

Position Statement
Music Teacher Evaluation: Clarification and Recommendations
Michigan Society for Music Teacher Education

Preamble

On January 3, 2010, Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm signed Senate Bill 981, thus enacting this legislation into law. This legislation is similar to that recently enacted in a number of states in an effort to secure educational funding through the Obama administration's "Race to the Top" initiative. While the bill addresses many aspects of school reform, sections 1249 and 1250 address teacher evaluation and compensation in the state of Michigan.

Beginning September 1, 2011, all school districts, with the involvement of teachers and administrators, will adopt and implement a "rigorous, transparent, and fair performance evaluation system" (Summers, 2010, p. 10). The system must establish clear approaches for 1) measuring student growth, 2) providing teachers and administrators with relevant data on student growth, and 3) evaluating a teacher's job performance "using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth as a significant factor" (p. 10). Under this law, school districts must evaluate teacher performance at least once per year, provide timely and constructive feedback, and use evaluations to inform decisions regarding teacher effectiveness, promotion, retention, development, tenure, compensation, and full certification.

Although this law allows school districts to use a variety of national, state, and local assessments, it is unclear how administrators will evaluate music educators in relation to student growth and achievement. The Michigan Society for Music Teacher Education (MISMTE) offers the following recommendations to aid teachers and administrators in this process.

Recommendations

- I. The MISMTE recommends that all **music educators**:
 - a. Be involved in developing and implementing preK-12 music curricula for general, vocal, and instrumental music based on the Michigan Music Content Standards and Benchmarks (Michigan State Board of Education, 1998). Curricula should state clearly what students should know and be able to do in music at the end of each grade level of instruction.
 - b. Work with school administration at the *beginning* of each evaluation cycle to identify objective measures of student learning and develop a timeline for data collection that will be part of the evaluation system.
 - c. Utilize assessments that clearly measure *musical growth and achievement* as stated by local curricula and Michigan state standards. In order to be fair, results of any assessments should be considered according to time allotted for music instruction as well as student/teacher ratios. See Addendum for examples.

- d. Consult colleagues, including those in higher education, for assistance in developing these procedures when necessary.
 - e. Work to maintain the integrity of the assessment and data collection process. Data used to evaluate teachers in other subjects will likely come from outside sources such as standardized test scores. Music educators, however, will probably provide their own evidence of student growth and achievement through a variety of assessments. Teachers should, therefore, make every effort to objectively and effectively measure student learning, and use this data to improve instruction whenever possible.
- II. The MISMTTE recommends that **school administrators**:
- a. Work with music educators at the *beginning* of each evaluation cycle to identify *objective* measures of student learning and develop a timeline for data collection that will be part of the evaluation system.
 - b. Consider factors such as scheduling, staffing, materials, equipment, and facilities (see MENC, 1994) that may impact student growth and achievement when evaluating teacher effectiveness.
 - c. Recognize the time these assessments and new approaches to instruction will require and, as needed, reconsider the number of service performances required, especially at the high school level (e.g., pep band, marching band, musical pit orchestra, community service performances, etc.).
 - d. Become familiar with the Michigan Music Content Standards and Benchmarks (Michigan State Board of Education, 1998) and local (district) music curricula.
 - e. Refrain from using large-group and solo-ensemble festival ratings as part of teacher evaluation. (See addendum for a detailed explanation).
 - f. Consult colleagues, including those in higher education, for assistance in this process as needed.

The new teacher evaluation system in Michigan has the potential to improve instruction and increase student learning if used appropriately. The MISMTTE stands ready to work with music educators and school administrators to develop such a process.

Addendum

Tools for Assessing Student Growth and Achievement

1. Assess changes in student performance through pre- and post-tests. Possible choices could include:
 - a. Teacher-designed tests, rating scales, and rubrics.
 - b. Psychometric tests such as:
 - i. *Watkins-Farnum Performance Scale*. 1970, Hal Leonard Corporation.
 - ii. *Iowa Tests of Music Literacy*. 1970, 1991, GIA Publications, Inc.
 - c. Assessment functions accompanying software such as *SmartMusic* (2011) or *Music Ace* (Harmonic Vision, 2010)
 - d. Assessment tests or units included as part of music textbook series. The following series books are just suggestions, others are available:
 - i. MacMillan-McGraw Hill publications, *Spotlight on Music* (2011), *Experiencing Choral Music*.
 - ii. GIA Publications, *Jump Right In* series
 - iii. Pearson Education Inc., Silver Burdett: *Making Music* series
 - iv. Hal Leonard, *Essential Elements*, *Essential Musicianship* series
2. Assessment of students' musical compositions or arrangements written within specific guidelines and graded with a criterion based rubric.
3. Assessment of student portfolios where student work is evaluated using specific, objective criteria. Portfolio's could include samples of student compositions, worksheets, written essays, self-evaluations, and performances in written, audio, or multimedia format.

For additional ideas, consult the publication, *Performance standards for music: Assessment strategies for music*, by MENC. This free online resource provides strategies for assessing students in each of the nine national content standards.

Position Statement: Festival Ratings and Music Teacher Evaluation

The MISMTTE opposes the use of festival ratings as a means of evaluating music teacher effectiveness based on the following reasons:

1. *Reliability of Ratings*. Music performance evaluation is somewhat subjective. Furthermore, several research studies have shown that a number of nonmusical factors can influence an adjudicator's score including (a) conductor and performer appearance, (b) performance order, (c) repertoire selection, (d) adjudicator experience and background, (e) adjudicator knowledge of special circumstances, and (f) the evaluation

form and procedure (For reviews of the literature, see Conrad, 2003; Forbes, 1994; and McPherson & Thompson, 1998). All of these nonmusical factors may contribute to measurement error and reduce the statistical reliability (consistency) of the final scores.

2. *Curricular Limitations.* Using festival scores/ratings in the teacher evaluation process may cause some music educators to manipulate the contest experience by spending an inordinate amount of time in the preparation process or selecting music that is beneath the capabilities of the group in order to insure a better result.
3. *Score Inflation.* Judges aware that school districts are using festival data in teacher evaluations may begin to consciously or subconsciously inflate scores to prevent the consequences of a poor result. This condition may actually weaken the integrity and value of the festival experience.
4. *Rating Effectiveness.* Although there are five possible ratings (I, II, III, IV, V), almost all groups earn a I or II. In one MSBOA district in 2011, for example, 91 groups earned a division I rating, 70 received a division II, 10 earned a division III, and none received a division IV or V. The average rating was 1.52. As a result, these ratings may not fully differentiate ensemble quality.
5. *Influence of Other Factors.* Ratings do not account for circumstances related to instruction such as rehearsal scheduling, financial support, staffing, or other factors that might influence instruction, student achievement, and the quality of the final performance.
6. *Group vs. Individual Performance.* Although Michigan School Band and Orchestra (MSBOA) and Michigan School Vocal Music Association (MSVMA) events provide an excellent educational experience for both students and directors, the ratings of band, orchestra, and choral festivals only measure group performance at one point in time rather than individual student growth over the course of a year or from one year to the next. Adjudicator comments from MSVMA and MSBOA festivals could serve as one basis for developing long term learning targets for students involved in large-group performance, provided music educators develop an appropriate assessment of individual student progress apart from festival scores.
7. *Other Limitations.* This practice calls into question equitable assessment for music teachers within a given school district. Festival or contest ratings generally apply only to music teachers who conduct an ensemble. General music teachers or teachers who do not participate in festivals may not be evaluated according to the same criteria. Furthermore, many music teachers only bring certain ensembles to festival. In this case, ratings reflect only the performance of a specific group rather than the achievement of all students in the program.

Music festivals sponsored by MSBOA, MSVMA, and other organizations provide excellent educational opportunities for both students and directors. The Michigan Society for Music Teacher Education supports these events as one part of the music education curriculum. However, teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders in the educational process must work together to insure that the results of festivals and contests are used appropriately and in context with the larger goals of music education.

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