



What Makes this TEAM Reflection Paper Successful?

Some specific examples/evidence that contributed to the success of this paper are provided below.

Module Four: Assessment

Grades 9-12

Music (Concert Band)

Criteria I: Development of New Learning (*How the teacher developed new learning and what was learned*)

How the teacher developed new learning:

- Read: *The Role of Rubrics in Advancing and Assessing Student Learning*, Ellen Stevens & Kenneth Wolf, *Journal of Effective Teaching*, and *Classroom Assessment and Grading* by Robert Marzano
- Conversations with Professor Seddon at the University of Wisconsin and Mr. W., music educator

What the teacher learned:

- “Wolf and Stevens emphasize the importance of providing specific criteria so that students will know the specific expectations for the given assessment . . . If I create a rubric with more levels then I can give much more feedback to my students to help them improve their performance.”
- “Professor Seddon emphasized to me that the descriptions need to be specific and concise so that there is little room for interpretation. The students need to clearly understand the expectations for each level in order to achieve in each category.”
- “Mr. W. discussed how he uses cooperative learning groups where the students use rubrics to assess other musical performances ... this makes [students] more comfortable with the expectations of the rubric because they are interacting with it in these exercises.”

Criteria II: Impact on Practice (*How the teacher’s practice is different*)

- “I was able to design an organized and informative rubric . . . The criteria for a successful musical performance included tone, note accuracy, rhythmic accuracy, intonation, style, balance/blend, and technique. Each of these categories included 5 levels with 5 being the highest.”
- “During weeks 2 and 3, I had the students begin peer group assessment. This allowed them to hear and assess individual tone qualities of a specific instrument and have more interaction with the rubric . . . each rubric had space for 2 stars (positive) and 1 wish (constructive).”
- “With this realization, I decided to have each student choose from a list of famous musicians who plays his/her own instrument. Students were asked to listen to this artist as part of their daily practicing and focus on matching and copying every nuance and tonal characteristic of the musician.”

Criteria III: Impact on students (*How student performance/learning has improved as a result of changes in the teacher’s practice.*)

- “One group . . . finished their assessments and reflected upon the results on their rubrics. [They] took turns playing along with the student who had the highest score. It was evident that [they] were focused on trying to match their peer’s tone on the saxophone. This not only showed students taking responsibility for their own learning, but also how students are independently using assessment data to focus on improving a particular aspect of their own playing.”
- “Having each student focus on emulating a specific musician resulted in more practicing. Students were taking their instrument home because practicing now involved utilizing first hand sources.”
- “[On the pre-assessment], 100% of the concert band students received a 3 or lower in the tone [category] . . . [On the final assessment] 93% of the students achieved a 3 or higher on the performance rubric and 78% of the 93% achieved a 4 or 5.”

Indicator 4: Teachers use multiple measures to analyze student performance and to inform subsequent planning and instruction by providing students with assessment criteria and individualized, descriptive feedback to help them improve their performance and assume responsibility for their learning.

Goal:

I will learn to develop assessment criteria that will provide students with specific, descriptive feedback regarding a musical performance. As a result, students will be able to accurately assess their own musical performances and show growth in their musical abilities. (Indicator 4)

Initial Summary:

I reviewed the CCT performance profile with my mentor and discovered that my concert band class does not utilize my assessments to improve their playing; these assessments rarely allow students to be responsible for their own learning. My mentor reviewed my grading rubric and noticed that it functions more like a rating scale because it does not supply any descriptions for the criteria presented. The assessments, therefore, provide no information to my students regarding their performances. The rubrics have also currently been used only for giving each student a grade rather than as a tool for adjusting instruction and measuring student growth. Upon reviewing the previous five assessments this year, I have found that only 9% of the band has shown improvement in more than one criterion of the rubric. Students are rarely provided written feedback regarding their performance and feedback that is given is never followed up with the students to ensure that they are focusing on improving certain aspects of their own playing. I have noticed that students are continually showing the same weaknesses for each assessment and receiving similar evaluations. This is proof that the rubric is ineffective and not implemented in a way that yields positive results.

Reflection Paper:

I began module four by reviewing the CCT Performance Profile on Assessment for Learning. As I reviewed indicator four, I realized how my grading rubric in concert band did not provide any feedback to students on their performances. I knew that the first step would be to design a rubric with specific criteria that would allow for comprehensive, individualized feedback.

I began by researching rubric development and found an article from the *Journal of Effective Teaching*. The article was titled, "The Role of Rubrics in Advancing and Assessing Student Learning" by Kenneth Wolf and Ellen Stevens. Wolf and Stevens emphasize the importance of providing specific criteria so that students will know the specific expectations for the given assessment. This is where my rubric is ineffective because it does not provide any information on how to be successful in a particular area. I found their guidelines for developing a rubric a perfect starting point. They discuss having a set of performance criteria as a foundation. I decided to use the categories I already have on my rubric because they cover all aspects of a person's musical performance. The next step is establishing performance levels. Wolf and Steven's state that more levels create a stronger formative assessment. If I create a rubric with more levels then I can give much more feedback to my students to help them improve their performance. I found performance descriptions to be the most important step because I did not have these on my current assessment. I learned that the statements need to guide the scoring of a performance without overwhelming the reader. More importantly, I realized that there needs to be a parallel structure across descriptions for each criterion. This will allow my students to use the rubric to gain an understanding of the sequential process involved in improving within a specific music category. With this information, I began to focus on developing descriptions for my different performance criteria. After multiple attempts, I realized that I needed to seek help from an expert in musical assessments. It

was at that moment that I contacted Dr. Thomas Seddon, music professor at the University of Wisconsin at LaCrosse.

I had the opportunity to speak with Professor Seddon on the phone to discuss music assessment rubrics. It was in our conversation that I learned about the importance of developing the description for the highest achievable level first. This will allow me to describe how a perfect performance in a particular category should sound. Once I establish the wording for the first description, I can then work through each to ensure that I am relating the descriptions to each other, thus creating a parallel structure. Professor Seddon emphasized to me that the descriptions need to be specific and concise so that there is little room for interpretation. The students need to clearly understand the expectations for each level in order to achieve in each category. I remember him also saying that students should only be assessed on things that are being taught in class. This is the opposite of what I have been doing in my formal assessments. I realized that by assessing students only on what has been taught holds them responsible for their own learning and allows them to specifically know the expectations. After our conversation, Professor Seddon emailed me several examples of rubrics that he had created and used over the years as a music educator. I found reading through these rubrics to be very helpful and found that they would guide me with developing cohesive areas of criteria with concrete descriptions.

Before continuing with creating a rubric, I thought more about my conversation with Professor Seddon. Students should not be assessed on topics not covered in band class is something that stuck in my mind. I continued to think about how I have discussed certain topics in class, but have never actually had the students experience exemplary examples of these musical components. It is nearly impossible for any student to improve in these areas without having a clear concept of the desired outcome. Upon looking for a text on this subject, I was unable to find anything that was inherent to music. Therefore, I decided to contact Mr. W., who is a very successful music educator in the state.

During our meeting, Mr. W. had a lot of valuable information that I could use in my concert band rehearsals. He discussed how he uses cooperative learning groups where the students use rubrics to assess other musical performances. These performances can be of an entire ensemble or of an individual instrument. I can remember him saying, "Music is unique because it is an aural art, and therefore students learn best through listening and responding." I asked him what type of rubric he used, and he said that he used the same rubric used to assess the students. I learned that doing this will enable students to have a clear understanding of the performance needed to achieve a specific score on the rubric. This makes them more comfortable with the expectations of the rubric because they are interacting with it in these exercises. Talking with Mr. W. gave me a lot of ideas about how to use assessments as a teaching tool for teaching students about high quality music performances.

Before continuing with the module, I decided to reference Marzano's text, *Classroom Assessment and Grading*. In this book he explains that creating a graph of student scores visually shows student progress over time. Marzano also states, "It also provides a vehicle for students to establish their own learning goals." Tracking student progress will help students to become aware of their performances and be able to set goals to help them focus on achieving a specific task. As students goal set and monitor their progress they are accepting more responsibility for their own learning and development.

My initial step in Module 4 was to create a rubric that met all of the specifications stated by Wolf and Stevens. Using the examples provided by Professor Seddon, I was able to design an organized and informative rubric. The criteria for a successful musical performance included tone, note accuracy, rhythmic accuracy, intonation, style, balance/blend, and technique. Each of these categories included 5 levels with 5 being the highest achievable score in a category. At the end of each category, I added a comment section where I could write direct feedback to the students regarding their performance in a particular area. One example of my ability to create a parallel structure is under the Rhythmic Accuracy category. The descriptions of the first three levels are: 5 – The student performs no rhythmic errors,

overall accurate performance; 4 – The student performs 1-2 wrong rhythmic figures with short continuous sections of imprecision; 3 – The student performs 3-4 wrong rhythmic figures, with continuous sections of imprecision. By keeping wording consistent and changing selected words I felt I was able to successfully connect the criteria to each other.

Using Marzano’s method of tracking student progress, I decided to gather pre-assessment data using the newly developed rubric. Students were assigned an excerpt from the music being taught in class and told that they would be assessed only on intonation, style, tone, and technique. This allowed them to be aware of the assessment expectations and have time to prepare the music. Each student received positive and constructive comments. Upon reviewing the results, 54 out of 56 students scored a 3 or lower in each of the four assessment categories. Two (2) students scored a 4 in technique. The most striking data was that 100% of the concert band received a 3 or lower in the tone, intonation, and style categories. It was then that I decided to focus my attention on one of the three musical concepts. The end goal is for 90% of the band students to receive a 3 or higher in the tone category. I immediately connected that tone can only be addressed using Mr. W’s method of cooperative learning group assessments in order to teach the students about what proper tone should sound like when produced on an instrument.

After the pre-assessment, I had a class discussion with the students asking them to comment and reflect on their assessments. During the discussion, I noticed that none of the students commented on tone. They were all focused on addressing technique because my instruction addressing tone has only been through direct instruction and questioning. Students have yet to engage with various concepts on a higher level of thinking, and therefore, have not developed a vocabulary to discuss these issues. Using the assessment rubric results and the class discussions, I can now adjust instruction to meet the needs of my students.

I began by using Mr. W.’s techniques by analyzing musical examples as a daily activity in class. The students got into a routine of entering class and working together to respond to different tone qualities and finally assign a score on the rubric. Students needed to assign a score on the intonation rubric, provide a comment, and justify why they assigned that score for the musical example. The recordings were versions of the same piece of music being rehearsed in class and consisted of a combination of good and bad musical examples. Upon the first good example one student responded by saying, “I don’t know what to put down for the assessment. It sounds fine.” After listening to a bad example the student commented under the tone category saying, “The sound of the instruments is not focused and sounds too harsh. It doesn’t blend well.” By the time they heard the next good example they responded with, “This group plays together well because their sounds are more focused.” This order of comments showed that the students were able to tell the difference between good and bad tone qualities. It also showed that after hearing improper tone production the students were able to respond much more accurately about a strong tone quality. This is because they now had multiple examples to aurally compare. Once students completed their evaluations, I facilitated a class discussion on what constitutes good tone quality. Students began to refer to the recordings to describe a strong tone. One student raised her hand and said, “One of the examples sounded like the players had airy and stuffy sounds, but the example with the better tone qualities had clearer and focused sounds. I liked the more focused one better.” The student is developing characteristics of good and bad tone qualities, so that they can be described when heard. After the class discussion, the students now had a list of vocabulary to utilize when describing and analyzing tone.

During weeks 2 and 3, I had students begin peer group assessments. This would allow them to hear and assess individual tone qualities of a specific instrument and have more interaction with the rubric. To ensure that each student received positive and constructive feedback, each rubric had space for 2 stars (positive) and 1 wish (constructive). I noticed during the lesson that students were given the opportunity to not only provide written feedback, but also discuss each other’s playing. One group of saxophonists



finished their assessments and reflected upon the results on their rubrics. After seeing who scored the highest for tone, all of the students took turns playing along with the student who had the highest score. It was evident that the students were focused on trying to match their peer's tone on the saxophone. This not only showed students taking responsibility for their own learning, but also how students are independently using assessment data to focus on improving a particular aspect of their own playing.

During week 4, the students had another assessment, but were only graded on tone. I knew that focusing on one concept for the assessment was successful when one student said to me after their exam, "Mr. L, I had more confidence with my test this time because I knew exactly what I had to be prepared for." This was a true statement for many of my students. I noticed performances were being executed with more conviction and focus, which resulted in a better assessment for the individual. Upon reviewing the results, I noticed that 72% of the ensemble received a 3 or higher and 40% of the 72% scoring a 4 or 5. This was a large increase compared to the pre-assessment data, but was still not at the 90% goal.

Reviewing these results made me question what was going on in the classroom. Informal assessments during band showed that the overall tone of the group was improving, but the assessment showed that there was still a lack of good tone quality when students play individually. I decided to revisit Marzano's student tracking and immediately noticed something that I had not done. In order for achievement, students need to set and focus on specific goals. I connected goal setting to Mr. W.'s statement about music being an aural art that students have to hear in order to reproduce. With this realization, I decided to have each student choose from a list of famous musicians who plays his/her own instrument. Students were asked to listen to this artist as part of their daily practicing and focus on matching and copying every nuance and tonal characteristic of the musician. Their initial assignment was to choose a musician and describe the musician's tone in writing. I was very impressed with the student responses, and it was evident that the prior class activities (class discussions/cooperative learning groups) prepared them to accurately describe individual tones. Having each student focus on emulating a specific musician resulted in more practicing. Students were taking their instruments home because practicing now involved utilizing first hand sources. Trying to sound like a specific musician also gave them a challenge and a specific reason/goal for practicing their instruments.

During week 8, the students had a final assessment of their individual tones. I was very pleased with the results as 93% of the students achieved a 3 or higher on the performance rubric and 78% of the 93% achieved a 4 or 5. This data showed that establishing a goal encourages students to work toward an end result, and working with first hand musical sources encourages students to continually assess and monitor their own playing. At the end of the 8 weeks, one student came to me and said, "Mr. L., it was a lot of fun playing along with a professional musician. I think I am going to choose another from the list and begin to work on replicating that player's tone on my own instrument." It was from that statement that I realized that the students have become critical listeners who are going to continuously evaluate and assess their own playing.

At the end of this module, I felt that I had improved upon my grading rubric and was able to implement it not just as a way to assess students, but as a learning tool for them. Instead of continually grading students based on all aspects of their playing without guided feedback, I am now focusing assessments on one aspect of their playing and providing different ways for them to improve in an area. Students are now interacting with the musical concepts, assessing their peers, and establishing goals for their practice sessions that lead to improved results on their assessments. Analyzing data collected from each assessment allowed me to reflect upon classroom activities and adjust instruction when needed. Enabling students to gain an understanding of good and poor tones helped them to understand the criteria on the rubric and what constitutes a particular grade. Knowing the requirements and expectation for each level on the rubric allows students to better prepare for the assessment and establish their goal. By the end of the module, I had surpassed my goal of 90% of the students achieving



a 3 or higher on the performance rubric. 93% met this goal, but more impressive is the 78% of the 93% achieved a 4 or 5. I plan to continue to track student progress as a vehicle for setting goals, and measuring strengths and weaknesses for every individual.

