



# Assessment Strategies for Ensembles

Midwest Clinic, 2024  
Leah Elaine Hanley, Presenter



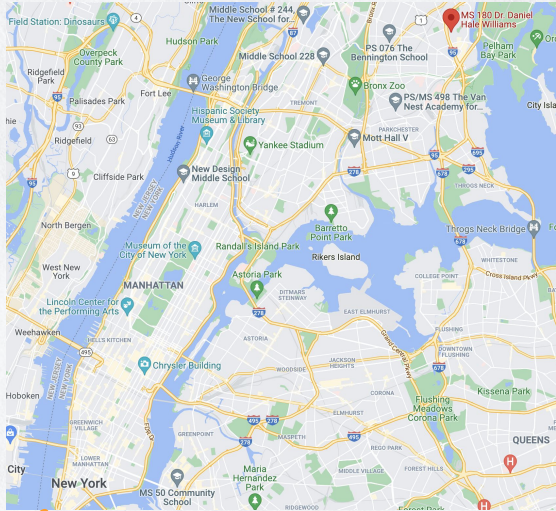
# About me

Leah Elaine Hanley, Presenter



# Leah Elaine Hanley

**Founding Orchestra Director, M.S. 180, Bronx** and the Salute to Music Bronx Orchestra Director. Leah is also the Arts Office Lead Music Teacher for the Bronx, and a Facilitator for the City-wide Music Professional Development.



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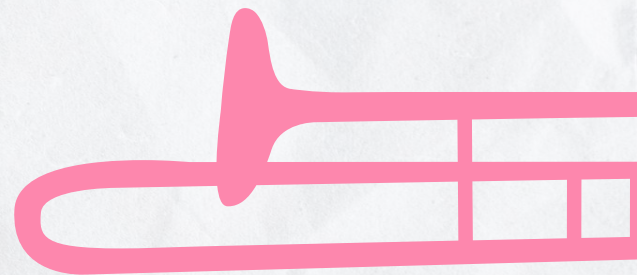
## Empowering Students

Quality feedback enables students to  
direct their own learning



**01**

**About You!!**



**Who is in the room?**



02

# Assessment 101

Basic ideas, definitions, and grading philosophy





# Why *Assess*?

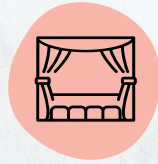
**We value what is assessed.**

# Types of Assessment



## Formative

- InFORMS next steps in teaching and learning.
- This what we do during rehearsals all the time.
- How do we do this meaningfully on an individual level?



## Summative

- SUMS up what is already learned.
- Typically tests, but for us - CONCERTS!
- Often feels high-stakes to students. Many are afraid to fail.
- Any grade that is permanent or unchangeable is summative.

# Assessment vs. grading



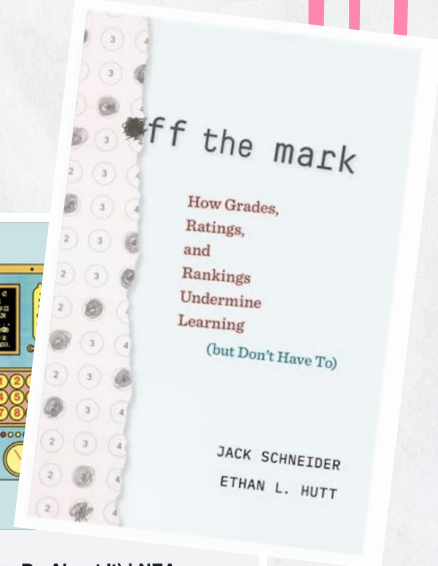
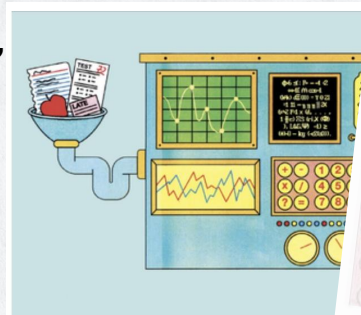
## Assessment

Purpose is to understand what students already know and can do. To identify gaps and next-steps in learning.

## Grading

"In the eyes of many students and parents, education is valuable because it can be traded for something else - social and economic advantage."

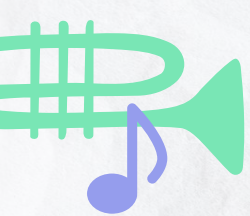
"The problem is that grades have become less about communication these days. Instead they are considered tokens that students exchange for future success."



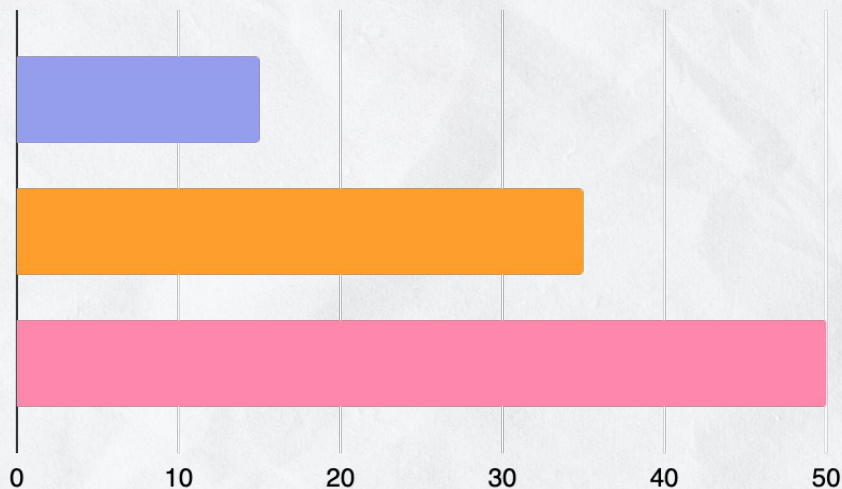
NEA.ORG

**How Grades Fail (And What You Can Do About It) | NEA**

Our current system of grading can be improved to get at the heart of...



# Grading for growth mindset



## Preparedness

During rehearsals. Includes materials & tardiness.

20%

## Assignments

Assessments live here.

30%

## Participation

During rehearsals. Students start at 90%.

50%



# We value what gets assessed.

Let's make sure we assess what we value.

"When students are anxious about their grades, it's hard to communicate with them as learners."



**Grades** reflect 2 values:

01

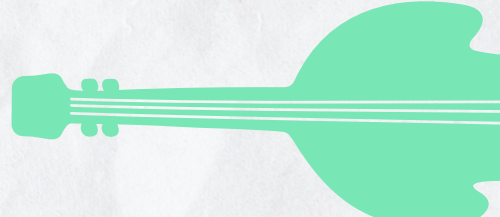
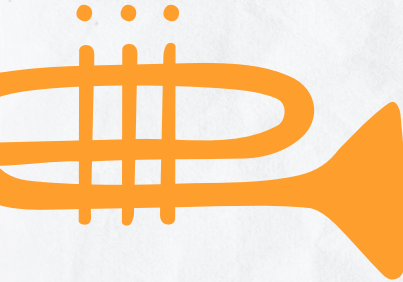
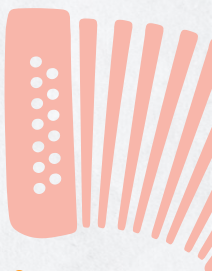
## Effort

Grade is based on completion, regardless of the raw score.

02

## Process

The grades are "overwritable" so that "present performance can overwrite previous failures."



**GRADING is about effort.**

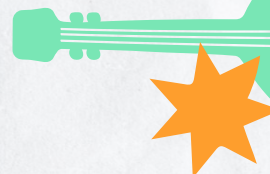
ASSESSMENT  
is about learning.

03

# Tech Tools

And how to use them





## 3 Rules for assessment tools:

01

### Efficient

Minimal impact to rehearsal time & teacher time.

02

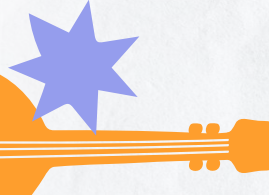
### Authentic

Reflect how professional musicians hone their skills or prepare for performance.

03

### Empower Learning

Provide students with valuable, actionable feedback.



# Technique:



## Orchestra Technique Assessment

Performer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Scale: \_\_\_\_\_ Rhythm: \_\_\_\_\_

### Bow Hold

| Got it! | Criteria                                          | Not Yet.... |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------|
|         | Hand is RELAXED - no tension!                     |             |
|         | Thumb is curved in a "C"-shape.                   |             |
|         | Pinky is curved, with NO WEIGHT                   |             |
|         | Hand leans toward the pointer finger WITH WEIGHT. |             |

### Bow Stroke

| Got it! | Criteria                                                                    | Not Yet.... |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
|         | The ENTIRE bow is used on every bow stroke.                                 |             |
|         | The bow is parallel to the bridge at all times.                             |             |
|         | The bow is in the "sweet spot," halfway between the bridge and fingerboard. |             |
|         | Tone is even throughout each stroke.                                        |             |

### Left Hand

| Got it! | Criteria                                                                                         | Not Yet.... |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
|         | Hand is RELAXED - no tension!                                                                    |             |
|         | Thumb is curved in a "C"-shape, with space around the neck of the instrument (your fairy house). |             |
|         | Hand is NOT supporting the weight of the instrument                                              |             |
|         | Wrist is straight in a line with the elbow.                                                      |             |

Next Steps(s): \_\_\_\_\_

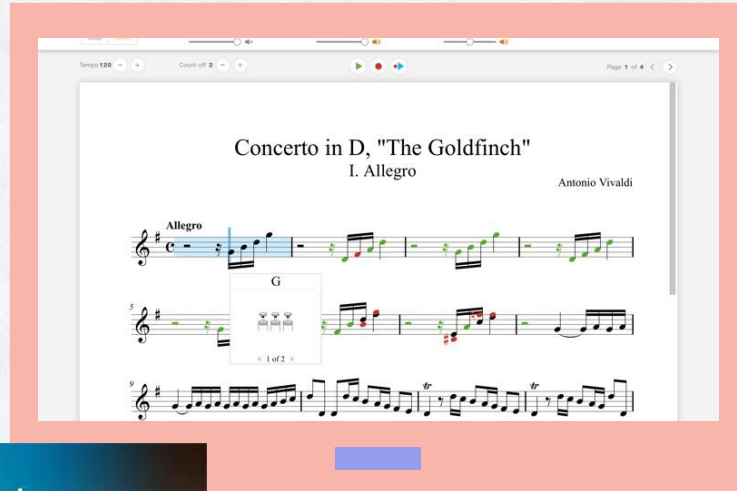
# Submit

By Screencastify





# Notes/Rhythms: Smartmusic v. PracticeFirst



## EFFICIENCY RULE:

If a computer CAN grade it, a computer SHOULD grade it!

smartmusic. IS NOW



**PracticeFirst**  
 **musicfirst**  
**classroom**



# Record

Software with instant playback, USB mic

# Listen

Reinforce critical listening skills

# Discuss

Students identify problems and solutions

(rinse/repeat)



# General music knowledge & skills

When execution is dependent on LISTENING &/or READING



**musictheory.net**

Exercise Customizer

**theonlinemetronome.com**

Tools for students to  
self-assess during practice



**Auralia**

Authentic assessments in  
ear training



**Musition**

Authentic assessments in  
music literacy





04

# Empowering Students

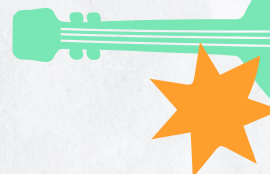
Quality feedback enables students to direct their own learning.





**GRADING is about effort.**

ASSESSMENT  
is about learning.



## 3 Rules for assessment tools:

01

### Efficient

Minimal impact to rehearsal time & teacher time.

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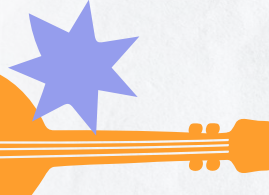
### Authentic

Reflect how professional musicians hone their skills or prepare for performance.

03

### Empower Learning

Provide students with valuable, actionable feedback.



Do our current assessment activities  
**empower students to direct**  
**their own learning?**





# BEAT IT MUSICAL MATHS



Count the beats to solve the maths equations:

$$\text{Quarter note} + \text{Quarter note} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$\text{Eighth note} + \text{Eighth note} + \text{Eighth note} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$\text{Half note} + \text{Half note} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$\text{Quarter note} + \text{Quarter note} + \text{Quarter note} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$\text{Half note} + \text{Half note} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

$$\text{Quarter note} + \text{Quarter note} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

Write an equation using music notes to equal each number:

$$= 4$$

$$= 2$$

$$= 5$$

$$= 3$$

$$= 4.5$$

$$= 6$$



Trace the notes.



Draw the notes as semibreves.

C C C C C C C



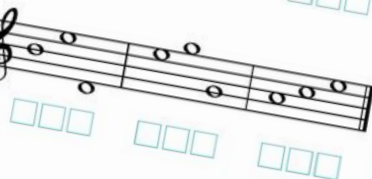
Trace the notes.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Spell and Play!

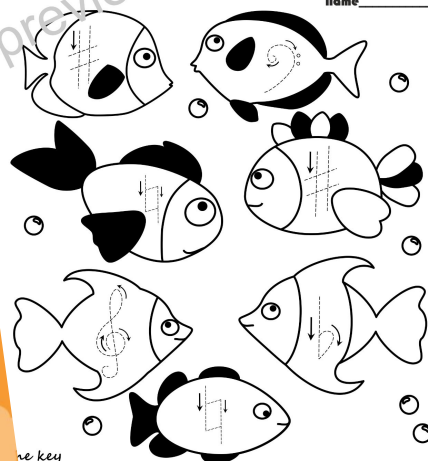
Write the correct letter names inside the boxes to spell the words. Try to play after writing.



## Trace the Music Symbols

then color the pictures using the key.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



the key

Treble clef

Bass clef

Sharp

Flat

Natural

## History of Music Research

Choose a period of musical history and carry out online research to develop your understanding of this time. Use the information you find to complete the worksheet below. Choose from the Baroque period, the Classical period, the Romantic period or 20th Century classical music.



Period in music history:

When was this period?

This period of music is known for:

## MUSIC NOTES

Name these notes:



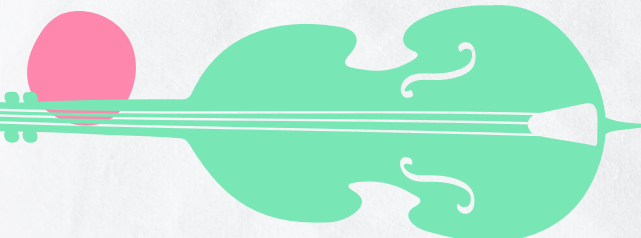
# Student Overboard!

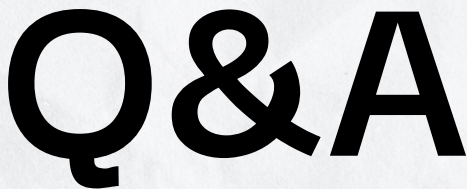
- It is easy to overdo it with great tech. Make sure students understand its role as THEIR tool for learning.
- What are the best parts of live music making in an ensemble? Always prioritize THOSE values in rehearsal.
- Center JOY and MUSIC and LEARNING.



(BTW, kid is playing in a citywide youth orchestra, this isn't in school, but still. My own kid was expected to do something similar with uploading videos or recordings at his middle school orchestra. Thank goodness never in front of the group!!)

I was just thinking about you because I was trying to remember if I ever had orchestra tests in school or youth orchestra or any of the many state/regional/etc orchestras. We didn't! ~~It~~ has tons and it's sucking out the joy. It's such a slog. Last year we had to send videos. This year, they test them in front of the group.





<https://sites.google.com/schools.nyc.gov/the-virtual-ensemble/digital-tools>





# Thanks!

Do you have any questions?

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[stringsattached.blog](http://stringsattached.blog)



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