

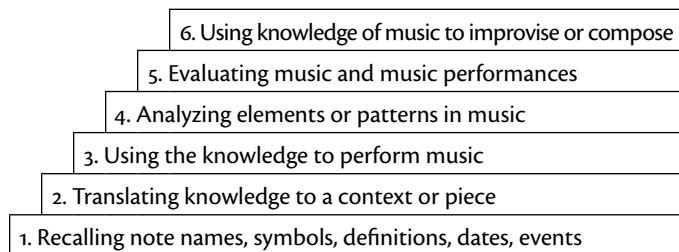
All-State: Perform-Connect-Reflect: Three Keys to Maximizing Student Performance in Ensemble Classes

presented by Dr. Wendy Barden

Dr. Barden currently serves as the K-12 Music Coordinator for the Osseo public schools. The session focused on engaging individual students positively and how it impacts an ensemble's performance by doing three things: 1) Perform at a high level, 2) Connect with students, and 3) Take time to reflect.

Dr. Barden recommends that the most effective orchestra directors structure their teaching on assessment for learning principles. They pace their instruction to move ahead when there is evidence for learning, not because a skill or concept has been taught. This is the process shown in the Teaching and Learning Cycle diagram.

She also referred to Bloom's *Taxonomy* (2001) and *Music Learning* as the hierarchy of cognitive skills from memorization to creation. The revised Bloom's taxonomy reordered the highest levels because the authors believed creative thinking is more complex than critical thinking.



Dr. Barden stated, "Across all subject areas, formative feedback greatly impacts students' success." Her examples included assessing students on scales, proficiency, global objectives/basic skills, and eight measure exercises. Also, she recommended incorporating higher-level thinking and comprehensive music learning into ensemble rehearsals to enhance performance. Once students are able to define terms and symbols and apply them to their concert music, "learning becomes increasingly sophisticated when students also use the concepts in analyzing music, composing, or improvising new melodies, and evaluating their performance against an exemplary model."

Team building exercises are important to Dr. Barden and she recommended that orchestra teachers include these activities with students—to connect with one another. Activities she recommended were:

- Mystery Jigsaw Puzzles: give students 100-piece puzzles without the cover and they cannot talk while trying to put it together in small groups.
- E Pluribus Unum "one out of many": each student completes this sentence on a note card: "I will contribute to our ensemble by...". Make a heading *E Pluribus Unum* on the wall or bulletin board and post all of the students' note card pledges under it. This is a visual reminder of our pledge to

work together as an ensemble ("one out of many").

- Contour Line Drawing: divide class into small groups of 3-4 people based on their instrument. Give each student in each group a different color crayon/marker. Tell students they must draw their instrument without talking, as a group. Eventually the picture is in many colors because each person drew a portion of the instrument. After activity is done, ask the students, "Which drawing would sell for the higher price?"
- Scavenger Hunt Bingo Card: create a bingo card with statements so that students can find other students who meet that criterion. For example: "Has a dog," "Participated in summer orchestra," "Went on vacation this summer," etc.

Connecting with parents is also a big concept that Dr. Barden mentioned. Get them involved with practice habits at home or have assessments that involve the parents.

Taking time to reflect was the last big area of conversation. As Douglas Reeves states, "Writing in all subject areas greatly impacts student success." This would include concert evaluations, year-end reflections, weekly practice reflection, or reflection on individual progress/goals.

According to Dr. Barden, in order to maximize student performance we must 1) Perform at a high level, 2) Connect with others, and 3) Take time to reflect.

For more information about this topic of maximizing student performance, check out Dr. Barden's publications *Music Theory in Band and Orchestra* and *Performance Assessment in Orchestra*, both available at kjos.com or at Groth Music. ‡

