



## Position Statement

### Music Teacher Evaluation: Clarification and Recommendations

*Michigan Society for Music Teacher Education*

#### Preamble

On July 19, 2011, Michigan Governor Rick Snyder signed teacher tenure reform legislation (Public Act [PA] 102, 2011) requiring school districts to make staffing decisions based on student achievement and growth rather than seniority. This legislation is similar to that recently enacted in a number of states in an effort to secure educational funding through the Obama administration's "Race to the Top" initiative (White House Press Office, n.d.).

Beginning September 1, 2011, all school districts, with the involvement of teachers and administrators, must adopt and implement a "rigorous, transparent, and fair performance evaluation system" (PA 102, 2011, p. 2) that labels teachers as "highly effective, effective, minimally effective, or ineffective" (p. 4). The system must establish clear approaches for (a) measuring student growth, (b) providing teachers and administrators with relevant data on student growth, and (c) evaluating a teacher's job performance "using multiple rating categories that take into account data on student growth as a significant factor" (p. 2). Beginning with the 2013-14 school year, at least 25% of teacher evaluations must be based on student growth and assessment data. This percentage increases to at least 40% in 2014-15 and at least 50% in 2015-16. Classroom observations will continue to be a part of the evaluation process and must include a review of (a) the teacher's lesson plan, (b) the state curriculum standard(s) used in the lesson, and (c) pupil engagement.

PA 102 requires school districts to evaluate teacher performance at least once per year (or biannually for teachers rated as highly effective for three consecutive years), provide timely and constructive feedback, and use evaluations to inform decisions regarding teacher effectiveness, promotion, retention, development, tenure, compensation, and full certification. Although this law allows school districts to use a variety of national, state, and local assessments, it is unclear how administrators will evaluate music educators in relation to student growth and achievement. The Michigan Society for Music Teacher Education (MISMTE) offers the following recommendations to aid teachers and administrators in this process.

#### Recommendations

- I. The MISMTE recommends that all **music educators**:
  - a. Be involved in developing and implementing preK-12 music curricula for general, vocal, and instrumental music based on the Michigan Music Content Standards and Benchmarks (Michigan Department of Education, 2011). Curricula should state clearly what students should know and be able to do in music at the end of each grade level of instruction.



- b. Work with school administration at the *beginning* of each evaluation cycle to identify objective measures of student learning and develop a timeline for data collection that will be part of the evaluation system.
- c. Utilize assessments that clearly measure *musical growth and achievement* as stated by local curricula and Michigan state standards and benchmarks (Michigan Department of Education, 2011; see addendum for examples).
- d. Consult colleagues, including those in higher education, for assistance in developing assessment procedures when necessary.
- e. Work to maintain the integrity of the assessment and data collection process. Data used to evaluate teachers in other subjects will likely come from outside sources such as standardized test scores. Music educators, however, will probably need to provide their own evidence of student growth and achievement through a variety of assessments. Teachers should, therefore, make every effort to objectively and effectively measure student learning, and use this data to improve instruction whenever possible. They should also collect artifacts of student work (e.g., recordings, compositions, reflections, etc.) and the tools (e.g., rubrics, exams, quizzes, etc.) used to evaluate them so that they will be able to describe their assessment process to parents, students, and administrators.

## II. The MISMTTE recommends that **school administrators**:

- a. Work with music educators at the *beginning* of each evaluation cycle to identify *objective* measures of student learning and develop a timeline for data collection that will be part of the evaluation system.
- b. Consider factors (e.g., scheduling and allotted instruction time, staffing and student/teacher ratios, materials, equipment, and facilities) that may affect student growth and achievement when evaluating teacher effectiveness. For additional information, see *Opportunity-to-Learn Standards for Music Instruction* (MENC, 1994) available at the National Association for Music Education website (see References for link).
- c. Recognize the time needed for teachers to collaborate in the creation of district-wide local music assessments and provide adequate release and/or inservice time for this task.



- d. Recognize the time these assessments and new approaches to instruction will require and, as needed, reconsider the number and types of performances presented by music programs (e.g., pep band, marching band, musical pit orchestra, elaborate concert performances, and other community service appearances).
- e. Become familiar with the Michigan Music Content Standards and Benchmarks (Michigan Department of Education, 2011, see References for link) and local (district) music curricula.
- f. Use with caution large-group and solo-ensemble festival ratings as part of teacher evaluation. (See addendum for a detailed explanation).
- g. Consult colleagues, including those in higher education, for assistance in this process as needed.

III. The MISMTTE recommends that **music teacher educators**:

- a. Know State and Federal laws/policies regarding teacher evaluation and tenure.
- b. Be aware of local policies and practices connected with evaluation and tenure.
- c. Communicate and interpret laws/policies to students and other stakeholders.
- d. Work with state organizations (NAfME, MTNA, MMEA, Principal/superintendent/school board associations) to develop and assess policy and practice.
- e. Offer assistance to school districts, administrators, and teachers seeking assistance in implementing new evaluation procedures.
- f. Develop undergraduate and graduate curricula that teaches:
  - i. Conceptual understanding of quantitative & qualitative measures
  - ii. How to develop valid and reliable assessment tools
  - iii. How to interpret data (what data says/does not say)
  - iv. How to use data to demonstrate learning (acquisition of musical skills, knowledge and dispositions over time).
- g. Model effective assessment practices.



- h. Develop research agenda to track effectiveness of evaluation tools over time.

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



## Addendum

### Tools for Assessing Student Growth and Achievement

1. PA 102 (2011) calls for the use of assessment tools that measure student growth through pre- and post-tests (p. 6). Possible choices could include:
  - a. Teacher-designed tests, rating scales, and rubrics.
  - b. Psychometric tests.
  - c. Assessment functions accompanying software such as *SmartMusic* (2011) or *Music Ace* (Harmonic Vision, 2010).
  - d. Assessment tests or units included as part of music textbook series.
2. PA 102 (2011) defines one aspect of teacher pedagogical knowledge as the ability to check and build higher-level understanding (p. 2). Assessments of higher order thinking skills in music may include:
  - a. Assessment of students' musical compositions or arrangements written within specific guidelines and graded with a criterion based rubric.
  - b. Assessment of student portfolios where student work is evaluated using specific, objective criteria. Portfolios could include samples of student compositions, worksheets, written essays, self-evaluations, and performances in written, audio, or multimedia format.

For additional ideas, consult the publication, *Performance Standards for Music: Assessment Strategies for Music* (MENC, 1994). This free online resource is available on the National Association for Music Education web site (see References for link) and provides strategies for assessing students in each of the nine national content standards.

### Festival Ratings and Music Teacher Evaluation

The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) states the following regarding the use of festival ratings in teacher evaluation:

Successful music teacher evaluation must, where the most easily observable outcomes of student learning in music are customarily measured in a collective manner (e.g., adjudicated ratings of large ensemble performances), limit the use of these data to valid and reliable measures and should form only part of a teacher's evaluation (NAfME, 2011).

The Michigan SMTE agrees with this statement, adding that:

1. All organizations that sponsor rated festivals should establish and periodically calculate statistical reliability (consistency) for ratings generated at these events, and provide data indicating the average rating and frequency counts for each final rating (I-V) issued



within a particular classification, and for all participants combined. These data will serve as norms used to compare individual results with those of similar groups. This effort may require the assistance of college faculty or others knowledgeable in statistics and education research.

2. Festival ratings are valid to the extent that they measure an ensemble's performance of two or three selections, and sight-reading ability, at one point in time. They furthermore only provide assessment for one of the five Michigan Music Standards and related benchmarks (Michigan Department of Education, 2011). A complete assessment of student growth requires multiple and varied measures of musicianship and musical understanding.
3. Teachers never should be required to attend a particular festival or use the results of these events as value-added data in their annual evaluation. Music educators who choose to use this data as part of their evaluation should do so voluntarily and as one of multiple measures of student growth.
4. Teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders in music education should be aware of the numerous factors that can influence performance adjudication. According to the extant research, these might include (a) conductor and performer appearance, (b) performance order, (c) repertoire selection, (d) adjudicator experience and background, (e) adjudicator knowledge of special circumstances, (f) the evaluation form, and (g) adjudication procedures (For reviews of the literature, see Conrad, 2003; Forbes, 1994; and McPherson & Thompson, 1998). All of these nonmusical factors may contribute to measurement error and reduce the statistical reliability (consistency) of the final scores. Furthermore, ratings do not account for circumstances related to instruction such as rehearsal scheduling, financial support, staffing, or other factors that might influence instruction, student achievement, and the quality of the final performance, most of which are out of the teacher's control.

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



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