

Blueprint for a Successful Instrumental Music Assessment

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A man in a dark suit, light blue shirt, and red tie is pointing his right index finger directly at the viewer. The background is a plain, light blue wall.

OVERVIEW

PURPOSE

Strategies to achieve a
Meaningful, **M**easurable
& **M**emorable
Music Assessment

Provide instrumental
directors with a blueprint to
prepare for adjudicated
performances.

Why Music Assessments?



Large group adjudicated event results are often a significant component of student and teacher evaluations.

Teachers are now evaluated on teaching effectiveness based upon their assessments of their students' musical progress.

PEER REVIEW

What are 5 things to help obtain high ratings at festival?



- 100% stressed the important of musical selection of your ensemble
- 91% stressed a focus on fundamentals including intonation, articulation and breathing
- 86% suggest that planning your rehearsal helps achieve maximum efficiency
- 76% focus on balance, blend, and ensemble instrumentation
- **Only** 14 % focused on proper notes

Define Common Ensemble Performance Errors

- **Tone/Intonation**
 - Lack of focused sonority or poor tone, which relates to poor intonation
- **Balance**
 - The inability to hear clear discernible melodic content vs. accompaniment/Percussion overbalancing
- **Technique**
 - Lacking uniform attacks/releases, correct pitches/rhythms
 - Inconsistent pulse
 - Non-uniformed articulations individually and across choirs
- **Interpretation/Musicality**
 - Lacking a full dynamic spectrum, usually softer softs
 - Too many short phrases (breathing on bar lines). Shoot for at least 4 bar phrases.
 - Anything longer than a quarter should move dynamically up or down.
 - Clipped phrasing and not holding fermatas for full value

What do
adjudicators
look and listen
for?



- Ensemble Cohesion
- Musicality
- Expression
- Unity
- Active Listening
- Responsiveness to Director

Musically Speaking

- Cohesive, representative sound
- Logical, musical phrasing
- Grade-Level Appropriate Literature
- Balance
- Appropriate Style
- Evidence of Effective Teaching/Rehearsing
- Watching, Listening, Communicating

Tone Quality

- Characteristic sound for that level
- Sound matches style
- Consistency

Rhythm

- Ensemble adherence to pulse
- Accuracy
- Complement to style and expression

Balance and Blend

- Roles and Responsibilities
- Active listening & Ability to adjust

Technique

- Skills representative of the level
- Physical control
- Vertical precision
- Pulse control

Musicianship

- Are you saying anything with your performance?
- Style, phrasing, tempo, dynamics
- Is expression an expectation?

Judges watch for...

- Attentiveness
- Enjoyment
- Musicianship
- Maturity
- Responsiveness to director
- Gestures that reflect your knowledge, invites musicality, and reflects the music's intent

Things Judges Do Not Appreciate

- No measure numbers in scores
- Illegal score copies
- A disregard for procedures, schedule, inflexibility, etc.
- Focus on self not the students
- No interest in learning

Things Judges Appreciate

- Adherence to procedures, schedule, guidelines, etc.
- Focus on the students
- Desire to learn
- Flexibility and understanding
- Good-naturedness



Educator's Role



- Edmund (2008) states, “As assessment plays an increasingly crucial role in education, it is up to music educators to use it most effectively” (p. 45).
- Marzano (2010), describes standards-based grading as an assessment and reporting system that references student achievement to specific topics within each subject area.
- Four categories define student performance: Minimal, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced (Marzano, 2010).

PREPARATION & PLANNING

**What is a key
element for
performance
success?**

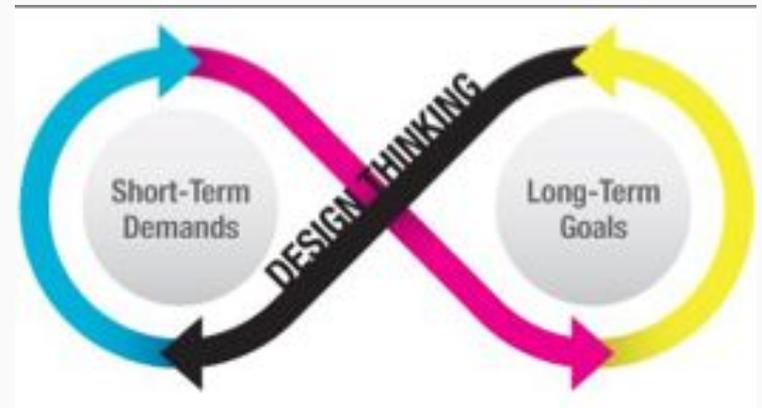


PROPER PLANNING

To be calm, relaxed,
focused and in control
on Assessment Day

Longitudinal Rehearsal Plans

- Macro to Micro-Formative to Summative Assessments
- 6-Week Plan
- Weekly Plan
- Daily Plan



6-Week Plan Including a Pre-Festival Adjudicated Concert

6-Week Sample Festival Plan

| SKILL | WEEK 6 | WEEK 5 | WEEK 4 | WEEK 3 | WEEK 2 | WEEK 1 |
|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Notes | | | | | | |
| Rhythms | | | | | | |
| Shifting/Fingering | | | | | | |
| Style | | | | | | |
| Tone Quality | | | | | | |
| Bowing | | | | | | |
| Tempo | | | | | | |
| Blend | | | | | | |
| Balance | | | | | | |
| Phrasing | | | | | | |
| Dynamics | | | | | | |
| Vibrato | | | | | | |
| Musical Flow | | | | | | |
| Musicality | | | | | | |

Requirements



- Familiarize yourself with the MMEA website (<https://www.mdmea.org>)
- Review all procedures in the manual
- Determine eligibility for county/district and state
- Determine music requirements
- Know your time limits (county/district, & state)
- Know your deadlines
- Understand the rating criteria and formulas

Learn the MMEA Grading Criteria and And Apply It Daily



- Recognize the Value of Adjudication/Assessment
 - Use this time to introduce critical evaluation of individual and ensemble performances
- Explain the MMEA scoring system to students and use it for evaluation from the beginning of the the year.
- Create weekly individual and ensemble assessment rating on 7 captions and give a final overall rating of:
 - I – Superior: 96-100%
 - II – Excellent: 90-95%
 - III – Good: 80-89%
 - IV – Fair: 74-79%
 - V – Poor: Below 74%
- Create daily lesson plans/objectives incorporating the assessment captions

Know the Copyright Issues

- Directors must provide **THREE** original conductor scores for the adjudicators
- Photocopies can be used **ONLY** if granted permission by the publisher in writing



Repertoire Selection

-This could be the most important planning element

- Select repertoire that comfortably compliments the technical abilities of the ensemble, fitting the median ability level
- Consider the 4 most significant musical elements when selecting grade-level appropriate repertoire:
 - Part independence, rhythmic complexity, tessitura, and wind and percussion instrumentation.
- Highlight your ensemble's strengths by featuring the best players/sections.
- Avoid pieces with lead parts for instruments that may not be particularly strong.
- Do not choose literature with missing instruments.

Seating Arrangements

-Reference John Whitwell's Seating Plan Theory

- **Principle 1**-Wind instruments sound better if there is more space between players than you find in an orchestra.
- **Principle 2**-Consider an arrangement that enhances the Pyramid Balance.
- **Principle 3**-Wind bands sound better if the seating plan is deeper, not wider.
- **Principle 4**-Center tubas and euphoniums with the trombones centered in front of them, then a combination effect takes place, which makes the bass notes of chords centered, more beautiful, and more transparent. The same principal applies to the tenor and baritone range instruments: bassoons, tenor and baritone sax, and bass clarinets. They can go anywhere, but they must be in a block together if they serve to clarify the tenor-baritone sound of the chordal structure.
- **Principle 5**-Rows of flutes and clarinets must not face each other. Instead, angle the rows so that the rows point slightly toward the audience as if aiming just behind the conductor and not at each other. If they face each other, their upper partials clash above the band before traveling to the audience, giving a brittle sound to the entire band.

Teaching Method

- Consistent Teaching Style
 - Students will achieve higher if they are familiar with the process
- Set weekly and monthly individual and ensemble achievement goals
- Assess the students' abilities throughout the period
 - Your students' individual abilities should grow as your ensemble does

Ask Yourself

What are my learning objectives for students?

Am I actually teaching what I am assessing?

Am I using student assessments to learn about my teaching and assessment?

Teaching Technique

- Create daily warm-up sheet that reflect how to:
- Practice precision (e.g., attack, sustain, release)
- Practice articulation patterns
 - Tonguing vs. slurring
 - Staccato, Legato, Marcato
- Playing Correct Notes
 - Practice scale (major, minor, chromatin)

How to Teach Musicality???

- Introduce shaping and phrasing ALL the time
- Play audio and video musical examples and vary styles
- Ensemble singing basic phrases and then sing festival literature to exaggerate the musical phrase

Balance

- The proper blend of melody, harmony and rhythmic accompaniment
- The melody must always be heard but never overpower the bass voice
- Practice interpretation -
Written dynamics do not guarantee good balance-it is situational



Concert **BAND CAMP**

Something to Consider??

- A 2-3 hour in school or after school concert band camp
- Bring in guest clinicians for each section to work with the students
- Put on a concert at the end of the rehearsal

REWRITES

When to Rewrite Student Parts?

- No double reeds? No French Horns? Too many flutes or saxes?
- Essential or music lines must be preserved
- When it is appropriate to re-score music?
 - Missing and/or weak sections
 - Missing and/or weak solissts
- How much rewriting is too much?
 - When the musical content of the piece is compromised
 - Rewriting is much more acceptable for Grade 1, 2 and 3 music than Grade 4 & 5

Will the judges disapprove of me rewriting?

- Will vary from judge to judge, but most judges will recognize the issue and give an “A” for effort to create a solution
- Most judges prefer that re-scoring be kept to a minimum
- If you are rescoring is tasteful and skillful enough, the judges might not even notice



General Re-Scoring Guidelines

1. Tessitura
 - a. Always choose the same range as the original
2. Timbre
 - a. Choose instruments or combinations that resemble the same color
3. Percussion
 - a. Always cover the basics - snare drum, bass drum, cymbals first then timpani and as many mallet parts as possible, anything else in rhythmic in nature
 - b. Mallets parts can often be omitted when they double wind parts
 - c. Ensure that percussion solos are covered
 - d. Consider using wind players to play the easier accessory parts

PERCUSSION

Percussion Guidelines

- Create percussion assignment for Assessment AND for Sight-Reading
- Have percussion play during warm-ups and ensure that they blend and do not over play
- Clarify a crash cymbal choke vs. a marching band smash
- Timpani tuning must be inaudible and done by the students
- Use appropriate implements
- Use a padded trap table
- Have a logistical, consistent set up

PERFORMANCE ETIQUETTE

Performance Etiquette

- Arrive to the venue early, leaving enough time to properly warm-up and be focused
- When in the audience be professional and kind
- When performing:
 - Dress appropriately
 - Remain focused and quiet
 - Do not wave to the audience

NON-MUSIC ITEMS

Non-Musical Items

- Reserve transportation
- Acquire chaperones
- Complete all necessary paperwork, Festival information, field trip forms, etc.
- Submit seating charts, scores, and any other pertinent information
- Create packing/equipment lists
- Obtain all medical forms, information, etc.

Key Takeaways

- Define assessment criteria and is the assessment tool reliable and valid
- Identify common performance errors
- Select grade appropriate repertoire selection
- Employ a behavioral approach for a positive adjudication outcome:
 - Plan - Prepare – Perform

Questions?



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