

GRADING AND ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES FOR SECONDARY CHORAL MUSIC  
IN THE METROPOLITAN SCHOOL DISTRICT OF DECATUR TOWNSHIP,  
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## Table of Contents

<b>Title Page</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Literature Review</b>	<b>3</b>
Common Philosophy and Practice	3
Recommendations for Practice	10
<b>Grading and Assessment Guidelines</b>	<b>21</b>
Validity and Reliability in Assessment	23
Rehearsal Assessment of Student Performance Skills-in-Development	25
Rehearsal Assessment of Repertoire Performance Skills-in-Development	26
Rehearsal Assessment of Sight-Reading Performance Skills-in-Development	28
Summative Performance Assessments	30
Summative Repertoire Performance Assessment	30
Summative Repertoire Sight-Reading Assessment	33
Additional Assessments for National Standard 5: Reading and Notating Music	37
Interval Training Assessments	37
Pitch Name Quiz	40
Performance Evaluation and Reflection	41
Rehearsal Dispositions	44
Rehearsal Participation	44
Student Music Markings	48

Additional Assessment Activities	49
Performance Grades	49
Semester Final Exam	51
Summary of Assessment Frequency and Grade Weights	52
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Appendix: Sample Assessment Tools</b>	<b>61</b>
Example 1: Performance Self-Assessment Rubric	62
Example 2: Summative Repertoire Performance Assessment Rubric	63
Example 3: Summative Sight-Reading Assessment Rubric	64
Example 4: Interval Performance Assessment Scoring Guide	65
Example 5: Pitch Name Quiz Template	66
Example 6: 3-3-3 Performance Reflection Worksheet	67
Example 7: 3-2-1 Performance Reflection Worksheet	69
Example 8: Venn Diagram Performance Reflection Worksheet	71
Example 9: Reflection Prompts	73
Example 10: Rehearsal Participation Checklist	74

### **List of Tables**

<b>Table 1: <i>Sample Grade Weighting Chart</i></b>	<b>55</b>
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## **Introduction**

In his article, “Assessment and Grading,” Lehman (1997) asks, “So what should music teachers grade on?” (par. 5). He asserts that flawed grading practices common in music classrooms can be seen as, “evidence that music lacks curricular substance” (par. 4). Lehman answers his question: “The only justifiable basis for grades is student progress in learning specific skills and knowledge in music, as outlined in applicable standards...and made explicit in a written curriculum” (par. 5). In the spring of 2011, the secondary choral music teachers of the Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township (Indianapolis, Indiana) began a process of drafting a Curriculum Alignment Document (CAD). The purpose of the CAD is to, as Lehman said, make student learning objectives “explicit.” The CAD guides curriculum and instruction at the middle school and high school levels so that students, as they move from seventh to twelfth grades, receive a thorough education utilizing a consistent set of defined educational priorities. Not currently included in the CAD are guidelines that make explicit how learning should be assessed and grades determined.

As former NAFME President Shuler (2011) writes, music educators must recognize the realities of “today’s data-driven school environment,” where teachers “need to provide assessment evidence to survive” (p. 10). Indeed, Cope (1996) comments, “As more and more emphasis is placed on student performance and teacher accountability, measurement and assessment are becoming increasingly important to all music educators” (p. 39). The research of Russell and Austin (2010) led them to claim that, unfortunately, assessment in music classes tends to be “very idiosyncratic and not always well aligned with the recommendations of assessment experts” (Music Assessment Research section, par. 1). This has certainly been the case in Decatur Township. This paper is an effort to begin to address that concern.

The goal of this project is to provide useful guidelines for assessment and grading to bring policy and procedures in Decatur Township more into line with current educational best-practice, as well as to improve the consistency of such between middle and high schools. So as to not deprive educators of the ability to devise particular assessments that best meet the needs of their students, it is not so much the objective of this project to prescribe specific assessments as it is to define what should (or should not) be assessed, appropriate weights to be given to various assessed activities, and to suggest effective ways to conduct such assessments.

In its current form, the CAD prioritizes unity in practice and instruction related to the National Standards for Music Education (MENC, 1994) one, five, and seven.

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
5. Reading and notating music
7. Evaluating music and music performances

In addition, the CAD discusses the fostering of specific rehearsal dispositions. As educational priorities have been established related to these particular areas, this project focuses on grading and assessment applicable to these priorities.

Considered first is the literature, including a summary of the substantial findings of researchers and the general consensus of pedagogy experts related to grading and assessment practices in music classes. Secondly, a number of grading and assessment guidelines for the MSD of Decatur Township are presented and discussed, with special concern noted for validity and reliability in assessment. Finally, the appendix to this document provides example assessment materials.

## **Literature Review**

As a precursor to considering any recommended grading or assessment guidelines for secondary choral music classes, it is important to investigate the literature on these subjects. A great deal has been written, and the literature focuses on two distinct areas: studies of current philosophy and practice as well as recommendations for, and descriptions of, recommended practice. The findings of researchers and the consensus of pedagogical experts, as presented in the literature, will form an important foundation for this discussion of grading and assessment practices in Decatur Township.

### **Common Philosophy and Practice**

Existing studies provide a helpful look into grading and assessment practices common in secondary music classrooms. Russell and Austin (2010) investigated the assessment practices of secondary music teachers across the southwestern United States. In their research they observed that music teachers consider a large variety of student actions and dispositions when determining grades (e.g., performance proficiency, attendance, attitude, knowledge of music theory, participation in class activities, individual student practice). They state, “Participants based grades on a combination of achievement and non-achievement criteria, with non-achievement criteria receiving greater weight in determining grades” (Assessment Practices of Secondary Music Teachers section, par. 1). In their study, an average of 60% of course grade weight was based on non-achievement criteria assessed through “a combination of subjective impressions and objective documentation” (Classroom Assessment Practices section, par. 4). Additionally, 70% of teachers “reported that the adoption of standards-based curricula had little or no impact on their assessment practices” (School District Assessment Framework section, par. 2). MENC (now known as NAFME) states: “The long-standing practice of many music educators of

commingling criteria based on music skills and knowledge with criteria not based on music—including attendance, effort, behavior, and attitude—is not compatible with standards-based grading” (1998a, p. 37). This is a sentiment shared by a large number of teachers and pedagogical scholars. Chiodo (2001) declares, “Music teachers must know the standards, base their instruction on the standards, and demonstrate the degree to which their students have met the standards” (p. 18). NAFME supports her position: “If curriculum is standards-based, then student grading should be standards-based as well” (MENC, 1998a, p. 37).

Russell and Austin hypothesize that music teachers have come to incorporate non-content-based expectations into their grading systems partially because it is commonly felt that not including them in the grading system misrepresents the critical nature of these non-musical criteria in the success of music ensembles. Indeed, several educators write passionately about the value—even need—for non-music grading criteria in music classes. Lehman (1997) suggests, “Attendance, for example, may be considered a prerequisite for a good grade in an ensemble because absenteeism diminishes the quality of the learning experience for everyone” (par. 3). Matheny (1994) proposes an assessment system focused on “the areas that are essential to membership in a music performance group: attendance, contribution to the ensemble, effort, attitude, willingness to adapt one’s schedule to group needs, musical skill, technical skill, performance skill, and desire for excellence” (p. 37). In a letter to the *Music Educators Journal*, Weiss (2011) writes:

When evaluated within the context of music’s intrinsic values, attendance-based grading for rehearsals and performances is absolutely necessary, not only for the ensemble’s success but also, and more important, for each student’s benefit. The intrinsic values of music do not lie [solely] in academic content. Empathy, compassion, self-awareness, and

cooperation are best learned in an ensemble setting and not from a book... And music's intrinsic values can only be processed by students when they are present and fully participating. To discount the importance of attendance is to devalue music in our schools. (p. 7)

Teachers often cite a variety of factors that significantly influence what and how they assess. Russell and Austin write, "Job realities may curtail music educators' efforts to assess student learning adequately" (Introduction section, par. 2). Examples include, "lack of pre-service or in-service training, limited student contact time, large student populations/class sizes, and insufficient resources for collecting, managing, and storing assessment artifacts" (Introduction section, par. 2), as well as, "parent and student apathy toward assessment in music classes" (Music Assessment Research section, par. 6). According to their research, pressures that might play a role in making assessment in music classes distinct from methods found in traditional academic classes include the need to maintain adequate course enrollments in elective classes as well as both the curricular and extracurricular responsibilities of the teacher (Discussion section, par. 4). Despite these common concerns, Russell and Austin found "little evidence...that assessment decisions and practices reported by secondary music teachers reflect untenable situations. The majority of participants in our study appear to work under adequate, if not ideal, classroom conditions" (Discussion section, par. 5).

Russell and Austin report that "music teachers seldom received administrative guidance" (Introduction section, par. 1) related to their assessment practices—described by the authors as "a culture of benign neglect" that allows "music teachers to maintain status quo assessment practices without consequence" (Discussion section, par. 2). Specifically, they found that 92% of study participants reported that "administrators seldom monitored or offered guidance as to how

students enrolled in music ensemble classes should be assessed” (School District Assessment Framework section, par. 2).

With little or no administrative supervision, “many teachers continue to develop their own assessment approaches in isolation—without regard to district curricula or assessment policies, and without considering the assessment policies employed by their colleagues or recommended by experts” (par. 1). This may be because these “grading systems employed by music teachers (which typically produce a large percentage of ‘A’ grades) tend to be endorsed by both students and parents” (Music Assessment Research section, par. 7). Indeed, teachers have “expressed the belief that the types of grades awarded [in music classes] can impact the public’s perception of music’s value and status in the school curriculum” (Music Assessment Research section, par. 7). The authors conclude that “it is critically important that music teachers share, discuss, and evaluate assessment strategies with their colleagues, provided that any discussion or evaluation focuses on the relative effectiveness of those strategies, rather than efficiency alone” (Discussion section, par. 9).

Among their more significant findings are the following.

1. Many of the study’s participants reported prior assessment training, including conference clinics (87%), district in-service sessions (64%), graduate courses (57%), and university workshops (48%). However, the authors still see a “continued need for general assessment training” in teacher’s pre-service education and in professional development for practicing teachers (Discussion section, par. 9).
2. 79% of participants “indicated that they provided students with a formal grading policy in writing—a practice that aligns with the recommendations of assessment experts” (Classroom Assessment Practices section, par. 1).

3. When grading their students, participants gave the greatest weight to performance, attitude, and attendance assessment. The least weighted assessments involved written knowledge and student practice.
4. Participants indicated that the vast majority of students receive, on average, A's (75%) or B's (15%), while only 7% receive C's and 3% receive D's or F's.
5. When scoring performance assessments, many music teachers used assessment tools such as rubrics (49%), rating scales (39%), and checklists (32%). However, 29% of participants scored their assessments based on "their global impressions (i.e., everyday interactions and informal observations)" (Classroom Assessment Practices section, par. 7).
6. Secondary music teachers who reported greater administrative guidance or oversight related to assessment and grading tended to give less weight to attitudinal grading criteria.
7. Participants who reported having greater instructional time were less inclined to base grades on attitude, as were music teachers responsible for a greater number of performances. Instructors who were responsible for preparing more performances were less likely to emphasize student knowledge and more likely to give greater grade weight to attendance.
8. Participants who reported greater confidence in assessment were more likely to weigh performance skills highly in grade calculations.

A second illuminating study related to teachers' grading practices, completed by McCoy (1991), is concerned with which grading criteria seem to be most important to high school choral and instrumental music teachers and how this aligns with the attitudes of school principals. As a

basis for her own research, she began with an analysis of the prior research of Bryant (1987) who investigated teachers' and principals' ideal grading priorities. In summary, Bryant found the following:

Teachers gave higher rankings to objectives concerned with performance skills and music knowledge than did principals. The principals, on the other hand, tended to give higher rankings to objectives concerned with affective and nonmusical outcomes of music education than did teachers (as cited in McCoy, p. 182).

In her own research, McCoy found, "Directors relied most heavily on non-music criteria to determine grades"—things such as attendance, behavior, participation, etc. (p. 188). In contrast, principals assigned most weight to psychomotor criteria—things such as performance, sight-reading, memorization, participation, outside rehearsal, etc. The single criterion most heavily weighted by directors was *attendance at concerts*. The single criterion most heavily weighted by principals was *basic performance technique*. Commenting on these particular findings, the author suggests: "Perhaps principals are more aware of potential legal problems involved in reducing grades for disciplinary reasons or nonattendance" (p. 188). Note that this is a specifically important issue in today's music classrooms and is addressed in more detail later in this review. It is perhaps surprising to note that in this study, "both directors and principals preferred a relative standard of performance based on the director's assessment of the student's *potential* for performance" rather than a rigid, more objective standard (p. 188, emphasis added).

Among choral directors, the top five highest weighted grading criteria were:

1. Attendance at concerts (non-music)
2. Attitude (affective domain)
3. Ability to perform concert music (psychomotor domain)

4. Basic performance technique: tone production, intonation, scales, vocalizes, etc.  
(psychomotor domain)
5. Behavior (non-music)

Among principals, the top five highest weighted grading criteria were:

1. Basic performance technique (psychomotor domain)
2. Attendance at concerts (non-music)
3. Attitude (affective domain)
4. Ability to perform concert music (psychomotor domain)
5. Attendance at daily rehearsals (non-music)

McCoy's findings seem to be at odds with those of Bryant; however, a plausible explanation for the discrepancy between the two studies might be that "directors have two sets of objectives: an ideal set [identified by Bryant], and a pragmatic set [identified by McCoy] against which they evaluate students" (McCoy, p. 189).

McCoy found that teaching experience was significantly correlated with some assessment decisions. "The weights assigned to psychomotor criteria by directors with medium experience and directors with high experience were significantly greater than the weights assigned by directors with low experience" (p. 186). Further, experience and school size were correlated with some assessment priorities: "Directors with low experience at small schools and directors with high experience at large schools weighted cognitive criteria [e.g., knowledge of music notation, theory, composers, forms, etc.] more heavily than did the other directors" (p. 186).

In evaluating the results of her study, McCoy hypothesizes that teachers may be "teaching as they were taught," as they imitate the assessment and grading practices of their

college or university ensemble directors (p. 189). Wesolowski's (2012) comment expresses a view found throughout the literature:

Music educators deal with performance assessment on a daily basis.... However, many music educators have not developed a mechanism to document student learning and developmental progress, or they have not tied their individual student assessment to their grading system. Furthermore, many music teachers rely heavily on non-music criteria, such as behavior, attitude, attendance, and participation to determine their grades. (p. 37)

This, of course, mirrors the findings of Russell & Austin and provides the basis for much discussion across the literature.

In a third study, Conway and Jeffers (2004) looked at the perceptions of assessment in instrumental music classes by parents. They found that parents appreciated a specific, in-depth explanation of their child's mastery of class content: "The parents interviewed in this study were adamant about wanting to have as much detail as possible regarding the musical growth of their children" (p. 20). However, they also found that parents desired for such a report to include a traditional letter grade as well. "Although they valued the [detailed report card] sent home by [the director]," they write, "several parents...expressed interest in a letter grade or some other measure for comparing their child's work with an established norm" (p. 19). Appearing to echo current trends in music assessment, "parents and students in this study confirmed that they want an accurate assessment based on musical criteria" (p. 23).

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Before teachers can decide *how* to best assess their students, they must first decide if they *should* assess their students. Crochet and Green (2012) write, "Typical large-ensemble rehearsals tend to become teacher-based and reactive" on the part of the students (p. 50). Commonly,

“instruction and assessment tend to focus on the whole group, with the teacher directing and making decisions” (p. 50). And, while whole-group assessment practices may help improve the group’s performance, “they cannot provide a systematic measure of individual student progress,” leading many directors to consider non-musical grading criteria, such as attendance and attitude (p. 50). “Out of frustration, teachers often assign playing [or singing] tests to resolve individual performance errors. We have found that this type of performance assessment produces dread and anxiety rather than an opportunity for students to become better musicians” (p. 50). Crochet and Green encourage teachers to accept the challenge of assessing the learning of individual students, positing that “improved performance of individual students should also result in better overall ensemble performance and higher motivation” (p. 50). Further, Wesolowski (2012) suggests that “the documentation of student performance enhances parents’ abilities to support and assist in the process of student learning and achievement” (p. 36).

Two issues are of critical importance when discussing recommended assessment and grading practices: validity and reliability. If assessment results and grades are to have any useful meaning, if they are to communicate anything accurately, they must fulfill the requirements of validity and reliability; otherwise, teachers run the risk of sharing incomplete or, even worse, patently false information about their students’ learning and academic achievement. The term *validity* refers to analysis of whether an assessment is truly measuring what it was intended to measure. This is the single most important factor in establishing the quality of an assessment (Oosterhof, 2001, p. 45). The term *reliability* refers to how well an assessment measures something consistently, whether that is throughout the assessment, over time, between different individuals taking the assessment, or between different raters/scorers. Reliability is a prerequisite for—though not a guarantee of—validity (Oosterhof, p. 80). Oosterhof (2001) and MENC

(1999) provide important and practical considerations for the educator preparing assessment tools for his/her students.

A variety of suggestions exist on how to make student assessment better represent the actual musical learning of individual members of music classes. Scott (1998) writes that the ideal evaluation system

...would motivate students to acquire and develop skills by providing appropriately challenging but attainable performance goals at all levels of talent and achievement. An ideal system would also allow students some involvement in the evaluation process and provide direction for further learning...while still providing feedback that would lead to an objective evaluation. (p. 17)

His *tiered evaluation system* (TES) is “designed to allow students some input into the level at which they wish to participate” – within some parameters set up by the music educator (p. 18). The system breaks a student’s grade into several individual parts: performance of literature, sight-reading, and exercises, as well as attendance and participation. This allows the teacher to evaluate small portions of the student’s work separately rather than everything all at once. The expectations for successful completion of each of these parts of the course vary based on the tier (i.e., level) at which the student is working. Once all of the requirements of a tier are reached, the student begins to work on completing the expectations of the next tier. The system is self-paced, not favoring fast or slow learners. The results of the TES can be all or only one part of a student’s overall grade. Scott reports that preparing to implement the system is time-consuming, and the system demands that teachers commit the time to hear and evaluate each student in the program.

One component of a TES could be the evaluation of artifacts included in a student portfolio, one of the literature's most commonly suggested types of student assessment for music classes. These portfolios contain evidence of a student's mastery of curricular content. Artifacts might include recordings of individual and/or ensemble performances, written tests and essays, performance self-evaluations and critiques, rubrics from teacher- and self-evaluation of student performance, journal entries, and worksheets—in short, anything that points to a student's growth and achievement in music. Among others, Green & Hale (2011) and Robinson (1995) provide significant information on the use of portfolios for student assessment in music classes.

Much discussion in the literature centers on creating effective rubrics to assess student performances. The use of quality rubrics can significantly diminish the subjectivity of evaluations of musical performances and increase the amount of useful feedback available to the performer. Several suggestions for creating rubrics commonly appear. The first is to create rubrics that use student-friendly language to describe what is being assessed and how it will be evaluated (MENC, 1998b). It is important that these descriptions use language that is not only understandable to students but also precise enough to make the evaluation process clear and objective (Robinson, 1995). Hale and Green (2009) argue that in a high-quality rubric, “each level of quality for each criterion is clearly demonstrated in concrete, behavioral terms that your students can understand” (p. 30). Students can also complete a rubric and compare it with the teacher's “to help them internalize the standards and self-assess” (p. 30).

Next, when creating the categories of the rubric that represent the possible levels of achievement, it is recommended that the scale be *criteria-specific* rather than simply numerical. Robinson (1995) discusses the disadvantages of assessing the quality of a performance based on a numerical scale, such as 1-2-3-4-5: “The distance between the units [of the scale] is often

unequal, causing those who make the judgment to arrive at their decisions based on subjective opinions of ‘goodness’ for a given category” (p. 29). Robinson states that such evaluation tools generally have “low levels of inter-judge reliability, and the fairness and validity of such experiences has been questioned” (p. 29). Saunders and Holahan (1997) concur, stating that performance assessment tools that use numerical scales “do not describe the nature of the student...performance that influenced the judge to determine it to be outstanding, average, or poor” (p. 260). Such assessment tools, they argue, provide little diagnostic feedback to the performer or teacher, because they are “not given specific indications of student performance capabilities or descriptions of what caused a performance to be substandard or outstanding” (p. 260).

By contrast, criteria-specific rating scales can be more objective. These include both continuous rating scales and additive rating scales. Continuous rating scales list a series of increasingly difficult technical or musical criteria. Attainment of a particular rating is contingent upon successful accomplishment of all previous criteria. Additive rating scales have criteria that are not sequential, so attainment of a particular rating does not depend on successful achievement of previous levels of criteria (e.g., a checklist). See Cope (1996) for additional discussion on continuous and additive scales.

#### Criteria-specific rating scales

...include written descriptors of specific levels of performance capability. When using criteria-specific rating scales, judges are asked to indicate which of several written criteria most closely describes the perceived level of performance ability. Adjudicators describe what they hear in a performance; they indicate neither whether they like or

dislike the performance nor state whether they agree or disagree that the performance meets an indeterminate standard. (Saunders & Holahan, p. 261)

In their research, Saunders and Holahan have found “direct evidence that criteria-specific rating scales can be used to evaluate student...performances with substantial reliability” (p. 270).

Further, they claim that the data provide “indirect evidence that criteria-specific rating scales have superior diagnostic validity” (p. 270). These recommendations for rubric design are echoed throughout the current literature: see Wesolowski (2012) as well as Hale & Green (2009).

Another important aspect of assessment is *authenticity*. “Authentic assessment is used to determine student progress while the student is involved in real-world activities where learned knowledge and skills can be applied” (Asmus, 1999, p. 20). Cope (1996) writes that an assessment task “should be authentic and meaningful to the extent that it provokes thought and engages students’ interest.” Well-designed authentic assessment tasks are “both natural and motivating to the student” (p. 42). Music educators have been utilizing such assessments for many years. Whether evaluating an ensemble or an individual, “the music performance is one of the most authentic assessment opportunities available in schools” (Asmus, 1999, p. 20). The importance of authentic assessment practices in music classrooms is well-described in the literature, for example MENC (1998b) and MENC (1999).

Crochet and Green endorse the use of hand-held recorders to document individual students during a performance of the ensemble in rehearsal of concert literature or when sight-reading; these individual performances are later assessed by the teacher who also provides comments and suggestions for improvement. Students can also evaluate their own performance. They suggest that teachers can administer such assessments once or twice each nine weeks with relative ease. Green & Hale (2011), Conway & Jeffers (2004), Burrack (2002), Chiodo (2001),

Goolsby (1999), MENC (1998a), MENC (1998b), and others also encourage teachers to use recordings to facilitate evaluation of student performances. If performing for evaluation in the presence of peers proves to be troublesome for students, video- or audio-recorded student demonstrations can be done in private in order to allow students to present their best work in a comfortable, non-threatening environment (Conway & Jeffers, 2004); however, this may diminish the authenticity of the assessment.

The classroom teacher does not have to bear the entire responsibility for assessing student achievement. While critiques from outside experts at contests and festivals are common sources of additional student evaluations, such data can be difficult to collect for each student in a music class and often suffers from a lack of validity and/or reliability. Fortunately, other options exist. Student self-evaluation is often mentioned in the literature for several reasons. First, self-evaluation by and for the individual performer and for the ensemble allows students to develop critical evaluative skills (Goolsby, 1999). Goolsby suggests that directors should have their students complete written performance evaluations. Then, “the director, knowing the content of the students’ comments, can call on students who made the most astute observations and ask them to read their papers. This assists the less astute or newer students to understand what the task [of musical self-evaluation] is” (p. 35). According to Burrack’s study of the topic (2002), students have reported that the primary improvement gained from continued exposure to performance assessment is in “listening with a conscious awareness of musical concepts” (p. 30). He argues that, for students, “learning what to listen for is a major benefit of assessment” (p. 30).

Another benefit of self-evaluations is the usefulness of the results. Crochet and Green encourage students and directors to rate aspects of a performance and compare these ratings “to yield important data for discussion, evaluation, and further instruction” (p. 52). Burrack

encourages the ensemble to listen to recorded portions of their literature and the instructor to compile student suggestions for improvement to utilize in subsequent rehearsals. Additionally, Burrack argues that purposeful and structured student evaluations of their own performances “help students take responsibility for music learning and become self-sufficient musicians” (p. 32). For additional discussion of student self-evaluation, see Hale & Green (2009) and MENC (1998b).

Watts suggests dividing a performance grade between the assessments of the teacher, performer, and audience. As a part of their concert preparations, the students create “a list of things they would need to do in order to give an excellent concert, such as exhibiting good posture, dynamics, and articulation... This list is configured as a survey that is tucked inside the program, and the audience uses it to grade the students” (as cited in MENC, 1998b, par. 12).

Common to many of these suggestions is the idea that assessment should not simply be used to define a student’s level of learning or performance proficiency; it should also be used to guide future instruction. Asmus writes that valuable assessment “involves not only objectively measuring acquired knowledge and skill over time in order to assign a fair grade, but also identifying appropriate future learning experiences that the teacher may offer to enhance student learning” (p. 19). This is known as *formative assessment*. Goolsby writes that, “...directors often make the erroneous assumption that if no errors are identified during a rehearsal, then the students must be learning” (p. 32). However, he observes that

...during the vast majority of rehearsals, students have no way of knowing whether they are accomplishing what is expected of them. This sense of accomplishment can only come if students are aware of the specific goals of the rehearsal or class—often a secret known only to the director... Without formative assessment, we have no way of knowing

if the students are simply learning our parameters for tolerance of mistakes, or if they are learning something about music. (p. 32)

When planning formative assessment, it is crucial that the students have a clear understanding of what they should learn. Crochet and Green suggest that, "...articulating goals energizes learners and provides them with direction" (p. 49). Goolsby believes that, "with these goals in mind, students can assume more of the responsibility for their own learning" (p. 35). Scott (2012) suggests that teachers involve students in the development of the criteria by which performances will be assessed so that "the development of assessment tools becomes an opportunity for learning" (p. 33). Asmus encourages teachers to remember: "...assessment is not an add-on to instruction. Rather, it is an integral part of the instructional process..." (p. 19).

NAfME reminds teachers that, when grades are given, they need to be able to explain how those grades were calculated. "Accurate and complete records concerning the grading process should be kept in order to answer any subsequent questions from parents or students concerning the basis for a grade" (MENC, 1998a, p. 40). From a legal perspective, it is valuable to keep this and additional considerations in mind when grading students in a music class.

Russell's paper, "Assessment and Case Law: Implications for the Grading Practices of Music Educators" (2011), provides a useful overview of the traditional and changing stance of the judiciary as it relates to grading in the music classes of America's schools. He writes: "Music educators have paid little attention to the legislation and litigation that could profoundly affect their assessment practices" (p. 35). As such, he provides several suggestions. Among them:

- "Grading policies, as written and applied, must be consistent with applicable state and federal laws" (p. 38). He warns, "Make sure you apply your policy as originally

written in all circumstances” (p. 38). See MENC (1998b) for additional discussion regarding the consistent administration of assessment and grading procedures.

- “Grading policies should be rooted in academic judgments as much as possible” (p. 38). He writes, “Courts have often ruled in favor of the student in cases where grading sanctions were seen as disciplinary” (p. 38). Dayton and Dupre state, “Allowing nonacademic factors to affect academic grades distorts the truth about students’ academic achievement, results in a misrepresentation of academic records, and opens the door to arbitrariness and abuse of discretion by school officials” (as cited in Russell, p. 38).

- Teachers need to be sure to provide appropriate *due process*.

Due process in assessment would require that students and parents be made aware of the assessment scheme, students and parents be allowed some grievance procedures that are conducted fairly and consistently, and the assessment policy have a valid academic reason for existing in its current form and be reasonable (p. 37).

A teacher’s grading policy should be approved the school administration. “When in doubt, err toward providing more rather than less due process” (p. 38).

- “When appropriate, consider providing an opportunity to students for constructive makeup work and attendance” (p. 39). Not doing so, he suggests, may appear to result in a punitive grade deductions that courts tend to see unfavorably.

The consensus of the literature is that secondary music education has not always embraced individual student assessment of educational objectives. Many educators have practical concerns related to how best to assess learning given demanding schedules, large class

sizes, conflicting expectations from administrators, and a lack of training in assessment techniques, among other concerns. The literature also makes clear that the grading policies of many music teachers are not reflective of curricular expectations and specific student learning objectives. Many music educators have a philosophical struggle with the appropriateness of traditional grading policies, which often prioritize non-academic attitudinal and attendance expectations in grade determinations, while others bridle at calls to eliminate such policies. These debates place music education outside of the mainstream of current educational practice in secondary classrooms. However, many practicing school music teachers and university pedagogues have provided extensive discussion of concrete steps to bring grading and assessment practices in line with standards-based assessment and achievement-based grading. Their plenteous suggestions provide significant encouragement to the secondary music teacher looking to embrace the challenges and benefits of high-quality assessment and grading practices.

## **Grading and Assessment Guidelines**

For this project, the process of creating grading and assessment guidelines for the secondary choral music classes in the MSD of Decatur Township begins from the acknowledgement, as expressed so often in the literature, that valid, reliable, authentic, and practical grading and assessment strategies are vital in the music classroom. NAFME declares, “the outcomes of student assessment show the students’ levels of learning, which, in turn, serve as the most accurate reflection of whether a music program is fulfilling its obligation—to improve its students’ musical skills and understanding” (MENC, 1999, par. 24).

The grading and assessment guidelines suggested here follow the specified educational priorities of the Curriculum Alignment Document for secondary choral music in Decatur Township. The CAD prioritizes curricular alignment between middle and high school choral music classes in the following areas:

- National Standard 1: Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- National Standard 5: Reading and notating music
- National Standard 7: Evaluating music and music performances
- Rehearsal Dispositions

Discussion of proposed grading and assessment guidelines in these areas begins with a brief presentation of important and practical validity and reliability considerations for teachers when creating quality assessments. Then, specific assessment practices are discussed and suggested administration frequency and relative grade weights for each assessment are given. As specific assessments are presented, the area of curriculum alignment being addressed from the CAD is noted.

Assessment recommendations appear as follows:

- Rehearsal Assessment of Student Performance Skills-in-Development for Standards One and Five. These assessments measure the achievement of selected, discrete objectives related to repertoire and sight-reading performance at a point when synthesis of all objectives may not yet have been achieved; thus, evaluation is limited in scope and the time required for administration is relatively brief. Rehearsal assessments of performance skills-in-development form benchmarks to communicate achievement between the more infrequent concerts and summative performance assessments.
- Summative Performance Assessments for Standards One and Five. These assessments measure achievement of repertoire and sight-reading performance goals at the end of the rehearsal/practice process, when mastery and synthesis of individual objectives are expected. These assessments are broader in scope than rehearsal assessments of performance skills-in-development and require more time to administer.
- Additional Assessments for National Standard Five. Included here are interval training assessments and a pitch name quiz.
- Performance Evaluation and Reflection (Standard 7).
- Rehearsal Dispositions. Included here are assessments of rehearsal participation and student music marking.
- Additional Assessment Activities. The final areas of assessment discussed are those of concert performances and end-of-semester exams, items that are implied by—but not specifically mentioned in—the CAD.

Following the discussion of specific assessment strategies, a proposed one-semester assessment activity outline and a cumulative summary of the presented assessment grade weighting recommendations are given.

### **Validity and Reliability in Assessment**

Validity and reliability are the cornerstones of quality assessments, without which the results of student assessments “will be questionable and therefore of limited value in determining a student’s level of understanding” (MENC, 1999, par. 15). Oosterhof (2001) provides several practical suggestions for educators related creating valid and reliable educational measurement tools.

When creating an assessment, the teacher should ask, *does this test really measure what I want it to?* This is the essence of validity. Additionally, the teacher should consider three aspects of validity.

1. **Construct-Related Evidence:** Does the student performance to be observed represent a legitimate indicator of the capability the teacher hopes to assess?
2. **Content-Related Evidence:** How well do the elements of the test correspond to the student performance to be observed?
3. **Criterion-Related Evidence:** How well does a student’s performance on a test correspond to his or her performance on similar measures outside of the test?

The teacher should also be mindful of qualities that support assessment reliability:

- multiple and varied measures of student performance evaluation
- evaluation of specific, narrowly defined skills
- evaluation of only those skills intended to be assessed
- evaluation on the same assessment of only specifically related skills

- concise, clearly written/presented directions
- specific and consistently-applied grading procedures and scoring criteria
- the use of more than one rater when assessing student actions subjectively

Because of the importance and authenticity of performance tasks in music classes, evaluations of student performances must play a central role in quality music-student assessment.

When creating a performance assessment, the teacher should ask several questions.

- Does this performance assessment present a task relevant to the instructional goal?
- Are the number and nature of qualities to be observed at one time sufficiently limited to allow accurate assessment?
- Are the conditions under which the performance assessment will occur clearly established?
- Are the instructions to the student concise and complete?

When creating a scoring plan for a performance assessment, these questions should be considered.

- Is each quality to be measured directly observable?
- Does the scoring plan delineate the essential qualities of a satisfactory performance?
- Will the scoring plan result in different observers assigning similar scores to a student's performance?

When creating rubrics, checklists, etc. for grading performance assessments, several factors should be considered.

- Rubric rating scales should have four to seven divisions.
- Descriptions of performance quality should be as specific and concise as possible.

- Key nouns and verbs that indicate the essence of the observation should appear early in the description.
- Items on a checklist should be grouped in the order in which they are likely to appear. On a rubric, items of similar content should be grouped together.
- All items should have the same polarity. Checklists should describe only desired or undesired qualities, not both. All rating scales on a rubric should utilize the same format (e.g., the left end of the scale always being either the most desired or the least desired performance).
- The assessment tool should be easy and efficient to mark.

If assessment tools can satisfy the demands of validity and reliability, then the teacher has found a way to evaluate students' achievement in the classroom with veracity. The results of these assessments—including student grades—will provide a truthful and useful representation of student learning. The grading and assessment guidelines discussed here are intended to point teachers toward policies and practices that will achieve these aims.

### **Rehearsal Assessment of Student Performance Skills-in-Development**

Based on the CAD's prioritization of skill development related to national standards one and five, the following guidelines focus on the assessment of ensemble repertoire and sight-reading performance skill while those skills are being cultivated through rehearsal activities. In a rehearsal assessment of student performance skills-in-development, the teacher is looking for evidence of mastery of a limited number of specific skills. A later summative performance assessment will measure students' skill in synthesizing these discrete objectives. While these rehearsal assessments are graded, they also serve an important formative function by

communicating with the students the degree to which they are developing the skills they need to be successful in future performance and summative assessment.

1. Rehearsal Assessment of Repertoire Performance Skills-in-Development (National Standard 1: Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music)

*CAD: Students are regularly assessed in their development of selected performance skills related to the choir's repertoire.*

Occasionally during the process of learning a new piece, all students should be assessed in their mastery of the given material. The results of such assessments will help the teacher and students develop an accurate sense of how well content is being grasped and allow the teacher an opportunity to assess individual, rather than ensemble, achievement. Further, the grades assigned to these assessments will keep parents and other interested parties informed as to the students' progress in class during the intervals between concerts.

The assessment is designed to be given quickly so as to minimize the amount of rehearsal time taken for this purpose. Students should only be evaluated in a few areas during a single assessment. Examples of assessment criteria include posture, diction, intonation, phrasing, breathing, memorization, language fluency, rhythmic accuracy, dynamics, etc., but no more than perhaps two of these areas should be evaluated during any one assessment. The rubric used for the *Summative Repertoire Performance Assessment* (see appendix, *Example 2*) can provide the scoring criteria for these rehearsal assessments. Recording rubric levels on the seating chart is one way of recording the assessment results efficiently.

It may be helpful to let students know early on in the learning process that there will be an assessment over the skills being taught and rehearsed. Prior to the assessment, the students should be made aware of what behaviors they will be expected to demonstrate, and the assessment should only be given after the students have received plenty of coaching and opportunity to practice these behaviors.

The teacher may wish to have a small group of students participate in a mock assessment, allowing the class to observe the assessment process. The director can verbalize his/her assessment methodology and decision-making processes to the class, as well. The rubric used to make the assessment should be made available to the students in advance of the assessment. This can be done with individual paper copies or by projecting the rubric on a whiteboard or screen. Rubrics can also be shared on the teacher's page of the District website.

During the assessment, it may be desirable for all students in the class to perform the work or a particular section of it. During that performance, the teacher will need to move about the classroom so that he/she can more easily hear and see individual students. Or, the teacher might desire to have only a subset of the choir perform during the assessment: one voice part, a small group of mixed parts, etc. In this case, it will be important that the students have experienced and become accustomed to performing in smaller groups prior to the assessment.

Once the assessment is completed, the director may wish to have the students engage in a process of self-reflection; this can be done verbally or in writing. The teacher may also ask the students to complete formal self-evaluations of their performances. A sample self-assessment is provided as *Example 1* in the appendix.

These reflections and self-evaluations can serve a purely formative function, or the teacher can grade them. However, it is important that these grades be recorded separately from the teacher's assessment of the student performance to protect the validity of the assessment results.

These rehearsal assessments should be given as frequently as the teacher feels is practical and valuable: certainly at least four times each semester. The grade for the director's assessment of the students' performances should be weighted to reflect the relative importance of the assessment. These assessments are designed to evaluate skills and behaviors that are developing. The grade should be weighted more heavily than a common, daily activity but less heavily than a final, summative assessment given at the conclusion of the rehearsal/preparation process.

## 2. Rehearsal Assessment of Sight-Reading Performance Skills-in-Development

(National Standard 5: Reading and notating music)

*CAD: All students are regularly assessed in their development of selected performance skills related to sight-reading.*

This assessment is similar to the *Rehearsal Assessment of Repertoire Performance Skills-in-Development* discussed above. The instructor should, from time to time, evaluate each student's developing proficiency in regard to the various skills needed to reading music at sight, such as:

- performing rhythm patterns
- performing pitch patterns
- performing melodic patterns

The most valid assessment of these skills involves students performing individually; but, this may take up more rehearsal time than many directors are willing to spare for anything other than a summative assessment. The Township teachers are encouraged to make individual performance a common part of sight-singing rehearsals in order to scaffold students toward success in and comfort with individual assessment. If students will not be performing alone for rehearsal assessments, performances of small groups are perhaps the best option. Physical distance between the participants while the teacher moves between them can help the teacher to hear each individual more accurately and reduce the influence of one singer's performance on another's. Students should only be evaluated in a few areas during a single assessment. The rubric for the *Summative Sight-Reading Assessment* (see appendix, *Example 3*) can provide the scoring criteria for a rehearsal assessment, but no more than perhaps two of the grading criteria should be evaluated during any one assessment. The students should be aware of the grading criteria prior to the assessment. Recording rubric levels on the seating chart is one way of recording results efficiently.

These assessments should be given relatively frequently—at least twice each semester and more often if possible. The grade weight assigned to this type of assessment should be similar to that of the rehearsal assessment of skills-in-development for repertoire: the grade should be weighted more heavily than a common daily activity but less heavily than a final, summative sight-reading assessment.

These rehearsal assessments are important in the process of preparing students for concert performance and for the summative performance assessments of repertoire and sight-reading skill that will follow. The results from these assessments communicate to the students how well they are developing the individual skills that they will need. Additionally, the process of preparing for and participating in these rehearsal assessments scaffolds students toward preparedness for the testing procedures used in the summative assessments.

### **Summative Performance Assessments**

The following guidelines relate to the summative assessment of ensemble repertoire and sight-reading performance skills. During a summative performance assessment, students are asked to demonstrate synthesis of the separate, distinct skills developed during the rehearsal process. The results of these assessments communicate to all stakeholders the degree to which individual students have mastered the performance objectives prioritized in the CAD related to standards one and five.

1. Summative Repertoire Performance Assessment (National Standard 1: Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music)

*CAD: All students participate in a summative evaluation of their achievement in mastering performance skills related to the choir's concert repertoire.*

Near the conclusion of the concert preparation process, each student should be given a summative assessment of his/her achievement in mastering the various skills required for a successful performance of that concert's new repertoire. As is so often mentioned in the literature, it is of vital importance that students individually demonstrate their learning.

These summative performance assessments should, if possible, evaluate each student for every new piece to be performed in the concert and should cover a wide range of skills (e.g., posture, diction, intonation, phrasing, breathing, memorization, language fluency, rhythmic accuracy, dynamics, blend, etc.). For this reason, sufficient time will need to be reserved to complete these assessments. It may be desirable to give these assessments just prior to, or just following, the concert performance. Students should expect and be prepared to be assessed on all of their music, but if assessing every student on the entirety of every song is not feasible, the teacher can select particularly consequential portions of the music and evaluate students only on those sections. In this case, the students should not be told in advance of the assessment what portions of their repertoire they will be asked to perform.

The students should be made aware of the summative assessment early on in the rehearsal process, and the assessment schedule should be announced to the students well in advance. Prior to the assessments, the rubric used to evaluate the performances should be presented to the students on paper, projected for the entire class to see, and/or placed on the teacher's webpage. Before the first assessment, the teacher may wish to use the rubric as a basis for rehearsal activities during which students are asked to demonstrate each of the individual skills listed to ensure student understanding of the terminology and performance expectations. The teacher may also wish to utilize a group of students to participate in a mock assessment in order for the class to see how the assessment will run and so the director can verbalize

his/her assessment methodology and decision making processes. A sample assessment rubric is included as *Example 2* in the appendix.

The specific procedures of the assessment itself will vary. Since performance in front of an audience is an important part of ensemble music-making, summative performance assessments are more authentic when given in the presence of an audience. Further, the observation of other students' performances can be a valuable learning opportunity. For these reasons, teachers are encouraged to hold their summative performance assessments in the presence of the entire class. Ideally, students will perform their repertoire with one student singing per voice part. This authentically represents the choral music-making process while also allowing the teacher to hear each individual clearly. Singing one person per part may not be possible in some cases, especially with inexperienced singers. Generally, performance groups should contain the smallest number of students that the director believes can successfully perform a work. All assessment groups should be of equal size and part make-up. Placement of students into groups can be done randomly, or the groups can be pre-selected by the director. Some students may be called upon to participate in more than one assessment group in order to balance the groups. In this case, those students should only be assessed during their first performance.

Evaluation of student performances given individually lacks the performance authenticity of group assessments. However, there are benefits to hearing students perform alone, including limiting public performance anxiety and eliminating the possibility of distracting and inaccurate performances by other members of the group, both of which would have a positive effect on the validity of the assessment. The

teacher will need to determine the assessment structure that most successfully meets the potentially competing ideals of authenticity and validity for his/her students. For example, older and more experienced singers need to show their ability to perform their parts accurately in the presence of other vocal parts. However, younger and less experienced students may give a more accurate representation of their learning when performing alone and away from peers. In this case, while some performance authenticity might be sacrificed, the teacher and student may well come away with better, more useful information about individual student achievement via individual tests.

Following each assessment, the teacher may wish for students to complete reflections and/or self-evaluations. A sample self-assessment is provided as *Example 1* in the appendix. For purposes of validity, grades for such reflection activities should be recorded separately from the assessment grade assigned by the teacher. The grade weight for summative performance assessments should be substantial. The combined grades of all summative performance assessments for the repertoire of a given concert should be equal to at least one-half of the value of that concert's participation grade.

2. Summative Sight-Reading Performance Assessment (National Standard 5: Reading and notating music)

*CAD: All students participate in a summative evaluation of their achievement in mastering performance skills related to sight-reading.*

The skills for rhythm, pitch, and melodic reading will have been evaluated during rehearsal assessments. This document suggests, therefore, that a summative sight-reading assessment should prioritize the synthesis of pitch and rhythm reading

through performance of melodic examples. However, if time permits and the teacher wishes to give summative assessments in each of these three areas, he/she may certainly do so.

The rubric used to score a summative sight-reading assessment should cover the variety of skills needed to give a successful sight-reading performance. In a melodic exercise, the skills to be evaluated include rhythmic accuracy, tempo stability, pitch accuracy, syllable accuracy, and the observation/performance of score markings (e.g., style, dynamics, repeats, etc.). Henry (2011) found that students are more likely to perform the rhythms accurately if they perform the pitches accurately. He writes that, when sight-singing, “Singers appeared to give priority to pitch over rhythm, performing pitch correctly at the expense of rhythmic accuracy” (p. 72). When establishing grade weights for the assessment rubric, then, it is important that rhythmic accuracy and tempo stability (a prerequisite for rhythmic accuracy) not be undervalued. In the suggested rubric (appendix, *Example 3*), the categories of pitch accuracy, rhythmic accuracy, and tempo stability receive the most weight. Syllable accuracy and the observation/performance of score markings receive less weight. Restarts result in a grade deduction.

Note that when performing a sight-reading exercise, the use of appropriate vocal technique should be expected. If a technique problem is inhibiting a student’s accurate performance in a sight-reading assessment, it is crucial that the student be informed. Broadly speaking, sight-reading should not be seen as a time when vocal technique plays a secondary role to other concerns. However, the primary purpose of the *sight-reading* assessment is to evaluate *sight-reading* skill. Standards of validity

require that the largest part of the final score be from assessment criteria related specifically to sight-reading and nothing else. At the same time, it is important that the teacher communicate to students the degree to which healthy and effective vocal technique is being used in their sight-reading. One way to do this is to include technique on the rubric for formative feedback purposes only: it would not be included in the calculation of the final score. On the suggested rubric (see appendix, *Example 3*), the teacher is asked to evaluate the performer's vocal technique related to tone quality and projection/breath support; these evaluations have no bearing on the students' grade for the assessment. As always, the grading rubric should be made available to the students prior to the administration of the assessment.

The teacher will need to hear each student perform his/her summative sight-reading assessment individually. The assessment should be given privately, especially if the same example will be used for more than one student and it might be overheard. The length of the examples used in the assessment should be at least as long as the examples used during practice. The appropriateness of the length of a sight-reading example will be influenced by class ability level and also by the amount of time available for the assessment. As with all assessments, the teacher must consider the balance between the time needed for a thorough evaluation of student achievement and the time required for other pressing matters, including concert preparations. To aid in the efficient administration of the assessment, the teacher should establish a time limit for each performance. This will ensure that all of the assessments are given in the available time and will also help to promote equal testing conditions for all students.

When administering the assessment, the consistent application of procedures is critical for validity and reliability. Here is a possible sequence of assessment procedures:

1. The student is provided with a copy of the assessment exercise.
2. The tonic triad is sounded.
3. A set and pre-announced period of time for personal preparation begins.

The length of this period will need to vary with the difficulty and length of the exercise to be performed, with more time being provided for the preparation of longer and more-difficult examples. Less than one minute of preparation time will be called for in most situations.

4. Following the preparation period, the tonic triad is sounded again
5. The student performance begins.

Of course, some variation in these procedures will be appropriate based on the particular skills on which the class is working. If it has been part of the classes' sight-singing practice, the students might be asked to determine the tonic for themselves and to play it on the piano, for example. Or, students may be given the tonic pitch and asked to sing the tonic triad to establish the tonality for themselves. In addition, the teacher may wish to ask some questions related to the example at the start of the assessment. Questions such as, *Where is 'do'?* and, *How many beats are in each measure?* can be used to gauge the students' abilities to recognize and interpret the symbols in the exercise and also to identify sources of problems that appear during the performance.

In addition to a sight-reading portion of the semester final exam, at least one summative sight-reading assessment should be given each semester. The grade weight assigned should be substantial—roughly equal to the combined weight of the assessments of student sight-reading skills-in-development given in the rehearsals leading up to the summative assessment. As with other assessments, student reflections and self-evaluations may be beneficial additions to this assessment process. However, any grades assigned to these activities must be recorded separately from the assessment grade assigned by the director.

These summative assessments are crucial for the District's choral music classes for two reasons. First of all, by evaluating the achievement of each student, the teachers have collected valid and informative data on which to base student grades. Further, the teachers have also received important feedback on the degree to which his/her students are meeting the curricular expectations of the CAD.

### **Additional Assessments for National Standard 5: Reading and Notating Music**

Pertinent to national standard five, the CAD prioritizes skills related to recognizing and performing intervals as well as naming pitches in the treble and bass clefs. The following assessments focus on these areas of the curriculum.

#### 1. Interval Training Assessments

*CAD: All students are regularly assessed in their proficiency with recognizing and performing musical intervals.*

Students should demonstrate the ability to hear and recognize, see and recognize, and sing the intervals between specified pitches. Intervals of priority should closely align with the course's sight-reading materials so that this assessment

complements the teacher's other music literacy activities. Students' skills in the following areas should be evaluated periodically:

- Aural Recognition. To assess aural recognition of intervals, the teacher should provide a performance of examples that students are then asked to identify. Remembering that singers are asked to carefully listen and sing in different pitch ranges based on their gender and/or voice part, the teacher should incorporate into the assessment different interval examples that are representative of the spectrum of common vocal ranges. The literature suggests that the timbre of the source of a musical example has some influence on a young student's ability to perceive it accurately (Green, 1990; Yarbrough et al., 1991, 1992; Price et al, 1994). There is some evidence to suggest that this impact is less significant for older students (Price, 2000). Regardless, vocal modeling by the teacher, with limited use of vibrato, is the most commonly recommended method. A neutral syllable such as *pa* should be used for each example. Students can record their answers on paper for the teacher to grade at a later time.
- Visual Recognition. To assess visual recognition of intervals, the teacher should provide students with written examples of intervals for them to look at and identify. This can be done on paper or, if the examples can be seen clearly, projected.
- Performance. When assessing a student's ability to accurately perform a given interval, the teacher will need to hear the student sing by him/herself. This is most expediently done with each student singing in the

presence of his/her classmates so that the teacher can evaluate a student and quickly move on to the next. However, this may not always be practical or desirable. It is important that the teacher experience each student's best effort, and this may not always be possible in a public setting. To protect the validity of the assessment, student performances should be given either all publically or all privately. Regardless of where the assessment is administered, it is important that the teacher be sure every student is given tasks that are appropriate for his/her vocal range.

The teacher will need to have a policy in place for student restarts and for the maximum time allowed for completion in an interval performance examination. For example, the teacher may allow a ten-second performance window and also, if an initial performance was not accurate, a second attempt for half credit. Whatever the teacher decides, the students in the same ensemble level should be assessed with identical procedures and policies. A sample scoring guide for an interval performance assessment is provided in the appendix as *Example 4*.

Each of these assessments should follow many practice examples that use procedures similar to those used in the official assessment. Grade weight for this type of assessment should be greater than that of a common daily activity and should be roughly equivalent to the rehearsal assessment of student performance skills-in-development for sight-reading mentioned previously.

## 2. Pitch Name Quiz

*CAD: All eighth graders are required to pass a quiz over pitch names during the first semester.*

As stated in the CAD, all eighth grade students are to be given a quiz during the first semester over pitch names in both treble and bass clef, including pitches up to two ledger lines above or below the staff. This quiz must be retaken until the student completes one with no errors. Because some students may need to take the quiz several times before finally receiving a perfect score, the teacher will need to have several versions of the quiz available so that a student who is retesting is not taking the same quiz he/she had taken previously. A blank sample quiz is provided as *Example 5* in the appendix.

The point value for this quiz should be approximately equal to a rehearsal assessment of student performance skills. For students who pass the quiz the first time, a score of 100% should be recorded in the gradebook. For every attempt at the quiz from the second on, students should receive a reduced score. The teacher will want to set a limit for the number of times he/she is willing to administer retakes and/or establish a deadline for passing the quiz. If a student is not able to achieve a perfect score within these parameters, then a zero should be recorded. For example, the teacher might choose to reduce the score a student can receive on the quiz by 10% for each attempt after the first. In this scenario, a student would effectively have five chances to pass the quiz before it would not be possible to earn a passing grade, at which point no more attempts would be allowed and a zero would be recorded in the gradebook. To maximize the possibility that most students will pass the quiz the first

time and thus limit the need for retakes, the teacher should give the first quiz only after all students have been given ample opportunity to develop and practice the necessary skills.

**Performance Evaluation and Reflection (National Standard 7: Evaluating Music and Music Performances)**

*CAD: All students participate in a formal process to evaluate their individual and ensemble performances in order to establish successes and areas for improvement.*

In order for students to effectively reflect on and evaluate their performances, they need significant prior experience in critical observation. They also need extensive modeling of reflective and evaluative activities by their director. All of this can and should be done as a part of rehearsals. For example, the instructor may ask for volunteers to observe the choir and look for inconsistencies in posture or mouth shape. He/she might ask an individual, group, or section to listen to a brief passage of the repertoire performed by one voice part and then make comments about dynamics or blend. When rehearsing a particular section to fix a specific problem, the director might use student observers to help determine when the issue has been successfully resolved. Recordings of rehearsal performances can also be used to allow the director an opportunity to model listening and evaluation skills while also giving the ensemble members more opportunity to practice and develop their own skills. If time permits, audio and video recordings of solo and ensemble performances from other sources can be used for additional director modeling and student practice.

Many students struggle to find the words to clearly express their observations. An essential aspect of student reflection and evaluation is the development of an appropriate vocabulary. It is important that the teacher model a musical vocabulary during rehearsals; and

when leading class reflection activities, the teacher must guide students to the terminology that accurately expresses their thoughts. This supports the District's goals for student literacy in every content area. In addition, when students are engaged in a process of critical observation, the teacher will likely wish to limit or direct their observations to specific areas to insure that critical aspects of the performance are not overlooked.

After major performances, the ensemble should participate in a process of reflection and evaluation wherein students are asked to examine their own performance as well as that of the ensemble. They should be tasked to find things that went well and things that did not. Burrack (2002) encourages music educators to “include techniques [in their teaching] that help students take responsibility for their music learning” (p.32). When reflecting on a performance, for example, rather than describing traits that were not satisfactory as *negatives* or *failures*, students can be asked to think about *RTIs*, an acronym that stands for *room to improve*. In this context, students must consider and then specify not what limited the success of the previous performance (i.e., a *negative*) but rather, what will enhance their next performance. As Gerrity (2004) notes, the goal of such reflective activities is to “encourage [students] to create their own strategies to aid in rectifying performance deficiencies” (p. 166). By carefully crafting the reflective activity, the teacher can encourage the students to keep a forward-looking perspective and empower their observation and choice-making. The sample reflection worksheets in the appendix to this document utilize this type of terminology.

The specific process used to facilitate and record student observation and reflection can vary widely. Students can work individually or in groups. Evaluations can be verbalized or presented in writing through prose or lists. If a recording of the performance is available, the director may wish for students to come up with some initial evaluations prior to

viewing/listening to the recording and ask the students if their thoughts changed after seeing and/or hearing the recording.

Examples of forms that can be used to facilitate student reflection are presented as *Examples 6, 7, 8, and 9* in the appendix. Whatever method the teacher chooses, the following items should be observed:

- It is important that the director not express personal observations and judgments about the performance until after the students have completed their own reflections.
- Students should reflect on personal as well as ensemble performance.
- The results of the reflection process should include goals or objectives for future rehearsal and performance.
- Writing in every content area is a priority of the District. As a part of their reflective activities, each student should prepare and submit a written document that includes specific observations supported with examples and/or explaining specific ways in which future performances can be improved as a result of these observations. Appropriate, subject-specific terminology should be used.
- The teacher should lead students toward evaluations of activities that are important for all future performances and away from things that will not have significant future relevance.

Grading performance reflections can be challenging. If the majority of the reflective activities did not happen on paper, then the teacher has little documentation of a student's achievement in this area. Therefore, it is crucial that some aspect of this reflection and evaluation process be in writing. Any prose should be graded on content and also on grammar and writing mechanics. Each school and/or Professional Learning Community (PLC) in the District will have

varying priorities for evaluating student writing, and these priorities should receive deference when student performance reflections are graded. Appropriate rubrics to assist with grading student writing are available from the lead-teacher in each PLC and/or building administrators. The total grade weight of the reflection should be approximately 10-20% of the grade for the performance being evaluated. If a student did not participate in the performance being evaluated, he or she can still participate in the reflection process, especially if a recording is available, and should do so.

### **Rehearsal Dispositions**

The CAD prioritizes the development of student rehearsal dispositions in two particular areas: rehearsal participation and music marking. The following are assessment guidelines applicable to each.

#### **1. Rehearsal Participation**

*CAD: Students are actively engaged in rehearsal activities. Student actions in rehearsal do not inhibit the learning process for themselves or others.*

The presence, or lack, of evaluated student participation in grade determinations has long been fodder for discussion and debate among music educators. Allen (2005) writes that a grade is a “*single* letter or numeric mark” and therefore “the reported grade must communicate a *single* fact about the student if it is to be a valid or accurate source of information coherently shared between the reporter of the grade and the grade report’s audience” (p. 220, emphasis added). This “single fact” must be “the truth about the student’s academic achievement” (p. 218) and not a “merged judgment” measure “of how well a student lives up to the teacher’s expectation of what a good student is” (p. 220). And yet, any attempt to synthesize a

student's success in the mastery of the breadth of content taught in any course will, by necessity, result on a "merged judgment" as the teacher makes decisions as to the importance of one learning objective over another and the relative weight of varying assessments in calculating the final grade. Allen suggests that teachers consider the following question: "If I was given a student's transcript with a single letter grade listed next to the subject I teach, what would be the most logical interpretation I could make about what the grade represents about the student's knowledge of the academic subject?" (p. 222). The way this question is answered, he writes, becomes "what I should try to have my grades communicate to whomever will read and interpret them in the future" (p. 222).

NAfME states: "The long-standing practice of many music educators of commingling criteria based on music skills and knowledge with criteria not based on music—including attendance, effort, behavior, and attitude, is not compatible with standards-based grading" (MENC, 1998a, p. 37). However, Kassner (1997) argues that there are critical nonmusical "qualities that go hand in hand with producing the highest musical performance and achieving musical understanding" (p. 6), without which teachers cannot truly claim to have taught their students to be high-quality musicians or successful ensemble members. Students in music performance courses need to be prepared to be successful musicians in and away from the classroom. If a single grade is going to communicate the degree to which a student has learned to be an effective choral musician, nonmusical qualities cannot be excluded from the calculation of that grade.

Foundational to this assessment project and document is the belief that a student's grade in choir should communicate his/her success in mastering the variety of musical and nonmusical skills, knowledge, and dispositions of a valuable member of a successful choral ensemble. It follows that when students participate fully in rehearsal activities, they will likely develop a great many of the skills needed to be good musicians and performers, and performance assessment grades will likely demonstrate this achievement. However, part of being a high-quality choral musician is developing the musical and nonmusical skills and knowledge needed to promote the success of the entire ensemble and not just the individual. Performance assessment grades do not provide evidence in this area, and it is for this reason that assessment of student actions in rehearsal is valuable.

Mello (2010) notes that two practices diminish the usefulness of class participation assessments: a lack of specifically defined participation objectives and infrequent communication of student achievement (p. 91). Because assessment of student participation is easily seen as arbitrary, students, parents, and administrators must be provided with specific, observable criteria that will be used in participation evaluation. Mello writes, "Perhaps the most crucial caveat concerning the grading of participation is that it should not be cursory but rather linked to specific learning objectives/outcomes in order to be effective" (p. 92). A check list can help to facilitate communication of rehearsal participation objectives, and a sample checklist is provided as *Example 10* in the appendix. In the sample, the teacher is asked to note the presence or absence of six attributes:

1. Maintains Engagement in Rehearsal Activities

2. Asks Questions to Clarify and/or Extend Learning
3. Speaks Only at Appropriate Times
4. Treats Classmates, Staff, and Rehearsal Space with Respect
5. Immediately Follows Instructions
6. Has Required Materials

These attributes lend definition and clarity to the assessment of a student's rehearsal participation quality, and the resulting grade has its basis in specific observations that can be clearly communicated to all stakeholders.

It is also important that participation assessment results be shared with students frequently. It is of no value to a student to discover at the end of the semester that his/her participation had not meet expectations. The goal, again, is to produce effective choral musicians, and, as with so many aspects of learning, guided practice is key. Without regular feedback, students have no way of knowing if they are successfully developing the skills and dispositions expected. Mello (2010) comments that, with classroom participation expectations, students "should have the opportunity to improve as the semester progresses, much like they do relative to specific subject matter knowledge and expertise" (p. 91).

These participation grades should be taken regularly. Obviously, evaluating every aspect of a student's rehearsal participation every day is impractical. However, the categories of an assessment checklist can be divided up and assessed over time. For example, the teacher can assess two expectations ("Speaks Only at Appropriate Times" and "Has Required Materials," for example) one week and two different expectations (perhaps, "Immediately Follows Instructions" and "Asks Questions to

Clarify and/or Extend Learning”) the next week. The value of a student participation grade taken during a rehearsal should be similar to but not more than the value of performance skill assessments given during rehearsals (e.g., those for sight-reading and repertoire performance skills-in-development). Russell (2011) reminds music teachers that, to avoid “successful legal challenges” to assigned grades, “Grading policies should be rooted in academic judgments as much as possible” (p. 38). He writes, “Greater weight should be given to [academic] achievement assessments than nonachievement assessments (e.g., attendance and attitude)” (p. 38). Participation should be one of many factors used to determine a student’s achievement in the course. The results of the teacher’s evaluation of student rehearsal participation should be shared with the students at least once each 4.5-week grading period (i.e., four times each semester).

## 2. Student Music Markings

*CAD: Students make and observe appropriate markings in their music.*

It is important that students make markings in their music that will promote accurate and efficient rehearsals. Additionally, the use of personal score marking is an important habit for musicians to develop. Examples include definitions of unfamiliar terms or symbols, pronunciations for unfamiliar words, indications of intervals, solfège syllables, rhythm syllables, phrasing marks, and reminders for mistakes in any number of areas. Until students are able to make these markings on their own, unprompted by the teacher, the director will need to specify markings for the students to make. At the conclusion of the rehearsal process, the director should determine that each student has included all the required markings for that song. For each song, it

may be convenient to pair this assessment with the summative performance assessment. Evaluating each student's music can be time-consuming, so the students should no longer be in need of their music when it is collected to be assessed. The grade for music markings should be weighted to be no more than 20% of the grade for the summative performance assessment of that piece.

### **Additional Assessment Activities**

Concert performance grades and semester final exams are additional assessments that deserve particular mention. While not specifically referenced in the CAD, the nature of the District's choir classes as performance ensembles necessitates discussion of the grading of students related to their ensemble performance participation. Additionally, guidelines for the creation of end-of-semester exams are provided.

#### **1. Performance Grades**

Individual performance assessments evaluate a student's proficiencies in many areas, but the performance of the ensemble—all of the individuals together—is the activity that most authentically provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate many of the skills that make choral music valuable and unique. In a concert setting, students are asked, among other things, to show that they can arrive on time, dress in appropriate concert apparel, sing in front of an audience, exhibit suitable performance behaviors, and work together to give an excellent performance: all things expected of professional musicians. The position taken in this document is that such an assessment opportunity is extremely important and therefore, that all concert and contest performances be required and graded events. Students who do not attend the performance will need to make up the missed points. These make-up

assessments must require the student to demonstrate, to the extent it is possible, proficiencies comparable to those assessed in the missed performance. Essays, worksheets, and other types of paperwork do not assess the same skills as an ensemble concert performance and thus are not appropriate activities for students to make up the points for a missed performance. In fact, there is little that can be done to allow a student to truly recreate a missed performance of the ensemble.

Perhaps the most valid and authentic way to recoup the missed points is through a video recorded performance given on the student's time. In this situation, the student would need to recreate the missed performance situation as closely as possible, including having an audience, wearing the appropriate apparel, performing outside of the school day, etc. The make-up performance should be presented *a cappella* unless the student can secure an accompanist (if appropriate). A video recording of the make-up performance should be submitted to the teacher within a specified period following the missed performance. Students' personal phones, computers, and tablet devices often have the capability to make video recordings, and each school's media center has recording equipment available for student use.

Evaluation of such a solo performance in the context of a make-up assignment for a missed ensemble performance is challenging. This performance will still lack many of the important qualities of the missed concert, including the formal performance venue, a large audience of strangers and peers, the presence of other ensemble members, the presence of soloists and instrumentalists, and the presence of the director, among others. Because of this, it is difficult for the student to give a performance comparable to the one that he or she was likely to have given at the

missed concert. The thrust of the concert performance assessment is evaluating whether or not students have successfully followed performance procedures and have contributed to—or at least not detracted from—the ensemble’s performance. Keeping this in mind, the teacher may wish to grant all of the possible points to the student who does follow the requested make-up assessment procedures and submits an appropriate recording of his/her solo performance.

## 2. Semester Final Exams

The administration of a cumulative end-of-semester final exam is required at Decatur Central High School. Semester final exams are given at Decatur Middle School, but the makeup of those tests is less strictly defined. The choral music teachers should take the opportunity provided by the semester exam to give a thorough assessment of many of the performance and non-performance skills taught in their classes. The CAD identifies several areas for assessment, including key signatures, pitch names, notes and their rhythmic values, solfège, vocal technique, evaluation of musical performances, rehearsal dispositions, intervals, etc. In addition, the teacher will undoubtedly have facilitated learning experiences related to other topics as required by the repertoire used by the ensemble and his/her own professional judgment of curricular priorities. A thorough sampling of all of this should be found in a final exam.

A portion of the exam should be assigned to a sight-reading performance, weighted to approximately 25% of the exam grade. Other performances can be included at the teacher’s discretion, although time considerations will be a substantial limiting factor. Oosterhof (2001) reminds educators that best-practice standards for

test writing encourage the use of a variety of question types. Unfortunately, the time available for grading final exams is short, especially at the end of the spring semester. The teacher will need to keep this practical consideration in mind when creating the exams. The grade weight for a semester final exam should be approximately 15-20% of the semester grade, but the specifics of this will be influenced by varying departmental, PLC, and school policies.

### **Summary of Assessment Frequency and Grade Weights**

When considering an assessment schedule, each teacher must carefully consider how much time he/she is willing to give to assessments. Under pressure to give excellent performances, a choir director may be inclined to sacrifice some individual student assessment. However, Demorest (1998) notes that, based on his analysis of the research related to choral sight-singing, “Group success does not appear to be related to individual achievement” (p. 6). This is an important reminder that each ensemble is made up of individuals who will each display differing levels of achievement of course content, and teachers cannot assume that members of a successful choir are individually prepared to be successful musicians. In every ensemble, the learning of each student must be individually verified. As Asmus (1999) writes, “The need for teachers to document student learning in music has become critical for demonstrating that learning is taking place in America’s music classrooms.” He continues, “Assessment is one of the music teacher’s professional responsibilities” (p. 22). Despite the time required, teachers in the MSD of Decatur Township are encouraged to make assessment a regular part of each choir’s activities.

The description of each of the suggested assessments in this document includes discussion of how often each assessment should be administered. Based on this information, a one-semester assessment schedule is proposed as follows:

- *Concert Participation* grades are taken for the two to three performances given each semester.
- At least four *Rehearsal Assessments of Repertoire Performance Skills-in-Development* are given.
- Two to four new pieces are sung at each concert with one individual *Summative Repertoire Performance Assessments* given for some portion of each new piece.
- At least two *Rehearsal Assessments of Sight-Reading Performance Skills-in-Development* are given.
- In addition to the semester exam, at least one *Summative Sight-Reading Performance Assessment* is given.
- Students are evaluated in all six categories of the *Rehearsal Participation Assessment* checklist at least once during each of the four 4.5-week grading periods every semester.
- A *Music Markings Check* happens for students' new music, usually in conjunction with the *Summative Repertoire Performance Assessments* for those pieces.
- Students complete one *Performance Evaluation* after each concert.
- At least two *Interval Training Assessments* are given.
- A *Semester Final Exam* is given.

In addition to these assessments, a variety of daily rehearsal activities will certainly be utilized by the teacher (e.g., worksheets, quizzes, bell-ringers, etc.), some for grades and others not.

Grade weights for these assessments and daily activities must be carefully considered.

For each assessment in this document, a suggested relative grade weight has been provided in the discussion of that assessment based on the value of each assessment in comparison to the others.

These judgments are predicated on three assumptions:

1. Academic achievement indicators should have a greater weight than achievement indicators of nonacademic content.
2. Assessments should have a greater weight than daily class work.
3. Summative performance assessments and concert performances provide the most evidence of student achievement related to the goals of the CAD and, as such, should have the greatest weight of all assessment categories.

Using the suggested relative grade weights from this document as a guide, a chart of graded activities, suggested relative grade weighting percentages, and a suggested minimum frequency per semester is provided in *Table 1* below.

Note that for the semester final exam, *Skyward*, the computerized gradebook program used in Decatur Township, allows the exam to be given a specific grade weight as a percentage of the entire semester grade. The assigned weight should be 15-20%. It is important that the teacher be familiar with school, departmental, and Professional Learning Community (PLC) guidelines for preparing and grading semester exams.

Table 1: *Sample Grade Weighting Chart*

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Relative Grade Value</b>	<b>Suggested Minimum Number per Semester</b>
Concert Participation	30%	2-3
Rehearsal Assessment of Repertoire Skills-in-Development	7%	4
Summative Repertoire Performance Assessment	9%	2-4
Rehearsal Assessment of Sight-Reading Skills-in-Development	6%	2
Summative Sight-Reading Performance Assessment	8%	1
Rehearsal Participation Assessment	4.5%	4
Music Markings Check	2.5%	2-4
Concert/Performance Evaluations	4.25%	2-3
Interval Training Assessment	4.25%	2
Pitch Name Quiz (Eighth Graders Only)	4.5%	1
Daily Rehearsal Activity, Worksheet, Quiz, Bell-Ringer, etc.	2-4%	various
Semester Final Exam <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written Assessment: 75% of total</li> <li>• Sight-Reading Performance: 25% of total</li> </ul>	17%*	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>	

*\*Note that school, PLC, and departmental expectations will influence the specific weight assigned to a semester final exam.*

## Conclusion

The Curriculum Alignment Document (CAD) for secondary choral music in the MSD of Decatur Township provides important guidance for teachers about the major curricular priorities for their classes. Creation of the CAD was an important first step in bringing cohesion to the educational practices of the middle and high school choral programs. The next step has been to define how these curricular priorities would be assessed to best determine that students are indeed achieving academic success in the areas prioritized in the CAD. The literature speaks clearly of the weaknesses commonly found in educational measurement practices of many music educators and also of the importance and educational value of rigorous, well-planned assessments and sensible, valid grading practices. The preceding recommended assessment and grading guidelines should direct the secondary choral music educators in the MSD of Decatur Township toward unified and effective policies and procedures. The intent of the guidelines presented here is to be specific enough to demonstrate well-crafted and useful assessments but not to prescribe the totality of assessment practices in any teacher's classroom. As with all educational activities, teachers must judge for themselves what will work best for their students. Additionally, refinement of these guidelines will certainly be called for as they are put into practice and areas for improvement are identified. Further, as the CAD is honed over time, these grading and assessment guidelines may need to be adapted for any new or modified curricular expectations. Continued collaboration between the secondary choral music teachers of the district will be necessary to ensure that grading and assessment practices are unified, functional, and of quality. When this is the case, the teachers can have confidence that their assessment results and class grades are meaningfully representing the achievement of their students.

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**Appendix: Sample Assessment Tools**

- Ex. 1: Performance Self-Assessment Rubric
- Ex. 2: Summative Repertoire Performance Assessment Rubric
- Ex. 3: Summative Sight-Reading Assessment Rubric
- Ex. 4: Interval Performance Assessment Scoring Guide
- Ex. 5: Pitch Name Quiz Template
- Ex. 6: 3-3-3 Performance Reflection Worksheet
- Ex. 7: 3-2-1 Performance Reflection Worksheet
- Ex. 8: Venn Diagram Performance Reflection Worksheet
- Ex. 9: Reflection Prompts
- Ex. 10: Rehearsal Participation Checklist

## Ex. 1: Performance Self-Assessment Rubric

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Choir: \_\_\_\_\_

Song Title: \_\_\_\_\_

*Circle the box in each row that corresponds to your evaluation of your singing performance.*

	0	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Accomplished 3	Exemplary 4
<b>Part &amp; Pitch Accuracy</b>	I did not sing my part.	I sang my part with <b>many significant</b> errors or inaccuracies.	I sang my part with <b>some significant</b> errors or inaccuracies.	I sang my part accurately with <b>only minor</b> errors.	I sang my part <b>accurately throughout</b> .
<b>Tone Quality &amp; Vowels</b>		My sound was <b>immature</b> . My vowels were <b>not round</b> .	My sound was <b>not very mature</b> . My vowel shapes were <b>often not round</b> .	My sound was <b>usually mature</b> with <b>mostly round</b> vowel shapes.	My sound was <b>mature</b> with <b>consistently round</b> vowel shapes.
<b>Breathing Technique &amp; Abdominal Support</b>		My breathing was shallow and not well controlled.	I <b>rarely</b> relaxed to inhale and tightened my abs when singing.	I <b>inconsistently</b> relaxed to inhale and tightened my abs when singing.	I <b>consistently</b> relaxed to inhale and tightened my abs when singing.
<b>Phrasing (as rehearsed)</b>	<b>None</b> of my breaths were at appropriate places.	<b>Few</b> of my breaths were at appropriate places.	<b>Some</b> of my breaths were at appropriate places.	<b>Most</b> of my breaths were at appropriate places.	<b>All</b> of my breaths were at appropriate places.
<b>Diction &amp; Language</b>	My performance did not include audible words.	<b>Few</b> of my words were clear. My <b>diction was muddy</b> .	<b>Some</b> of my words were clear. My <b>diction was sometimes muddy</b> .	<b>Most</b> of my words were clear. My <b>diction was precise</b> .	All of my words were clear. My <b>diction was exaggerated</b> .
<b>Dynamics</b>	I performed <b>none</b> of the dynamics	I performed <b>some</b> of the dynamics	I performed <b>most</b> of the dynamics.	I performed <b>all</b> of the dynamics.	I performed <b>all</b> of the dynamics <b>energetically</b> .
<b>Projection</b>	I could not be heard.	I generally <b>did not</b> project my voice; I could <b>not</b> be heard clearly.	I <b>sometimes</b> projected my voice; I could <b>sometimes</b> be heard clearly.	I <b>usually</b> projected my voice; I could <b>usually</b> be heard clearly.	I <b>always</b> projected my voice well; I could <b>always</b> be heard clearly.
	Beginning 0	Developing 1	Accomplished 2	Exemplary 3	
<b>Poise &amp; Posture</b>	Appropriate singing posture and confidence were <b>not</b> present.	Appropriate singing posture and confidence were <b>not consistently</b> present.	Appropriate singing posture and confidence were <b>usually</b> present.	Appropriate singing posture and confidence were <b>always</b> present.	
<b>Expression</b>	My face & body <b>did not provide any</b> appropriate expression.	My face & body provided <b>some</b> appropriate expression.	My face & body provided <b>mostly</b> appropriate expression.	My face & body provided a <b>variety</b> of appropriate expression.	

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

## Ex. 2: Summative Repertoire Performance Assessment Rubric

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Choir: \_\_\_\_\_

Voice Part: \_\_\_\_\_

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Song \_\_\_\_\_

	0	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Accomplished 3	Exemplary 4
<b>Part &amp; Pitch Accuracy</b>	Part was <b>not sung</b> .	Part was sung with <b>many</b> significant errors or inaccuracies.	Part was sung with <b>some</b> significant errors or inaccuracies.	Part was sung accurately with <b>only minor</b> errors or inaccuracies.	Part was sung <b>accurately throughout</b> .
<b>Intonation/Tuning</b>	Performance did not include singing.	Singing was <b>never</b> in tune.	Singing was <b>rarely</b> in tune.	Singing was <b>mostly</b> in tune.	Singing was <b>always</b> in tune.
<b>Tone Quality &amp; Vowels</b>		Sound was <b>immature</b> ; vowels shapes were <b>not round</b> .	Sound was <b>not very mature</b> ; vowel shapes were <b>often not round</b> .	Sound was <b>usually mature</b> with <b>mostly round</b> vowel shapes.	Sound was <b>mature</b> with <b>consistently round</b> vowel shapes.
<b>Breathing Technique</b>		Breathing was <b>never</b> deep and controlled.	Breathing was <b>rarely</b> deep and controlled.	Breathing was <b>generally</b> deep and controlled.	Breathing was <b>always</b> deep and controlled.
<b>Phrasing (as rehearsed)</b>	<b>No</b> breaths at appropriate places.	<b>Few</b> breaths at appropriate places.	<b>Some</b> breaths at appropriate places.	<b>Most</b> breaths at appropriate places.	<b>All</b> breaths at appropriate places.
<b>Diction &amp; Language</b>	Performance did not include audible words.	<b>Few</b> words were clear. Diction was <b>consistently muddy</b> .	<b>Some</b> words were clear. Diction was <b>sometimes muddy</b> .	<b>Most</b> words were clear. Diction was <b>precise</b> .	<b>All</b> words were clear. Diction was <b>exaggerated</b> .
<b>Dynamics</b>	<b>None</b> of the dynamics were performed.	<b>Some</b> of the dynamics were performed.	<b>Most</b> of the dynamics were performed.	<b>All</b> dynamics were performed.	<b>All</b> dynamics were performed <b>energetically</b> .
<b>Projection</b>	Performance could not be heard.	<b>Did not</b> project voice; could <b>not</b> be heard clearly.	<b>Sometimes</b> projected voice; could <b>sometimes</b> be heard clearly.	<b>Usually</b> projected voice; <b>usually</b> could be heard clearly.	<b>Always</b> projected voice well; could <b>always</b> be heard clearly.
	<b>Beginning 0</b>	<b>Developing 1</b>	<b>Accomplished 2</b>	<b>Exemplary 3</b>	
<b>Poise &amp; Posture</b>	Appropriate singing posture and confidence were <b>not</b> present.	Appropriate singing posture and confidence were <b>not consistently</b> present.	Appropriate singing posture and confidence were <b>usually</b> present.	Appropriate singing posture and confidence were <b>always</b> present.	
<b>Expression</b>	Face & body <b>did not provide any</b> appropriate expression.	Face & body provided <b>some</b> appropriate expression.	Face & body provided <b>mostly</b> appropriate expression.	Face & body provided <b>a variety</b> of appropriate expression.	

38/37	36/35	34/33	32/31	30/29	28/27	26/25	24/23	22/21	20/19	18/17	16/15	14-
A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
100%	96%	92%	89%	86%	82%	79%	76%	72%	69%	66%	62%	59%

Comments:

### Ex. 3: Summative Sight-Reading Assessment Rubric

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Choir: \_\_\_\_\_

Voice Part: \_\_\_\_\_

Pitch Accuracy	No pitches were performed correctly. 0 points	Few pitches were performed correctly. 4 points
	Some pitches were performed correctly. 8 points	Most pitches were performed correctly. 12 points
	All pitches were performed correctly. 16 points	

Comments:

Rhythmic Accuracy	Never 0 points	Rarely 2 points	Usually 4 points	Always 6 points
Tempo Stability	Never 0 points	Rarely 2 points	Usually 4 points	Always 6 points

Solfège Accuracy	Syllables Not Used 0 points	Rarely / Never 3 points	Usually 6 points	Always 9 points
------------------	--------------------------------	----------------------------	---------------------	--------------------

Performance of Score Markings	None 0 points	Some 2 points	Most 3 points	All 4 points
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Tone Quality	Did Not Sing	Sound was <b>immature</b> ; vowels shapes were <b>not round</b> .	Sound was <b>not very mature</b> ; vowel shapes were <b>often not round</b> .	Sound was <b>usually mature</b> with <b>mostly round</b> vowel shapes.	Sound was <b>mature</b> with <b>consistently round</b> vowel shapes.
Projection/Breath Support	Did not Sing	<b>Did not</b> use sufficient breath energy; could <b>not</b> be heard clearly.	<b>Sometimes</b> used sufficient breath energy; could <b>sometimes</b> be heard clearly.	<b>Usually</b> used sufficient breath energy; could <b>usually</b> be heard clearly.	<b>Always</b> used sufficient breath energy; could <b>always</b> be heard clearly.

Restarts (-4 pts. each): \_\_\_\_\_

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

37-36	35-34	33-32	31-30	29-28	27-26	25-24	23-22	21-20	19-18	17-16	15-14	13-
A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
100%	96%	92%	89%	86%	82%	79%	76%	72%	69%	66%	62%	59%

Comments:

### Ex. 4: Interval Performance Assessment Scoring Guide

Number of Examples for this Assessment: 1 2 3

Class \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name	Example 1			Example 2			Example 3			Points Earned
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	
	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None 0 pts.	1 <sup>st</sup> Attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> Attempt	None	

Key: 1<sup>st</sup> Attempt = 4 pts.; 2<sup>nd</sup> Attempt = 2 pts.; None = 0 pts.

**Ex. 5: Pitch Name Quiz #\_\_\_\_\_**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

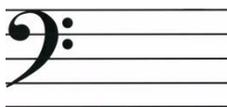
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name each pitch. Write your answer below each example. A perfect score is required to pass.

1.



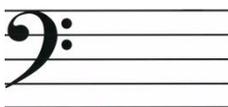
2.



3.



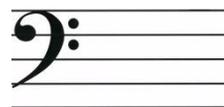
3.



4.



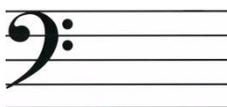
5.



6.



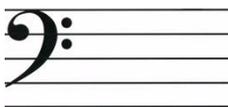
7.



8.



9.



Number Correct (out of 10): \_\_\_\_\_

**PASS****RE-TAKE**

## Ex. 6: 3-3-3 Performance Reflection

---

 Name

---

 Class

---

 Performance

### I. Personal Performance Summary

<b>Personal Positives</b> 1. 2. 3.	<b>Choir Positives</b> 1. 2. 3.
<b>Personal RTIs</b> 1. 2. 3.	<b>Choir RTIs</b> 1. 2. 3.

### II. Group/Section Performance Summary

<b>Choir Positives</b> 1. 2. 3.	<b>Choir RTIs</b> 1. 2. 3.
--	-------------------------------------

### III. Choir Performance Summary

<b>Choir Positives</b> 1. 2. 3.	<b>Choir RTIs</b> 1. 2. 3.
--	-------------------------------------

### IV. Where do we go from here?

This is a concert reflection plan that utilizes individual, small group, and ensemble participation to evaluate the performance given and create goals for the next. The results are three areas of success and three areas of refinement at the personal, small group, and ensemble levels; thus, this reflection is known as a 3-3-3 reflection.

In the first section of the worksheet, students list three areas in which they feel they personally excelled during the concert (“positives”) and three areas in which they feel they personally have room to improve (“RTI”) before the next performance. Then, they do the same on behalf of the entire choir.

In the second section, the students are divided into small groups (randomly, by voice part, assigned by director, etc.). Each member of the group shares his/her “Choir Positives” and “Choir RTIs.” Then, the group discusses what has been shared and comes to consensus on the three most important items for each category.

A similar process is employed in the third section. Each group reports back to the class with their positives and RTIs. The class then discusses the accumulated list (guided by the director) and comes to consensus on the three most critical for each. In the final section, each student responds to the writing prompt, “Where do we go from here?”

The acronym *RTI* (for *room to improve*) is used for this reflection instead of terms such as *negatives* or *weaknesses* to purposefully direct students’ thoughts toward the next performance, encouraging them to prioritize consideration of those behaviors intended to make that performance as successful as possible.

## Ex. 7: 3-2-1 Performance Reflection

---

 Name

---

 Class

---

 Performance

### I. Personal Performance Summary

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Personal Positives</b></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Choir Positives</b></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Personal RTIs</b></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Choir RTIs</b></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>

### II. Group/Section Performance Summary

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Choir Positives</b></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Choir RTIs</b></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p>
---	--

### III. Choir Performance Summary

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Choir Positive</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Choir RTI</b></p>
--	---

### IV. Where do we go from here?

The 3-3-1 reflection worksheet is similar to the 3-3-3 worksheet discussed previously. However, the goal here is to arrive at a single area of greatest success and a single, most critical area for improvement. As in the 3-3-3 reflection, individual, small group, and ensemble participation is used in the reflection and evaluation process.

### Ex. 8: Venn Diagram Performance Reflection

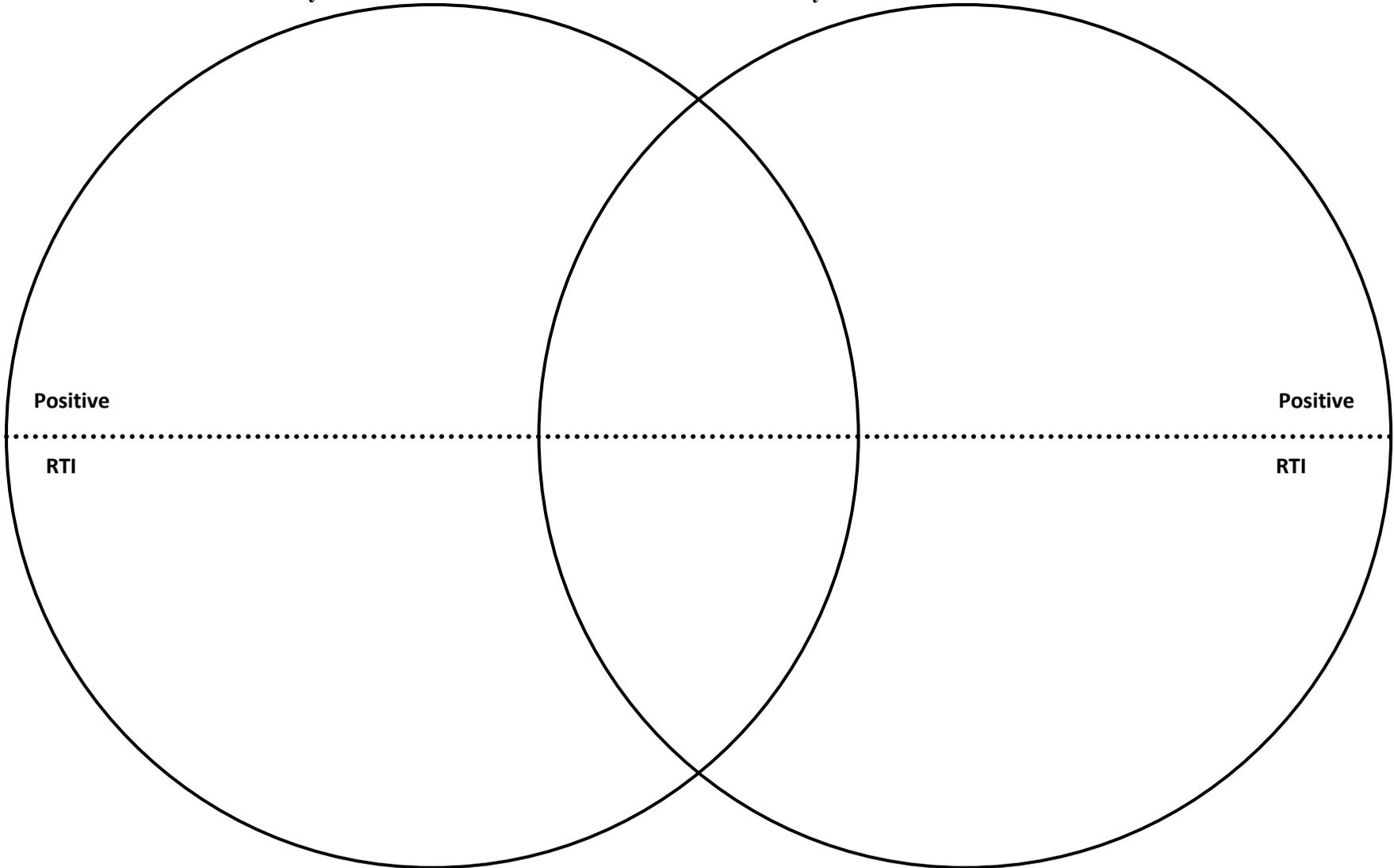
\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Class

\_\_\_\_\_  
Performance

**My Reflections on Our Choir**

**My Partner's Reflections on Our Choir**



For this concert performance reflection, students work individually to complete the left side of Venn diagram on their worksheet. In the top portion of the circle, students list things they feel went particularly well (“positive”). In the lower portion of the circle, they list items they feel need to be improved prior to the next performance (“RTI,” an acronym standing for *room to improve*). Then, in pairs, they copy down the information from their partner onto the right half of their worksheet. Any items that are shared between both partners are listed in the center, overlapping section of the diagram. The acronym *RTI* is used for this reflection instead of terms such as *negatives* or *weaknesses* to purposefully direct students’ thoughts toward the next performance, encouraging them to prioritize consideration of those behaviors intended to make that performance as successful as possible.

**Ex. 9: Reflection Prompts**

These writing prompts can be completed with single sentences or short paragraphs and are intended to encourage higher-order thinking. They can be completed and submitted to the teacher in this form, or they can serve as a pre-writing exercise for a larger reflective essay.

1. I now understand...
2. I am now beginning to wonder...
3. I was surprised...
4. I can see the connections between...
5. I want to know more about...
6. I would like some help with...
7. I am becoming more confident about...

## Ex. 10: Rehearsal Participation Checklist

---

 Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

---

 Class \_\_\_\_\_

Semester:    I    II

Grading Period:    1    2    3    4

Observation Date	✓	Points Earned: ____/____ Percentage: _____%
<b>Maintains Engagement in Rehearsal Activities</b>		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comments:
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Asks Questions to Clarify and/or Extend Learning</b>		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comments:
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Speaks Only at Appropriate Times</b>		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comments:
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Treats Classmates, Staff, and Rehearsal Space with Respect</b>		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comments:
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Immediately Follows Instructions</b>		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comments:
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Has Required Materials</b>		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Comments:
	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Key: ✓ = *trait observed*, 0 = *trait not observed*

The rehearsal participation checklist provides the director a tool for keeping a record of his/her formal evaluation of defined student participation objectives. When an official evaluation is made, the teacher records the date of the observation and indicates that the specific trait being evaluated was observed (indicated by a check-mark) or was not (indicated with a zero).