

Assessments in Elementary Music

Why, When and How?

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- ▶ Gain accountability from students and parents by providing appropriate and verifiable feedback.
- ▶ Give yourself data to assess the success of your teaching with each group.

“Seriously? I see them once a week!”

- ▶ Assessments can be the glue that holds the information you teach together.
- ▶ By assessing, you are committing to creating a program the students can master (not too easy, not too hard) and holding yourself accountable for changing it if your results demonstrate the need. This is good for your program, your students and music education.
- ▶ Because you and your students are working towards their ability to demonstrate mastery, you are providing the continuity that will ensure they remember what you teach them!

Don't panic.

- ▶ Assessments do not have to be “hard.”
- ▶ You get to decide what they are.
- ▶ You get to decide if they need changing.

We'll look at some ideas in a minute...

When Should I Assess?

- ▶ I assess every 9 weeks. This provides enough time to cover lots of material without overloading students.
- ▶ At 8 weeks we review all material together as a class. I give each child a study sheet and we review it together. This *consolidates the learning* as well as prepares them for the assessment.

What is the goal of my assessments?

- ▶ I have no interest in failing a student in elementary music. Once a week is not enough for the students to learn at a considerable depth of knowledge. However, the assessments can provide data and accountability.
- ▶ IC guidelines for assessments are that they make up 30% of the final grade. When combined with participation, performance, and projects, this means that a child that participates in class but receives an extremely low grade on the assessment might fall somewhere in the mid 80's.
- ▶ Because parents can't believe an elementary school child could possibly get "less than 100 in music (!)" the assessment, if done properly, provides a relatively painless way to wake them up...painless, because you can't really argue that a "B" is bad, but you can't claim the child knew their stuff either.

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- ▶ Create a **recovery policy**: If a student fails the written part of the assessment, they will be allowed to take it home and correct all wrong answers. The test will be re-graded, and the old and new score averaged together. Any child that corrects the test perfectly using whatever resources they wish (parent, internet, conference with you) will earn at least a 75 on the assessment.

For example: a 3rd grade assessment at 27 weeks

▶ Written Assessment (20 minutes)

- ▶ Be able to identify / define 10 codes (music symbols).
- ▶ Be able to identify / draw E-B on the staff.
- ▶ Be able to identify / draw the places in Solfege Town (my Solfege system)
- ▶ Be able to circle the Solfege notes of the pentatonic scale
- ▶ Be able to choose from a meter on the board (4/4 $\frac{3}{4}$ 2/4 6/8) and tell what it counts to
- ▶ Write out the 12-bar blues using Solfege

▶ Performance Evaluation (remainder of time)

- ▶ Locomotion (with Dance Police game)
- ▶ Four White Horses (with clapping game)
- ▶ Draw Me a Bucket (with game)
- ▶ (Old Dan Tucker) optional
- ▶ Improvising over the blues on a pentatonic scale in mallet instruments

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- ▶ 55 points total.

Traquavis wants to improve his score

- ▶ Traquavis takes his test home and corrects it with Mom's help (and a conference call to the teacher).
- ▶ Traquavis returns the test to his teacher. It's almost perfect now. The corrected grade is 95. (50 performance plus 45 written)
- ▶ Teacher averages the first grade and the second grade to get the revised grade. $55+95=150$ $150 \div 2 = 75$

The result...

- ▶ Traquavis got a passing grade that is a reflection of both his test preparation and his willingness to work to improve.
- ▶ His Mom saw exactly where the score came from and got a sense that the teacher is both teaching real material and is paying attention in Music Class.
- ▶ Traquavis got a lot of time with material he might have only been sort of listening to before!

Kindergarten and First

- ▶ Typically they don't write uniformly well enough to take a test.
- ▶ Their test can be completely performance-based.

Kindergarten

- ▶ “Performance” - split class into two groups. One group will be the audience, one the performers.
- ▶ Performers must perform all the songs and games, led by the teacher. Audience must demonstrate appropriate audience etiquette as defined by the teacher.
- ▶ After the performance, the two groups switch.

Performance assessment for First Grade

- ▶ Half of the grade can be participation / cooperation.
- ▶ The other half can come from one or more simple performance assessments.

Performance Assessments Should...

- ▶ Focus on one skill at a time
- ▶ Be easy to grade
- ▶ Be quick so that each child can move through the task while the others watch.

Example of a First Grade Performance Assessment

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- ▶ The simple assessment requires only one skill, but measures several things:
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 - 2) Do they know which way is up on a keyboard or mallet instrument?
 - 3) Can they match what they think with what they do?

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1) Do they know what up and down mean in music? 2) Do they know which way is up on a keyboard or mallet instrument? 3) Can they match what they think with what they do?
- ▶ This assessment does not measure whether they play steps or skips, what technique they use to hit the bars, or any dynamic decisions they make.

Grading the assessment (assume this is the only one you use)

- ▶ Student says and plays the same direction: 50 points.
- ▶ Student says one direction and plays the other: 40 points.
- ▶ Student says one direction and plays both directions: 30 points.
- ▶ Student plays one direction and does not say what it is: 20 points.
- ▶ Student plays in more than one direction: 10 points.

You can combine several performance assessments if you have time.

- ▶ “Up and Down” on the xylophone - 25 points
- ▶ “Forte and Piano” in the voice - 15 points
- ▶ “Identify whether a symbol is a quarter note or two eighth notes” - 10 points

Treat the performance assessment like the written one

- ▶ Combine “participation” (50 points) with “performance” (50 points) to arrive at a final grade.
- ▶ Give students a practice run on week 8 so they’ve done it once. If desired, give them a chance to retake on week 10.
- ▶ TIP: When doing a whole-group performance test, let the person who goes first have the option of going again, because they’re the only person that doesn’t get to watch someone else do it!

If you want to look at my materials...

- ▶ What do I assess?
- ▶ What do my study guides look like?
- ▶ Where can I find this ridiculously wordy power-point?

Everything will be posted on the Atlanta Choral Exchange,
<http://atlantachoral.weebly.com/>

I'll send out an e-mail to all Fine Arts Staff with a link!