere. First, they insist on the importance of tone quality: no matter how many correct notes are played in the correct spot, if the music doesn't sound good, it isn't good. Second, they make sure that students are aware that the quickest way to fix the overall sound of an ensemble is to have everyone in the group sit with good posture and play with sufficient breath support.

Self-Evaluation

One of the primary goals of music education in general is musical independence. For instrumental music, this goal in part translates to self-assessment, not only by and for each individual, but for the full ensemble. Perhaps the most successful large-scale project of this type has been the Domain Project developed by Arts Propel and funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, Educational Testing Service, Harvard's Project Zero, and the Pittsburgh public school system.

Figure 1 contains a form derived from the one used in the Domain Projects. Students can use this form to evaluate their own performance and that of the group. Through practice and class discussion, students improve their listening habits and, over a period of several years, become rather astute at listening critically to their own performances. Copies of this form are kept in each student's band or orchestra folder. The ensemble plays a particular section of a selected piece (for example, a segment of sixteen to sixty-four measures) while the director records the performance. Students are asked to write comments in the first column: the top blocks address how the individual sounds and how the entire ensemble sounds, and the bottom two blocks have space for comments on how the performance can be improved. Several rehearsals later, the same section of music is performed and recorded and the director plays both tapes for the students. The first is a "reminder" of how the passage previously sounded, and the second shows the current level of performance. Students complete the second column by answering the same questions, but this time considering the improvement of the performance (or lack of improvement). This exercise should be completed on a weekly basis using a variety of types and sections of ensemble literature.

The forms are collected after each exercise and scored by the teacher. The designers of Domain Projects encourage teachers to consider three areas in scoring the student's comments (see bottom of figure 1). The score for being "Specific" (using a given scale—for example, zero to five) is based on the student's accurate use of musical terms and elements and in identifying areas of concern and suggesting solutions.

The score for "Relationships" is contingent on the student's observation of connections among problems and among solutions. For example, a student who accurately identifies several problems within the ensemble performance would score higher than a student who identifies only a single problem; however, a student who comments on the relationship of one problem to another would score even higher.

The score for "Suggested Improvements" is determined by the number of suggested improvements and the relationships of the suggested improvements to the observed problems. Also considered is the sophistication of the suggested improvements (e.g., suggesting whom the flutes should listen to, as opposed to just suggesting that the flutes "listen").

Critical to the success of this type of assessment is a class discussion following the first few times it is used and after the director scores the papers. The director, knowing the content of the students' comments, can call on students who made the most astute observations and ask them to read their papers. This assists the less astute or newer students to understand what the task is. In informal studies where this form was used in public school band rehearsals, it was noted with great pleasure by the teacher that some of the most successful students who completed this exercise were "third" clarinets and trumpets—that is, students who were usually less successful in tasks related to performance skills.

Older students who have completed these exercises over a number of years will often develop keen listening skills. These skills will often transfer to students' performances and individual practice sessions. This means that more responsibility for correct performance skills is given to the students and rehearsal time is saved if during class discussions it is made clear what objectives can be achieved and how these will lead to good performance skills.

Goals and Responsibility

Two points bear repeating. First, instrumental teachers need to continually share their goals, objectives, and expectations with their students. Second, with these goals in mind, students can assume more of the responsibility for their own learning, but monitoring student learning is still a primary task of teachers.

Checklists and forms can be helpful in teaching critical listening to the continued on page 50
ensemble. Both of these assessment tools can be altered and adapted by any director for any level of instrumental music. These tools may prove particularly useful for directors who attempt to incorporate the content standards found in the National Standards for Music Education.  

Finally, we must assume that devoting time to assessment will eventually save time in class—time that has been wasted as we have repeated information again and again when preparing musical selections. Our task is to produce musicians, and better musicians will produce better music.

Notes


5. Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, _National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts_ (Reston, VA: MENC, 1994).