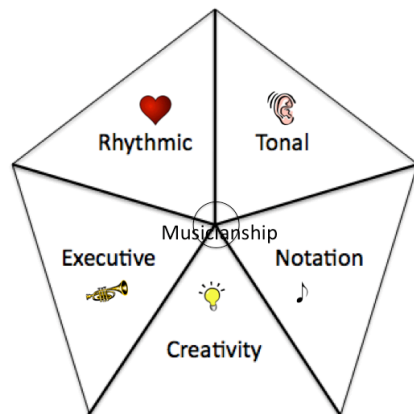


# BEYOND THE METHOD BOOK

## DEVELOPING MUSICIANSHIP IN BEGINNING BAND

Chad West, Ph.D.  
cwest@ithaca.edu

PRESENTED AT THE  
MIDWEST CLINIC  
December 2015



*Students' external instruments are only as well-tuned as their internal instruments. When technique and notation are realized through an aural sensitivity to sound, performance is transformed from an act of mechanics to an expression of musicianship.*

## TEACHING THE “BIG 5”

### RHYTHMIC

Think of rhythmic ability as one's skill at performing rhythms in the context of steady time. It is important to note that one's rhythmic ability is independent of one's notation ability. A student may have a well-developed sense of rhythm and a steady sense of time without any cognitive ability to read rhythmic notation and vice-versa. Just think of all of the complex rhythmic patterns in drumming traditions across the world that are performed completely without written notation; these performers have highly developed rhythmic abilities.

### TONAL

It is helpful to think of tonal ability as the ability to differentiate pitch in the context of a tonality. As with rhythmic ability, a student's tonal ability is independent of the cognitive function of understanding notation. A student may have a well-developed sense of pitch without any cognitive ability to read tonal notation and vice-versa. Think of all of the wonderfully talented pop and folk artists who sing and play beautifully without notation. Their ears are well developed even though they may not take their cues from written notation.

### CREATIVITY

I think of musical creativity simply as one's ability to generate musical ideas apart from that which is externally dictated. Even when our students are proficient at reading notation, and manipulate their instruments beautifully with good rhythm and intonation, they are missing a crucial component of musicianship if they have not developed some sense of independent musical thought. Think of all of the garage band members, living room guitar players, and self-taught pianists who create their own music; regardless of their ability to read or write notation, they are functioning as creative musicians.

THIS PRESENTATION IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE:

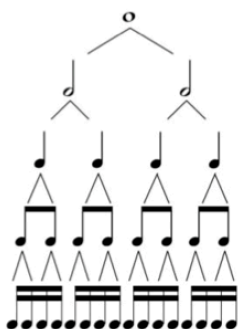
West, C. (2015). Developing internal musicianship in beginning band through teaching the “Big 5.” *Music Educators Journal*, 101(3), 101-106.



## SAMPLE ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPING THE “BIG 5”\*

- ✓ Have students sing a melody (T)
- ✓ Have student move to the macro beat and micro beat while singing a melody (T, R)
- ✓ Audiation exercises with a melody (singing in head and raising hand when done) (T, R)
- ✓ Resting tone exercises with a melody (T)
- ✓ Learn to play a melody by ear (T, R, E)
- ✓ Tonal and rhythmic echoing exercises (T, R)
- ✓ Tonal and rhythmic call-and-response exercises (T, R, C)
- ✓ Disguise practice of a melody focusing on executive skills (E)
- ✓ Have students notate a previously learned melody using iconic notation (N)
- ✓ Help students transform their iconic notation to standard notation (N)
- ✓ Play beginning of previously learned melody and have students improvise endings (C)
- ✓ Improvise counter melodies (C)
- ✓ Learn a major tune in the minor mode (and vice-versa) (T)
- ✓ Learn a duple tune in triple meter (and vice-versa) (R)

\* While many of the activities presented here are derived from and part of prescribed, research-based sequences, I present them here simply as a collection of activities in no particular order that can be used to help students develop in areas of the “Big 5.”



Decoding/Analysis



vs.



Recognition/Application

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO *READ* NOTATION?EXECUTIVE 

Edwin Gordon makes a distinction between executive skills and audiation skills. Executive skills are the skills involved in physically manipulating the instrument (posture, hand position, breath support, embouchure, tone production, etc.), often referred to as “technique.” As music teachers, we generally do a good job developing these skills in our students, probably because much of the time in our college methods courses was devoted to learning how to play and teach secondary instruments.

NOTATION 

Reading notation extends beyond simply knowing which button to push or key to strike and for how long. When learning to read a language, a child might see the letters d-o-g and say the word “dog,” but unless those letters evoke the essence of a dog in the child’s mind, the child is simply decoding the letters rather than giving them meaning. Similarly, when learning to read music notation, students might see the symbols D-C-Bb and be able to execute their corresponding fingerings, but if they do not hear the corresponding sounds in their minds, they are simply decoding symbols rather than giving them musical meaning. Just as students need to associate words with meanings, music students need to associate symbols with sounds.