

A Fond Farewell

I much admit to mixed emotions as I write this, my last article as President of VAMEA. After two consecutive terms and 4 years as your President, I must first say thank you to the membership, especially the music administrators of the commonwealth. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve you and with you. Never in my professional life have I met a more dedicated group of music educators to serve students, teachers, and the art form we love. I must thank Joyce Zsembery, Secretary-Treasurer of VAMEA and Supervisor of Arts in Prince William County. No one has worked harder or been a more ardent supporter of the work our association has undertaken, thank you Joyce. I also must thank Holly Sunderland, Instructional Specialist with Virginia Beach City Public Schools. She kept me on track, helped to organize every meeting we had, and was instrumental in the design of our website, thank you for what you did for me and our organization. As I pass the privilege of this office on to our next president, our association is in good hands. Perhaps no one is better positioned to take this office than Mr. Jim Harmon, president-elect of VAMEA, and Supervisor of Music in Loudon County. Jim is a school board member and holds office in the NAFME Council of Music Program Leaders. Mrs. Annamarie Bollino, Fine and Performing Arts Coordinator in Stafford County Public Schools is slated to serve as president-elect to Mr. Harmon. I have had the pleasure of getting to know Mrs. Bollino and recognize her as a well-respected educator and administrator. Like I said, we are in great hands for years to come! I also want to thank my good friend and colleague Dr. Steve King. Dr. King is VAMEA's expert government relations liaison and he has transformed the position. I look forward to continuing to serve on the Virginia Coalition for Fine Arts Education that he chairs.

Music Education has changed and it has changed for the better. Music Education like all of education is demanding greater accountability and measurements of student growth the likes we have never seen before. I encourage you to embrace this movement and to make it your own. Taking ownership provides you with the opportunity to mold and shape it to best suit your needs. Take Standard 7 from the Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Virginia Teachers. This provocative and controversial new standard has every school division examining how to best implement this action. What follows is a bit of background and suggestions on you can develop a simple, to very rigorous system of accountability to show student growth over time.

Developing Assessments for Music Programs

Measuring Student Growth over Time

The Virginia Department of Education has updated and changed the guidelines for Teacher Assessment. Up to 40% of a teachers evaluation will now be based on student progress. With no state or national music tests to draw from, School Districts across the Commonwealth will have to develop their own or be tied to non-musical data. In developing K-12 music assessments you must consider what to measure and how to measure it. Additionally, assessments in music must be developed to assess both music literacy and music performance. Teachers and school divisions have two major options to consider. One, develop comprehensive assessments in the style and scope of current SOL configurations, or assess student progress through the standards and curriculum on an ongoing basis. The second method takes a balanced approach using a variety of assessments, including; individual student performance, declarative knowledge (theory/history/form), Composition/Creativity, etc., all directly from what is being taught. The following is one way to develop assessments in this manner.

Option 1: Pre-assessment and Post-assessment

A simple but effective approach to quantify student growth over time is to simply develop a pre-test and post-test. The pre-test is to be administered at the beginning of the year and the post-test at the end to show student growth. Assessment material should come from the standards you are teaching and developed into an assessment that can measure both literacy and performance ability. The strength of this approach is its pure simplicity; however, it is also its weakness. The type of testing does not provide for formative assessment for you to actually adjust your teaching to the learning of the students. After all, no one wants to wait until the end of the year to see if our students are actually learning what we are teaching. Yea, yea, I know our performances provide this opportunity, but performance alone is not a full measure of music literacy.

Option 2: Pre-assessment, Quarterly assessment, and Post-assessment

Develop the pre-test and a post-test; however, assess along the way and measure different aspects of the curriculum other than just performance. Performance is a great indicator but is only one aspect of a comprehensive music education. I recommend the addition of quarterly assessments to the pre and post-tests, to better measure student growth over time. This will also provide you powerful information to adjust instruction. However imperfect this measure and methodology is, it is better than a one shot SOL assessment, which is designed to measure minimum competency.

Begin with the end in mind. What are your students going to learn this year? Determine upfront what students are to know, understand, and be skilled at, at the end of instruction. Assessments should measure both music literacy and music performance at a minimum. This is easy to approach if you are teaching by grade level and more difficult if you are teaching a performance

ensemble. However difficult, you are going to teach something. If it is worth teaching it is worth measuring. Take the most important skills and musical information that have to transfer for student growth (historical, theory, auditory, rhythmic, etc.) and develop a list. This should serve as the basis of your pre/post-test. If your school division has a unified curriculum you should begin with it to determine what you are already assessing. Ask questions as you examine the curriculum. Are there assessments you are already administering, that rise to a level of such importance, that they can be considered as a summative nine week assessment? This process will assist you in developing a more comprehensive assessment system as a true indicator of student growth.

Caution – Do not attempt to develop an assessment that measures everything you have done in a particular nine week time frame. First and foremost, keep it real. Find that one skill or one standard so important, that you can claim it as a measure, or a “benchmark” of music literacy or performance for that nine week period. For example, if it is a rhythmic exercise you want to test you can do so for both a student’s playing ability, and counting ability. In addition to having the student play the exercise, have them count and clap out loud. Have them write the counting into the exercise. As the level increases, increase the complexity of the assessment. If it is a playing test, have them play or sing, write in the counting, and note names, and identify each symbol on the staff. I know, I know you don’t have time to do this. If you are currently giving playing/singing tests and after a student has played/sung their test they just sit and listen to everyone else, you just found the time you need to add literacy to your assessments.

Why not just use the District Assessment to show what my students are able to do?

Although District Assessment is a wonderful process, it is but a pulse check on program and our performing ensembles. Testing for student growth should not include group performances or

assessment festivals. These are great indicators of student application; however, participation in these events assesses the collective, not the individual.

Map the Curriculum

Using Heidi Jacobs, Mapping the Big Picture as a reference, map the curriculum. Lay out your program of studies, what are doing with your students, by units of study, weekly, or even daily to get started. Whether you map by month or by nine weeks, do whatever works for you. I prefer mapping in nine week segments, as it matches current grading practices. Each nine week segment should including the following. Use the table to begin:

Year Long Class Map	
<p>What is it you actually do in class with your students?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>This should be a long list of activities and musical skills required, performance and literacy.</i> 	<p>What are the State Standards</p> <p>What are the National Standards</p> <p>What are your Division objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>This should also be a long list.</i>
<p>First Quarter, Include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The processes and skills emphasized in this quarter; The content in terms of essential concepts and topics; The products and performances that are the assessments OF learning; At the end of the process make sure you have accounted for what you want your students to 	<p>Include:</p> <p>What Standards/objectives are you teaching during this quarter?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>This could be a long or short list depending on the grade level or performance ensemble.</i>

<p>know, understand, and be skilled at for this nine week period.</p>	
<p>Second Quarter, Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same process at first 	<p>Include:</p> <p>What Standards/objectives are you teaching during this quarter?</p>
<p>Third Quarter, Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same process at first 	<p>Include:</p> <p>What Standards/objectives are you teaching during this quarter?</p>
<p>Fourth Quarter, Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same process as first, AND: <p>Look for alignment, consistency, and examine the breadth of what students are LEARNING, what is the evidence they have learned what you have taught.</p>	<p>Include:</p> <p>What Standards/objectives are you teaching during this quarter?</p>

This process will yield an enormous amount of information you can use in developing a comprehensive assessment program. If nothing else, determine upfront what students are to know, understand, and be skilled at, at the end of instruction. Assessments should measure both music literacy and music performance at a minimum. There is much more to than I can possibly cover in this article and I'm quite sure you have some ideas on how to proceed. Please consider sharing your ideas with me and I'll post them to the VAMEA website.

I sign every email, my tag is; Music Literacy + Music Performance = Music Education. If we truly embrace this, Virginia will lead the way in performance indicators for both students...and teachers.

Once again, it has been a pleasure and I hope to see you at conference in the future, a lot less stressed than before.

John