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### Now That We're There, Who Wants to Know?

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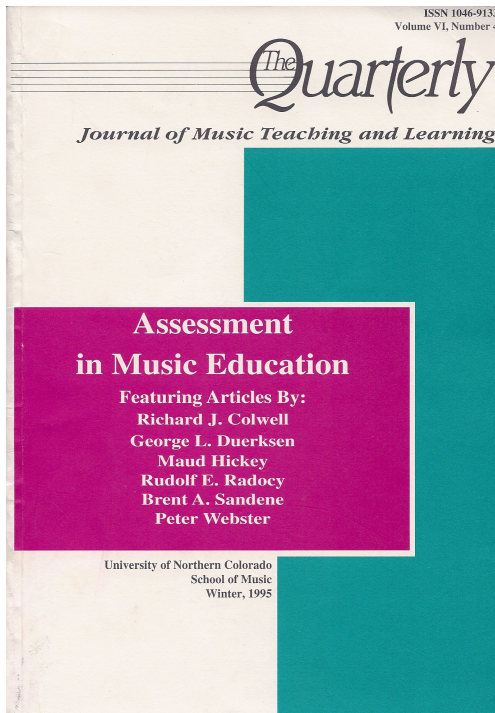
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# Now That We're There, Who Wants To Know?<sup>1</sup>

**By Richard J. Colwell**

*New England Conservatory*

Recently a colleague opposed to the implementation of standards asked: 1) "What right do you think you have in establishing what any human being should know?" 2) "What right do you have in establishing what experiences every child should have?" 3) "As different as children are, how could you presume to establish not only what any single child should know or be able to do but when he or she should demonstrate this competency?" Interesting questions all; questions raised by the adoption of national, state, and local standards. It is not only the evaluation community that is split on these and other issues; there is a variety of opinions on how to improve the schools. The press emphasizes the latest trends — the spectacular, the radical, and the headliner. Because the press is so influential, assessing the depth of feeling about reforming the schools is difficult and complex once one gets beyond the general concerns for schooling. Whether there is serious interest by teachers, parents, and students in changing present music programs is unknown. To quote our President, perhaps we are all in a funk. During any transition

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period, the voices of special interest groups become loud. Evaluation professionals are listening to and reflecting on the many messages of the reform movement.

Not long after the first encounter, another colleague, one who realized that with standards comes a need for evaluation, approached me at a conference exclaiming: "All grades should be abolished!" "Why do we have grades?" he asked. "Do you really think they motivate students? Do you really think grades provide meaningful feedback to students and parents? Have you ever made any important decisions based on knowing a student's grade in a course or the student's grade point average? Are not grades more a mark of failure than of

success? Are there not more students concerned over why they receive a B+ than over a D-? Doesn't the need to give grades standardize the curriculum and put a straight jacket on learning? Don't grades restrict the creativity and flexibility of the teacher? Grades as an outcome of evaluation make no sense." He, of course, associated evaluation and assessment with present grading practices, a not uncommon connection.

Like me, my colleagues are curious about — even threatened by — the momentum of the waterfall of change. The momentum is motivated in part by partially specious reports of failure in the public schools. Why is

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there all of this talk about new assessments, especially assessment in music? According to our reform-minded education colleagues, music was the only subject in the curriculum that assessed with sanity. Ensembles and classes that emphasized musical performance were judged on their performing ability at a few crucial points in the school year. There was no grading on the normal or bell shaped curve; most students could be successful. In elementary music we knew that, with the two grades of satisfactory and improving, improving reflected more the student's interest in music class than his or her accomplishments. The worry about high stakes assessment and the use of inappropriate multiple choice tests has not applied to music. (Assessment and evaluation are used interchangeably in this article, although a distinction can be made).

Now, even the music teachers are being advised to learn how to better sort their students. Some of the newer schemes facilitate multiple sorting — not only is the student to be assessed on singing ability but on whether that student can relate music and social studies, beat out the rhythm patterns of some ethnic folk songs, and improvise on the latest rap song. Workshops on assessment unfortunately appear to be focused as much on what to assess as on how to assess. There is also a decided shift in emphasis from the group to the individual.

The attention being given to evaluation of music instruction does come as a surprise. Not only the public, but also school administrators, are unsure of what they want to see happen in a quality music program. The locker room chatter does not appear to be just "catch up" talk: It is not occasioned solely by the designation of the arts as a basic subject and its need to assume the trappings of a basic subject. This attention to evaluation in music could be only for show, for appearances' sake. Musicians know the importance of appearances. (Even a few of our students know what we mean when we ask them to wear their good clothes to the performance.) Perhaps this new attention to reporting our successes is to be more important than show? I really do not know.

Adopting a new method or changing the

present schemata of evaluating music programs would be readily accepted by the profession if it meant the survival of our programs. Survival is such a strong instinct that we have been known to make tactical and strategic errors when we thought survival was the basic issue. Teachers would also universally change their evaluation procedures if offered a nearly infallible measure of musical potential, but few other compelling reasons come to mind that account for this strong interest in evaluation. There are excellent reasons to evaluate — improvement of instruction, improved counseling, support, motivation, teaching, and more — but these reasons are not new.

Thus, I remain undecided as to whether this attention to assessment is:

- teacher shop talk that sounds credible in service sessions which impress our superintendents,
- being promoted by bored college professors,
- a me-too idea of state arts supervisors,
- fodder that can be turned into journal articles; or
- whether this assessment interest marks a turning point in music education and is an indication that music teachers are anxious and willing to undertake one of the biggest changes in music teaching practices in our history.

I hope it is the latter. Adoption of a serious assessment philosophy will require more changes in our teaching than in our assessment.

If this interest in evaluation is sincere, there are multiple reasons for the sincerity. Each reason leads us on a different path of instruction and will suggest interesting and varied teaching and evaluation techniques in the quest for a better musically educated society than presently exists in the United States.

Let me give one example. There is a belief among psychologists that the curriculum in the schools should be primarily a cognitive-based curriculum. These evangelists who focus on teaching and teacher education are no longer promoting the selection of interesting stimuli for students; they are advocating cognitive constructivism. For them, important understanding occurs only when students construct their own meaning for any

Music teachers may be interested in assessment today because we are being credited for having developed and used authentic assessments, mainly the portfolio, that are now to be copied by the teachers of other basic subjects.... As most of us have never used any assessment in a systematic manner, it is ironic to find ourselves being emulated.

experiences. This ability to construct meaning requires that a student learn to sort through data, to assimilate, to think critically, to reason, to solve problems, to think in big blocks and to place any resulting knowledge in an appropriate context, one with which the student is familiar. Howard Gardner, devotees of Getty Center for Education in the Arts, and many educational reformers advocate this approach. Cognitive constructivism may or may not be the primary goal of music instruction.

The recent attention to educational evaluation is also media driven. The media seek "factual" stories on school test scores, and they create comparisons for us to mull over. Data are everywhere and the sensationalist use of such data sells. For example, crime stories report the number of students with weapons in school and the *number* of stab wounds of murder victims. Human interest stories report the number, ages, and dates that young boys were fondled by the local pedophile and every isolated case of child abuse. I find these data-oriented stories neither of interest nor exemplary of our humanness. In describing American education, assessment data are twisted and turned. Student scores are compared with the Finns in reading and with the Japanese in math or science. There is no limit to the use of these *selective* geographical data comparisons, whether they are meaningful or not. Once geographical comparisons in math and reading are no longer titillating or devastating, American students will be compared on some other ability, perhaps their forestry (ecological) competence with students of Kenya or Madagascar. For the media to trash us, there does not have to be a comparison group. Sometimes we learn only that American students correctly answered only half of

the items. It is all in how you say it. I recall reading in Kiplinger's *Newsletter* that a high percentage of American high school graduates could not read blueprints. Well, I've looked at a few blueprints this past summer while the Conservatory's concert hall was being remodeled, elevators and ramps installed, smoke detectors and automatic sprinkler systems emplaced, asbestos removed, and I know that not trusting the reading of those blueprints to someone like me was a sound decision. Why should every high school graduate read blueprints?

Admittedly, I enjoy the naiveté of the criticisms of the SAT and ACT tests. This naiveté is not limited to the unknowing reporters. Educators and others who should know better have joined this "criticize the SAT" chorus. The basic negative arguments are that these tests, which have multiple choice response sections, are verbally and mathematically based and consequently narrow the curriculum. The SAT and ACT tests don't narrow anything. These tests were purposely developed to *not* reflect any subject taught in American high schools, although having studied math does help. They were designed to provide the best estimate of a student's potential in an achievement-free mode. If verbal and math competencies predict college success, that's fine. The SAT test constructors expected that colleges and others would use a student's *academic* record to provide information on any potential that can be estimated from past subject matter success. The fact that the tests are multiple-choice is irrelevant.

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to be copied by the teachers of other basic subjects. As the portfolio is an indirect method of authentic assessment, any use it will have in music will be quite different from its uses in other subjects. It is indirect in that recordings are made and judgments are based on the recordings, not the actual performance. Music teachers can use their ears and *directly* assess their objectives. As most of us have never used any assessment in a systematic manner, it is ironic to find ourselves being emulated. Is emulation the sincerest form of flattery?

Our increased interest in assessment might arise from the rumor that the national assessment in music is to be resurrected in 1997. Those in Washington who are footing the bill for the development of this national assessment would like to see any results of National Assessment of Educational Progress published on a state-by-state basis. They also would have little or no objection to test score comparisons by cities, schools, or teachers. As this evaluation is to be voluntary and at only one grade level (8), the results will not satisfy its promoters and will be almost totally devoid of meaning for the profession. I believe, also, that there is a lack of professional urgency among music educators about any national assessment. The public was not concerned about the results of the national assessment of educational progress in music in either 1971 or 1979. We must bear in mind that presently the public's concern is that all students have the *opportunity* to participate in school music, not that *all* students be successful in music.

Beyond the rumor of the national assessment, another reason for the new interest in evaluation is an assumption that the political force being exerted on the schools as part of the reform movement will require *all* basic

subjects to be systematically evaluated. Basic subjects are those subjects required of all students and that consume most of the educational resources. Although there is a recommendation that the arts become a basic subject, there may be no immediate demand for an assessment system in music. We could miss the advantages and disadvantages of assessment. There may really be a free ride for us. The public has never questioned what goes on in any required music classes — most lay persons readily admit to knowing little about the arts and accept teacher opinion. In any community, what Mrs. Johnson says is 4th grade music is 4th grade music. What John Poorman says is a high school band program is unquestioned as long as his public appearances are frequent and tuneful. If we reject the free ride, however, the price will be to provide the public with evidence of what was achieved in this newly required basic subject. What makes tomorrow's graduates better human beings than those who earned a diploma when there was no arts requirement?

Another reason for the interest in assessment is the relationship between assessment and power. Assessment is a political act. The demand for a change in assessment practices was not initiated by teachers in the field; the impetus came from those who work in policy and politics, who believe that improved assessment will strengthen the stature of music in the public schools. Important subjects and events are assessed. For example, at the scene of an automobile accident, there is strong sentiment for a required sobriety test. Testing for product safety is increasing; and even educators have argued that teachers be certified through an evaluation process. Subjects and events that impact on our lives are assessed.

High stakes is a crucial concept for us.... Do we wish music assessments to affect promotion, grades, and graduation? What will be the consequences of failure in music? Presumably there are consequences associated with all basic subjects.

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This relationship to power is interesting. Presently, there is not a strong public demand for assessing the outcomes of general music classes. Thus, politically astute leaders have encouraged required evaluation plans with the expectation that an enhanced status for general music will come when student achievement in all basic subjects is publicly reported. The rationale is that the doors will be opened for those who teach that which is assessed; however, doors could swing shut for the electives.

There are probably as many reasons for the interest in assessment as there are music teachers. One unstated reason for interest in evaluation is the human need for inclusion. I initially thought only students needed inclusion but, of course, teacher inclusion is equally compelling. When sides are chosen, we don't want to be the last one. It's satisfying to be thought of as an equal and contributing member of the teaching team, not one whose value is "availability" for planning period relief.

Currently, there is a strong political and, I assume, educational interest in educating those students who have fallen toward the bottom. These include the handicapped, the disadvantaged, the homeless, and those who previously would have dropped out of school or received alternative schooling. Special education and at-risk programs are expensive; thus, there is a compelling interest in evaluating the success of this new area. In these special programs, the interest is more on the success of the individual than that of the class. Did the music program keep one additional child in school, and did the music program provide a boost for the self-esteem of a few potentially suicidal adolescents? This interest, as well as the long-silenced interest in the gifted and talented, sets up the need for a complex assessment

system. Such a system must be valid for individuals, sensitive to differences in small groups and entire classes, viable across grade levels to accommodate ensembles and other mixed groupings, and able to capture the changed spirit of the entire school.

These reasons for music teachers to be interested and knowledgeable concerning assessment are not trivial. You can, nonetheless, see the difficulty of focusing on the priorities when deciding how to expend your energies. Moreover, I have not emphasized the possibility that assessment could result in improved student learning, enhanced motivation and a deepened interest in school for students, improved teaching by teachers, and stronger support for the music program.

### **Achievement History**

The reason for the importance of assessment in the history of education is recognizable. Horace Mann was the first superintendent of public instruction, a Massachusetts initiative in 1837. By 1845 he began to wonder whether those Commonwealth dollars flowing to the Boston School Committee could be justified on the basis of the pupils' attainments, and he twisted the arms of the school committee members to institute a comprehensive survey of student achievement *by school*. Boston schools were even ranked on the basis of these test scores, and ranking continues today. This understandable idea of assessment spread gradually throughout the United States, and was not uncommon by the 1870s. Ranking data appealed to Americans and became an item of interest to newspaper readers. These test results did not affect student promotion until the end of the century.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, a statement by the teacher that the student was eli-

gible for promotion/graduation was sufficient for the awarding of diplomas. Once tests became a factor in student promotion, they became "high stakes" measures. High stakes is a crucial concept for us; when test results affect students in a major way, there is a demand for fairness and standardization of tests or for any assessment measure. Do we wish music assessments to affect promotion, grades, and graduation? What will be the consequences of failure in music? Presumably there are consequences associated with all basic subjects.

At the turn of the century there was more than a casual interest in test fairness when these high stakes, standardized measures first became widely used. Philosophical and propriety questions were raised. The country was growing, and the addition of more schools required a larger share of the local budget. The children of the immigrants who had come to the United States in large numbers near the end of the 19th century were expected to learn to read and write English, and to learn how to become good American citizens and assume the rights, obligations, and privileges thereof. Despite the importance of education for democracy, these questions arose: Was there a need to educate everyone? How much education was necessary? Were Jefferson's ideas about support for education still feasible? These questions remain relevant. Is there a need to educate everyone in music? How much instruction is necessary? How competent must every child be and in what?

### **Aptitude History**

Alfred Binet, at the request of the French government, developed his intelligence test to identify those children lacking the potential to complete the work required in traditional schools. France, like most Western nations, had schools for the mentally subnormal and with a two-tiered educational system came the requirement to place students appropriately in one of the two tiers.

Americans were eager to adapt Binet's work. The class system in society and in education was not unknown to the new immigrants. The influential Jefferson had agreed that *some* of the poor should not be

*fully* educated at public expense. In the next decades, whether the screening was for armed forces placement in World War I or to meet the large-scale screening for employment in America's massive factories, personal data on intelligence became important. These IQ tests, as they came to be known, have had a remarkable history, changing very little in nearly 100 years. They were not necessarily fair. When girls outscored boys on the 1916 version of the IQ test, the test developers dropped the questions in which the girls did better because it was *common* knowledge that boys are more capable than girls — the test questions had to be flawed. Recent publications suggest that the important aptitude may now be a Student's EQ., i.e. emotional intelligence quotient. Whether the term is IQ, EQ, or multiple intelligence, the importance of talent remains.

The opportunity to sort students by ability or potential is attractive to music teachers; it is frustrating to try to teach students to sing who can't match pitch. When students drop out of instrumental music, band and orchestra directors believe that their instructional efforts are forever lost. Seashore's 1912 *Measures of Musical Talents* was published in 1919 and was widely used and accepted as a valid test by most professional musicians. It is no longer used nor is there much interest in *any* music talent test. Music teachers may no longer use talent as the primary criterion for organizing instruction or for including or excluding students, although the idea of the importance of talent is far from dead. Some schools have no basis for instructional organization except age or grade with very mixed outcomes.

### **Present (Almost) Achievement**

Economy and efficiency were and are valued by Americans, and most school assessments have consisted of tests that could be easily given and scored. Interest has turned, however, from IQ to student achievement with about 80 percent of the tests given to students being achievement tests.

A lesson for us stems from the extensive use of music achievement tests in the 1930s and 1940s. The most successful tests were tests that measured the cognitive components of music — test questions on student compe-

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tence with notation or questions about the historical-cultural context of music. When instruction changed to emphasize more of the "doing" of music with a focus on aural perception, test publishers provided questions using aurally-based stimuli and musical tasks. As these tests required a recording, tape, or CD, the tests were more expensive, less user-friendly, and they were "timed" tests — students had to stay with the recording or give up. Timed tests were frustrating for slow students, for those whose attention span was short, and for students who were momentarily distracted. These tests may not have measured what a student knew and could do under "ideal" conditions, but they were very "authentic." The timed tasks were similar to the tasks required of a listener at a concert hall or in a performance situation. Authenticity is not always a high teacher priority. Student involvement and student progress were more important.

Mursell attacked the earlier factual paper and pencil tests but apparently never made up his mind about aural perception as an instructional outcome. Mursell advocated what is today called "holistic" evaluation. One hypothesis that I have about Mursell's reluctance to promote that which he advocated is that student scores on aural examinations were not flattering. Improving a student's aural abilities (perception) was not only a formidable task for which many teachers had not been prepared, but it called into play a host of factors, not the least of which were home background, prior experience, talent, motivation, and interest. Aural tests in music, no matter how authentic, never caught on. Teachers do not elect to give tests on which their students do poorly and that do not reflect their teaching emphasis. Many of the assessments proposed for music under *Goals 2000* will be far more complex to administer and score than these rejected-and-never-used achievement measures.

Today we are exploring assessment in music without much negative baggage. Teachers' decisions today and in the coming months will be ground breaking.

Today's questions seem to be:

- Why do we want to evaluate?
- What do we want to know?
- Who should be evaluated?
- How do we evaluate?
- When do we want to know the results?
- Who is the audience?
- Who has the power of making decisions?
- Are there fair assessment models?
- Are the curriculum models of a good music program that is part of general education exemplified by good liberal arts schools or by music conservatories?

There are today more reasons than those cited at the beginning of this article for supporting the evaluation of music students and music programs. The discussion that follows here will be limited to answering only this question — Why do we want to evaluate? The reasons for evaluating are numerous and important.

### Feedback

It is no exaggeration to say that a careful and systematic evaluation is the single most important act in improving classroom teaching and learning. Accurate feedback is crucial to improvement in musical performance. To obtain quality feedback, individual musicians will pay \$50, \$100 or more to a teacher or coach. The ability to provide valid feedback to groups of musicians distinguishes great conductors from average conductors. These conductors must, of course, have musical vision, but what is crucial is their ability to provide meaningful feedback to a player or group of players on the differences between their vision and the actual performance.

Composers studied with Nadia Boulanger because of her ability to provide quality

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feedback. Students prefer to attend classes where there is discussion and even argument on stimulating ideas. These classes provide the opportunity to broaden our perceptions of the world and our role in it. The positive effect is due to feedback.

There are suggestions in the reform literature today about the importance of students becoming self-learners, becoming independent of the teacher. The teacher is to serve primarily as a resource for the student, who has been taught to learn. These suggestions are not focused on music instruction and, if the assumption is that all subjects are similar, these individuals inhabit different musical worlds from those with which I am familiar. Our research indicates that immediate instructor feedback is better than delayed feedback; our instructional practices, whether in the private studio or in class, mirror this belief. Feedback is crucial. I know of no research that touts the absence of teacher-centered instruction in favor of discovery learning in music education. We may be on our own in developing any assessment strategies that focus on immediacy and type of feedback.

Fortunately, providing supportive feedback to students has been a major part of music education's evaluation efforts. Our assessment, however, has been used primarily to improve, not to judge, so we still need to make progress in this area. We have not employed high stakes evaluation for students in our music programs; but music instruction at the high school level can result in high stakes teacher evaluation. Teaching high school music is perceived as being different from social studies or science education. In music there is a perception of a direct connection between "if the student doesn't perform well, the teacher hasn't taught well." If the science teacher has a Westinghouse winner, it is a bit unexpected. If the orchestra does not obtain a superior rating or if there are not more players accepted for the all-state orchestra than from any other compa-

rable town, the teacher is "not like the last one" and has to go.

Teachers would like friendly assessments that would provide public feedback on our program and our objectives. Obtaining such feedback is presently not possible, as there are few common public expectations of an adequate music program. Individual teachers, as I have suggested, establish the parameters of instruction, and many programs are unique.

Good evaluation procedures will quickly provide evidence of the difference between discipline-based and performance-based programs. Student and parent perception of music programs may be the standard against which programs are judged.

Evaluation in music classes is of major importance because grades in music provide so little feedback to parents, administrators, and students. All students might receive grades of A or satisfactory, but few parents or administrators believe that such grading practice represents the latest in outcomes-based assessment or indicates that all students have mastered the course objectives. Receiving all grades of A or S may not be an indication of a student's improvement or accomplishment in musical skills, knowledge, and understanding.

### **Relationship of Objectives to Outcome**

We must also evaluate to gather insight on the relationship of teacher objectives with objectives of the students. A recent doctoral study indicates that students do not like to sing ethnic folk songs, especially those of their own ethnicity. This finding brings into question the wide-spread emphasis on multicultural music. Several other studies indicate a lack of agreement in high school music between teacher and student objectives. The generalizability of these research results is not known.

Evaluation models will quickly reveal the extent of agreement between what we say and what we do. If the major expenditure of

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student-teacher energy is to produce the annual musical, and the assessment that counts consists of accolades for the music program and for individual student performances the day after the musical, the students may not believe that the day-to-day classroom experiences are important to their musical education.

We also evaluate because we sometimes teach in ungraded situations, and comparisons are meaningful. Freshman and seniors are in the same class or ensemble in our high school. Middle school students of varied grade levels (6, 7, and 8) should have an opportunity to participate in the same musical experiences — at least where current middle school philosophy is followed. Ensembles scheduled in the middle school by grade level, 6th grade band, 7th grade band, and so on, can not be educationally justified and do not contribute to the goals of competence or non-graded education. Students are less interested in obtaining evaluation feedback from this non-authentic experience, and this feedback is of lower instructional value when placement in a class or ensemble is simply an administrative convenience.

We evaluate to ascertain student success with both individual and cooperative goals. One can be a fine soloist but an unsatisfactory member of an ensemble; the criteria for success can change depending upon the context. Similarly, students can understand blend and balance and become excellent followers but lack musical independence. Science educators are presently conducting research on whether success with paired students is an indicator that each student has learned. (Incidentally, their findings are that pairing in science does not result in equal learning.) Music teachers could have graphically explained to these science teachers the role of leadership-followership in any pairing or grouping. As we know, when our section

leaders are unavailable to provide that leadership through giving of clues, or initiating performance and discussion, the class or ensemble atmosphere is completely changed.

We evaluate to separate process from product, two elements that can be further subdivided. Product can be a specific behavioral outcome, or it can include the behavior in a context that contributes to a broader array of outcomes. For example, performing with good tone quality can be only one product in a broader array of outcomes.

Process objectives include:

- exposing students to music twice a week for 30 minutes; and
- exposing them twice a week for 30 minutes to the ideas and methods of Carl Orff.

The process of individual methods such as Orff — rather than music itself — is often what is taught. Another example of a process objective would be taking students to a symphony orchestra concert where students are guaranteed exposure to the music of a Russian composer. Isn't *Peter and the Wolf* a staple for all children's concerts? At these children's concerts, students do experience the relationship of the conductor to the orchestra, the relationship of soloist to accompaniment, and even how individuals behave at a formal concert. They might, for the first time, experience a piece of music in its entirety. These experiences defy any traditional assessment, authentic or partial. Process objectives in the reform movement such as problem-solving and critical thinking may be considered to differ in importance from many of the process objectives commonly stressed in music.

I have presented a few of the reasons why we evaluate in order to emphasize what appear to be the important ideas in state arts frameworks. The critical statements in a

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framework indicate that there *must* be multiple means of assessment to demonstrate the achievements of public school music classes. We attempt so much with so little that assessment of all kinds — objective tests, observations, performances — is of increased importance. Every one of the needs requires its own assessment; the task is indeed formidable.

The expectation is that the evaluation initially will center on the content standards for music developed at the national, state, and local levels. We should be taking these nine carefully crafted standards and developing at the state and local level performance standards based on these content standards. Performance standards are not to be pass/fail but assessed as basic, proficient, and advanced. I find the adoption of only three rungs to the ladder understandable but unfortunate, especially when we consider the extreme diversity in our classrooms. I would advocate at least six, but that is another topic entirely.

Be forewarned that initially, and perhaps for some time, the real assessment will not be on the nine voluntary national standards or any standards the state develops. Student, parent and possibly administrator perception of a successful music program will be the initial standard against which programs and students are judged. Before devoting any resources to assessment, our first task is to determine this perception in each of our communities.

We have an opportunity, but an opportunity that could easily be easily squandered, if we spend our time developing assessments for present unsatisfactory programs. Assessment efforts need to be related to exemplary programs we wish to retain or visionary new programs we wish to initiate. That is point number 1.

Point number 2 — How do we approach the task? The centerpiece of the reform

movement is the voluntary national standards, but there are four sets of standards. The nine content standards are the best known. Performance standards on how well the students should know the content or how well they should perform are a second set of standards. Teacher education standards are a third set of standards. Although most teachers are dedicated, competent, and passionate about their work, a few bad apples make the headlines. These headlines have led us to teacher testing, expanded teacher education programs, and professional development centers. The fourth set of standards, *opportunity to learn* standards, are crucial to any professional music educator. I am suggesting that it is this set of standards that should have been prerequisite to accepting music as a basic subject in the curriculum.

The arts advocacy groups should make opportunity to learn the keystone of their lobbying effort. The National Endowment of the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education should have funded, or now fund, scholars and researchers and institute campaigns on behalf of opportunities in music and the arts. There are windows of opportunity that, when missed, may not soon open again. Can we regain the support of so many groups on a second campaign? What music students and teachers need is unthreatened and uninterrupted blocks of instructional time. They need well-equipped music rooms, instruments, books, music, CD's, computers, software, and more. What value is research on teaching and learning if teachers do not have the resources to try to reach a diverse student body with its many needs?

Students and teachers also need administrative support of music programs. Flexible scheduling, advisories, exploratory clubs and courses about which so much is written do not seem to consider music as if it is to be taught by a specialist. To accomplish the ob-

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jectives promised by the arts advocates, music must be scheduled first. There is no other way to take advantage of musically qualified teachers who work in more than one school or who wish to group students across age levels to accommodate learning styles, talent, interest, cooperative learning, instrumentation, and maturity level. Scheduling all students into a sixth grade exploratory music class or into a sixth grade chorus or band makes no educational sense and is not philosophically consistent with today's middle school philosophy. Scheduling is equally crucial in elementary and secondary schools.

Students and teachers also need parental support. There must be time, place and encouragement for practice and study.

Scheduling music once a week does not meet any conceivable *opportunity to learn* standards. It may not meet even the survival standards. A music teacher accepts such a schedule because the very survival of the program is at risk. With such a schedule, satisfactory attainment of any standard is highly doubtful. Content and performance standards can have little meaning to teachers, parents, and students without the opportunity to learn the knowledge and skills required in music. Model music assessment strategies will seem impossible to these individuals. I argue that practice time, a form of that detested seat time, is more important in music than in math. In fact it's critical. Performing together requires practicing together. Music has individual and group goals, while math has only individual goals. For the math educator, cooperative learning is a tool that aids in attaining individual competency. In music, cooperative learning is both a tool and a goal.

If we listen to the parents and the public, there is strong support for every child to

have the opportunity to learn music in school, perhaps as high as 90 percent. We must not misinterpret this; the support for *required* music for all children is extremely weak, about 20 percent, placing it last among ranked required subjects. This low ranking, however, in no way impacts on our needs in providing quality instruction.

Based on what I know about teaching and learning music, students should have daily instruction and/or practice, and they must have the other opportunities to learn that I have mentioned. Everyone can add to this list. MENC's "Opportunity to Learn" booklet is a place to start, although assessors believe it ill informed and lacking in priorities. If opportunity to learn is so basic, why has it not received its deserved emphasis? Opportunity is a political issue. Adopting content and performance standards for teachers and students is cheap, whereas equality issues resonate in every legislative body because they require the appropriation of real dollars.

Because the assessment schemata are not firmly established in most states, we still have an opportunity to improve music programs if we establish at the local and state levels minimum opportunity to learn standards as a prior basis for any evaluation. Inform all of your supporters — the arts advocates — that now you really need their help. Expose to the media the lack of opportunity — it is time for Wynton Marsalis, Yo-Yo Ma and Seiji Ozawa, those who are featured in MENC publications, to inform the public about the time and effort required to obtain personal satisfaction from music. Music teachers must organize a counter movement to the idea that having an artist in the school or attending a youth concert is all it takes to become musically educated.

If *opportunity to learn* standards are the

...*opportunity to learn* standards, are crucial to any professional music educator. I am suggesting that it is this set of standards that should have been prerequisite to accepting music as a basic subject in the curriculum.

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starting point for music education in the current reform movement, what is the musical content that music teachers should use as they adopt various assessment strategies? I do not believe the content question is that crucial, important as it is. The nine content standards developed at the national level are well thought out standards — I would have no objections to teachers teaching for them or for local objectives and standards.

### What To Do

We should use the present interest in assessment as an opportunity to improve music teaching and learning. We should not assess solely to solidify our ranking in the school curriculum, or assess because portfolios or other authentic assessment tools are attractive or state mandated. One should assess something or everything that is important in your situation. As music educators in general music are not pleased with their present program and curriculum, it makes little sense to develop and implement an authentic assessment program to be used with, for example, once a week or exploratory music classes.

The reform movement is designed to change the public's perception of the schools and the perception of the competence of students in those schools. Albert Shanker reminds the readers of the *New York Times* that in education there are at present no standards, no penalties for goofing off. He states that all students can graduate from high school and all of these students can matriculate at 95 percent of the colleges in this country (and probably major in education!). The Shankerian method of analyzing the public perception problem leads to instituting penalties for goofing off, penalties fairly imposed that result from the use of quality high stakes assessment measures.

Assessment measures should not be se-

lected because they are interesting, therapeutic, or politically viable. Such measures are not necessarily less biased or more culturally valid. High stakes assessment requires our best thinking.

Numbers that evaluators have used in assessment are not dehumanizing; numbers are a human invention, designed to help understand human nature and human learning. Numbers are as natural as language and as natural as the symbol system used in music. They are not precise, but neither is notation. To avoid assessing product in any quantitative way, an argument is being made that we need to assess implementation objectives; these are objectives that describe the planned activities, materials, and personnel which theoretically or logically should yield the end results described in the product objectives. This is an interesting idea, but one without concrete validation. Evaluators have done little research on the relative effectiveness of *any* evaluation scheme and because of this lack of research, we can not make enlightened decisions. We presently need to investigate a variety of evaluation systems. If one system indicates the relative failure of a program, determination of just what went wrong is heeded, and educators should know all about that failure before trying a new program or a new assessment system. Many good ideas have been prematurely rejected due to single focus and uninterpreted evaluation. Education leads to multiple outcomes; a student can become technically proficient but also learn to dislike music. When this happens we need to consider both outcomes. General music programs have long suffered from single evaluations.

We still have to manage our music programs and manage the individuals within the program. Authentic assessment, either with or without portfolios, will not be informative

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about the effect of class size, use of resources, or any *Opportunity to Learn* variables on the present music program. Traditional assessments remain the staple of this area. So where are we? We are at the beginning of the journey.

Assessment measures that must be considered include criterion-referenced testing, norm-referenced testing, anchor-point performance reference, authentic assessment, portfolio procedures, curriculum-embedded assessment, and analysis of cognitive-process requirements of subject matter. Few of these have had their potential examined for music education. Some of these may not even sound familiar. No one method of evaluation will serve the needs of the profession.

Let us ask music teachers to identify the thing that they really care about, that they believe is important, and that the public can be convinced to care passionately about.

Then let us exhaustively assess knowledge or skills:

- in formative and summative ways,
- in its component parts and holistically,
- in both cooperative and competitive settings,
- with individuals and groups,
- in school and out of school,
- for its transferability and its permanence.

In addition, we can collect quantitative and qualitative data, and try all of the devices suggested in the state framework. In this way, we will display our students' competence to everyone, including the media. If the media will cover a musical petting zoo and *Peter and the Wolf*, maybe they will also feature students who are excited by good music instruction.

An example of focusing on a priority is the work of Edwin Gordon. He believes

passionately in the importance of audiation. For him audiation is central to musical understanding. He is not involved in attitude or preference scales or interested in how audiation improves one's human relations, self concept, or aesthetics. He emphasizes audiation in his teaching at all age levels, his students do research on audiation, and he devotes considerable effort toward promoting his ideas through books and workshops. He is not concerned that behaviorism, per se, is not *au courant* and is, in fact, rather a pejorative word. Skill development fits a musical ability that he cares about deeply, and he is not worried about the labels. It would not be impossible to assess achievement in audiation and would not be too complicated to assess the impact of audiation on larger musical tasks and understandings. The assessment task is not a small one; however, Gordon would have a considerable body of convincing data that would immediately shore up support for the music programs in the communities in which his program is in effect. The magnitude of the assessment task is such that, whatever competency is selected, we need to put all of our efforts in a limited few directions.

A promising evaluation model is the local piano teacher. This private entrepreneur may have evaluation right. The teacher has clear priorities, which include learning to read the notes and accurately manipulate one's way through technique and musical exercises. The teacher adds musical knowledge for interest, information (everyone should know about "fingers" Liszt), and for musical understanding. When appropriate, the teacher has students listen to not only the teacher's playing but to that of others, fellow students and recordings. The teacher might have students compose or improvise a bit,

but all experiences fit into a plan to make the student a better musician and any performance more musical and more accurate.

The teacher assigns homework, expects students to learn on their own, and knows that after lessons are discontinued, the ability to continue learning is assured. Experts and some teachers may not like the performance model with these emphases and priorities, but this model makes it possible to describe feasible assessments. It's a place to start.

Unfortunately the piano performance model requires a more rigorous instructional pattern than is present in most general music classes. General music courses often have non-assessable objectives such as: explore the world of music, become aware of the music of other cultures, develop a familiarity with performance practices and understand the music of their own culture. These objectives are not bad, but they are not standards. Objectives that use the verbs of "know," "understand," "appreciate," "become aware of," and "improve" present real challenges to assessors because they are fuzzy. Those of us who do not teach general music on a regular basis assume that more rigor and more specificity is always possible. The importance of school context is why setting objectives and selecting assessments is a local decision.

Articles such as this one can only suggest options and issue cautions. What is important is that we avoid dogmatism when thinking about the reform movement and measures of assessment. Dogmatism is evident when individuals can accept only one type of assessment and reject the possibility that the short answer, or other evaluation techniques, might best serve their purpose. Dogmatism is present when didactic teaching is completely rejected in favor of constructivism, when the view is held that one must always *do* music instead of *being taught* music, when spelling practice is rejected because it does not improve reading and writing and when the idea of teaching fundamentals is rejected in favor of higher order thinking.

No one is a stronger advocate of providing assessment feedback than I. I am optimistic

about the potential, but appreciative of the teacher effort required to conduct meaningful assessments. Sergiovanni has given us food for thought (Sergiovanni, 1996).

What do we want students to know?

What do we want students to become?

How do we want them to think?

How do we want them to reason?

What do we want them to value and believe?

How can we help them to become persons of character in our democratic society?

How do we want them to live their lives together in this school, to care for each other, to help each other, to respect each other?

How do we want them to work together, to inquire together, to learn together?

What do we believe about how students learn?

How should we think about our roles as teachers, counselors, friends?

What are our responsibilities as we stand in *loco parentis* to our students?

How will we work together as adults?

What will our obligations be to each other?

How will we share the burdens of leadership in this school?

What do we believe about accountability?

Where do the parents fit into the picture?

What obligations and commitments should we make to parents and what obligations and commitments should we expect from them?<sup>2</sup>

## Notes

1. Revised version of a paper originally given in October 1995 at the Suncoast Music Education Forum. Printed with the permission of the University of South Florida.

2. Sergiovanni, Thomas. *Leadership for the Schoolhouse*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996. pp. 63-64

