

All-State: S.O.S—Sequencing, Organizing and Using Standards in the Orchestra Classroom

Assess Your Way to Success

Holding Students Accountable

presented by Denese Odegaard

Denese Odegaard is currently the Fargo Public Schools Performing Arts Specialist. She contributed to the NAfME publication Standards and Benchmarks for Composition and Arranging and is author of Simply Strings method book and Music Curriculum Writing 101: Assistance with Standards-Based Music Curriculum and Assessment Writing (GIA). She covered a variety of topics in her day-long session. Many of her handouts and checklists are available on her website www.MusicWorkshops.pbworks.com. Denese wants to make teaching easier for everyone, and generously makes her materials available without charge.

Sequencing

To develop your teaching sequence, take all of the method books that would be appropriate for use at each grade level and sequence them according to: key signature; note introduction and range; intervals used; rhythms; style; technique such as articulations, positions, etc; eras or composers. Once you have a sequence, you can give students a longer time to work on particular key signatures to make finger patterns familiar. You can start with easier rhythms and work toward harder ones. You can add new concepts such as shifting while still working on familiar key signatures and rhythms. You can play music from different composers within certain keys for variety in your literature.

Organizing

Denese has a host of checklists and forms available on her website to help teachers get and stay organized:

- When you are teaching many classes, make a checklist to check off once a class has learned a piece, exercise or concept to help you keep track of where each class is.
- Keep a daily drill log.
- Maintain a checklist of student needs for contests.
- Have a substitute teacher information packet prepared ahead of time, with a lesson plan sample, names of principals and their phone numbers, names of other teachers in your music department, your schedule (what times, what students, what rooms), emergency plan information, where to find method books and large group materials, attendance policies and procedures, responsible students in each class, supervision duties... Everything your sub will need to make a seamless transition in your absence.

Standards

Use standards to your advantage to teach effectively. They define your over-arching philosophical foundations, life-long goals, and the create/perform/respond components. You need a curriculum so that when



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one teacher leaves, the next teacher can step in, and so that many teachers can coordinate within a school or district.

In writing your curriculum and assessments, collaborate with other teachers in your grade to develop a common document. For each skill or category, have descriptors for baseline / developing / proficient / advanced levels.

1. Baseline: beginning stages of understanding or demonstrating concepts
2. Developing: progress towards proficiency
3. Proficient: what is expected at grade level
4. Advanced: exceptional work; performs with ease and sensitivity or is creative

Chunk standards together. For example, learn D, E, F# in your method book; improvise on D, E, F#. Compose a piece using those three notes and the rhythms ♩ ♪♪.

Put the composition onto the computer. Record it. Have others play it.

Have standards-based concerts that include several areas. "Taste of Music" could include music of different cultures, with food from those cultures served at intermission. For a concert in March, feature composers who have a birthday in March (there are many of them!). When performing a programmatic piece such as *Peer Gynt*, have students write a story to go with the music.

Assessment

Assessment is necessary to check for student understanding, to decide what to re-teach, and to help students know what they know. Research shows that feedback should be corrective, timely, and specific to criteria. Assessments should be fair and free from bias, contained clearly defined criteria, and be shared with students ahead of time. Practice evaluating student performances in your teacher group, using your rubric.

In developing and using an assessment form, list the more assessed criteria at the top and the less often assessed ones at the bottom. Number the criteria, choosing which ones to assess, and let the students know what is to be assessed prior to the assessment. Write leveled statements positively to encourage lower level students to reach proficiency. Use words like "some," "few" and "many" instead of counting errors. Avoid descriptors such as "good," "acceptable" and "poor." Use words that specifically describe the desired result. You can use a template at rubistar.4teachers.org or Microsoft Excel to write rubrics.

A checklist (see website for examples) can be a quick-to-use assessment tool where a checkmark indicates something that needs fixing / attention. When the student has several checkmarks in a row (over multiple assessments) for the same criteria, both teacher and student will know there is a

problem to be solved.

When doing individual assessment, have students do chair work such as rhythms cards or music terms when it is not their turn to play.

Transfer a rubric to a letter grade by deciding the weight for each criteria. E.g., for a Level 3 (proficient at grade level) player, tone might be 20 points, pitch 20 points and articulation 10 points, for a total possible of 50 points. Level 4 (exceptional) players get bonus points beyond the 50 total possible.

Teach your students assessment and help them learn how to describe a perfor-

mance by using good and bad examples from YouTube. Make sure they have a vocabulary to give descriptive feedback; use word banks to build a vocabulary. Offer time for students to reflect on their own work and give them the opportunity to explain why things went well or did not go well on a performance, activity, or project. Have them explain what they would do differently next time if given the chance. Provide opportunities for your students to self-assess; they should report a variety of “I can...” statements. E.g. I can ... “keep my feet flat;” “keep my back straight;” etc.

When a student doesn't get it, say, “Tell

me what you know and I'll help you with the rest.”

Student Accountability

Students need to know: Where am I going? and Where am I now? Teach students that it's OK to make mistakes because that's how we learn. Give lots of specific feedback without a letter grade to encourage learning. Use an exit slip / recipe card for reflection. Have students write before they leave class at the end of the week: What did you learn? How did you learn it? What did you learn about yourself? †