

ASSESSMENT IN BAND AND STRING CLASSES: WHY, WHAT, AND HOW DO YOU TEST?

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Sponsored by Neil A. Kjos Music Company



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WHY ASSESS?

1. ASSESSMENT IS A SYSTEM THAT DRIVES INSTRUCTION

How can we help students learn more?

- This is assessment FOR learning.
- This is a process that is an integral part of the learning cycle, when there's still time to help students improve.
- It requires frequent and informative feedback.
- It focuses on achievement targets that scaffold to meet standards.
- It may require a mark in grade book that indicates the student completed the assignment, rather than the quality of the work.
- The goal for students is to continue to develop and refine their performance skills – play it better the next time.

2. ASSESSMENT IS A SNAPSHOT OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

How much have students learned?

- This is assessment OF learning.
- This is a culminating event after learning is supposed to have taken place.
- It focuses on achievement to meet a state or local standard.
- It results in a grade or score written in the grade book as a record of achievement.
- The goal for students is to get the highest possible score, and avoid failure.

Balance assessment FOR learning and assessment OF learning.

Assessment is an integral part of teaching, not something done in addition to teaching.

Assessment is often multifaceted. Different methods are required to assess the development of performance skills and musical knowledge and understanding.

EVALUATE OR GRADE = a judgment based on a collection of assessments.

WHAT AND HOW? PERFORMANCE SKILLS

• Let students know what you will be listening and watching for before they play.

LESSON BOOK LINE OR SHORT ETUDE

Name _____

Date _____

- Notes: Key of D Major
- Rhythm: Steady pulse
- Position: Correct LH position

Comments:

Replay Needed? ____ Yes ____ No

* Assessment FOR learning



Name _____

Date _____

Start (1)	+	Posture (1)	+	Notes (8)	=	Total (10)
				Rhythm		
				Articulation/Bowing		

⑤

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Comments:



SCALE TEST

Name _____

Date _____

Scale _____

Good!

Replay for

Comments:

- Good Start
- Correct Notes
- Correct Fingerings
- Steady Tempo
- Appropriate Tempo

TEST A NEW RHYTHM/METER

- Quiz Block: Four measures ordered differently; test chosen randomly; play or clap.

Name _____

Date _____

1. 

2. 

3. 

Total Score _____

Comments:



LITERATURE EXCERPT

- Select specific goals of this performance and customize a rubric.

Name _____

Date _____

Element	2	1	0
Tone Supported.	Characteristic.	Uncharacteristic at times. support.	Often loses focus or support.
Posture	Facilitates good tone, air support, and mental concentration.	Halfway there ...	Slouching.
Notes & Intonation	Notes are accurate.	Key signature missed.	Several notes inaccurate.
Articulation	Articulation clean and accurate.	Articulation accurate but muddy at times.	Articulation inaccurate.
Pulse & Rhythm	Maintains steady pulse. Rhythms are accurate.	Maintains steady pulse. One rhythm misplayed.	Pulse not steady. Rhythm inaccurate.
Dynamic Contrast	Dynamics obvious, as written.	Some dynamic contrast used.	No use of dynamic markings.

Total Score _____

Comments:

TESTING MANAGEMENT?

1. LISTEN TO “PLAYING TESTS” IN CLASS

- How much time is too much?
- How many measures must you hear?
- What do other students do while you are testing?
- How do you give feedback?

2. RECORD DURING CLASS TIME

- Send students to a practice room during class to record their playing test. Give written feedback with score in a timely manner. *Students have one chance to play the test.*

3. RECORD OUTSIDE OF CLASS

- Assign students to bring in a tape/CD of their playing test. Give written feedback with score in a timely manner. *Students have multiple chances to record, evaluate, and submit their best performance.*

4. USE ASSESSMENT SOFTWARE

- Look beyond the score and learn how to read the information provided by the computer.

WHAT AND HOW? BEFORE AND BEYOND PERFORMANCE

- *To what level of learning and understanding should we teach ... and assess?*

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

Evaluating

Student uses all levels of knowing to evaluate and place a value judgment on a work. Critique, compare, contrast.

SYNTHESIZING

Student is able to use knowledge and skill to create an original work. Improvise, compose.

Analyzing

Student is able to break down material into its component parts. Order dynamic markings, analyze and describe specific elements, use appropriate bow stroke to convey style.

Producing or Applying

Student has the ability to use knowledge and comprehension without external direction. Play instrument, perform from notation, respond to conductor gestures.

Comprehending

Student has the ability to make inferences when told what to do. Write the counting, draw the bar lines, identify same and different themes.

Knowing

Student recognizes or recalls information. Emphasis is on one's ability to remember. Define a term, label countries on a map, name notes on the staff, recall parts of the instrument.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASSESS DYNAMICS (at various levels of understanding)

MATCHING

(*Knowing* - 1)

Match the correct definition to each term.

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| _____ <i>forte</i> | A. medium loud |
| _____ <i>mezzo forte</i> | B. soft |
| _____ <i>mezzo piano</i> | C. medium soft |
| _____ <i>piano</i> | D. very loud |
| | E. loud |

SHORT-ANSWER

(*Knowing* - 1)

Write the term for each symbol.

mp _____

ff _____

f _____

p _____

 _____

SHORT-ANSWER

(Comprehending - 2)

Moderato

mf *mf*

Explain how you would play the dynamics in the first four measures of this song.

Measure 1: _____

Measure 2: _____

Measure 3: _____

Measure 4: _____

CATEGORIZE

(Analyzing - 4)

Write **D** next to each dynamic marking. Write **T** next to each tempo marking.

___ Andante

___ Allegro

___ Piano

___ Fortissimo

___ Mezzo forte

___ Vivace

___ Moderato

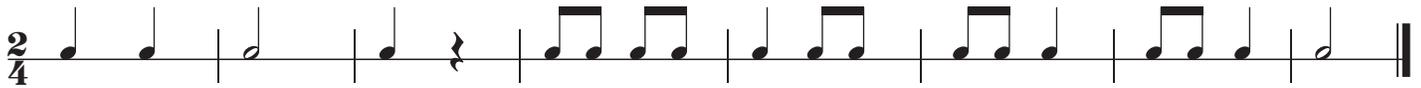
___ Crescendo

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASSESS RHYTHM (at various levels of understanding)

SHORT-ANSWER

(Comprehending - 2)

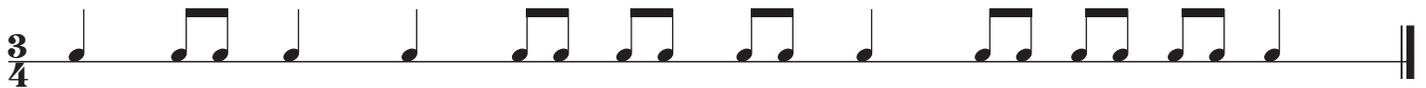
Write the counting.



SHORT-ANSWER

(Comprehending - 2)

Write the counting and draw the bar lines.



SHORT-ANSWER

(Analyzing - 4)

Rewrite the rhythm line replacing one note in each measure with a rest.



SHORT-ANSWER

(SYNTHESIZING - 5)

Use ♩, ♪, ♩♩, and/or ♪♪ to complete each unfinished measure.

A musical staff with a 4/4 time signature. The first measure contains a quarter note. The second measure contains a quarter note followed by an eighth note pair. The third measure contains a quarter note, an eighth note pair, and another eighth note pair. The fourth measure contains a quarter note and an eighth note pair.

A musical staff with four measures of partial notation. The first measure contains a quarter note. The second measure contains a quarter note followed by an eighth note pair. The third measure contains a quarter note. The fourth measure contains a quarter note and an eighth note pair.

SHORT-ANSWER

(SYNTHESIZING - 5)

Compose a rhythm line using ♩, ♪, ♩♩, and ♪♪. Be sure the last measure has a feeling of “the end.”

A musical staff with a 3/4 time signature. The staff is divided into three empty measures by vertical bar lines. The final measure ends with a double bar line.

TEST-DESIGN BASICS

- Write a more reliable test by lowering the chances of guessing the correct answer.
- A correct answer should be clear. Incorrect choices should be plausible but clearly false.
- Humorous foils and other hints should be avoided. Some students will understand, but others won't.
- Questions to which students provide rather than select an answer require a higher-level of knowledge to complete correctly.
- Have procedures in place to address misspellings and partial answers.

MAKE THE MOST OF EACH QUESTION FORMAT

- True-False: Consider having students correct or explain false statements to receive full credit.
- Multiple Choice: Use a minimum of 3 answer choices. Avoid "All of the above" or "None of the above."
- Matching: Provide more answers than the number of questions, or allow answers to be used more than once. Arrange questions and answers in groups of 5-6.
- Essay: Questions must be focused. Construct a sample answer in advance to determine the scoring.

IMPROVE THE LAYOUT OF A TEST

- Type it.
- Leave plenty of white space on the page.
- Provide an adequate number of lines on which to write answers.
- Limit the number of skills or concepts assessed in each test.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON ASSESSMENT

- Just because something is taught doesn't mean it is learned.
- Assess musical knowledge, application of knowledge, and performance skill within the context of the instrumental music curriculum.
- Pencil and paper test items are important to the development of music knowledge, but they do not measure the essence of musicianship.
- A well-designed test will require both higher-level and lower-level thinking skills.
- Ask students to recall facts, but also to analyze, synthesize, and apply information in a variety of situations. Strive for the highest possible level of application.
- Studying orally is the best preparation for written tests.

RESOURCES

Model Learner Outcomes for Music Education, Minnesota Department of Education, 1990.

Assessment FOR Learning video by Assessment Institute, 2003.

Spotlight on Assessment in Music Education, MENC, 2001.

Burbridge, Ann A. *Assessment: Pencil, Paper ... & Performance, Too!*, pp. 7-9.

Fiese, Richard K. and Robin E. Fiese. *Music Teaching and Assessment*, pp. 13-15.

Foley, Briana. *Performance Assessment: Applications for General Music*, pp. 16-19.

Hamann, Keitha Lucas. *Assessment Tools for the Music Classroom*, pp. 23-25.

Kelsey, Cindy. *Assessment in the Music Class: Knowing What, How and How Much*, pp. 29-31.

Rodriguez, Carlos Xavier. *Assessment FAQs of Music Educators*, pp. 67-69.

