

Arts Assessment For Learning

MUSIC — 3RD GRADE

REFLECTION: IMPROVED RECORDER PERFORMANCE

Without judgment, describe what you did. Just the facts:

Class opened with a rhythmic warm-up that provided a bridge to recorder articulation by translating the rhythm syllables into “too-s” and “doo-s.”

The Reflection sheet was introduced using an overhead transparency and described as a way to track their progress. Headings and criteria were reviewed. Boxes at the far end of each row were filled in with descriptors chosen from checklists in their journal.

After constructing an AAAB phrase with patterns suggested from the class, I distributed recorders and students practiced the entire phrase. Then, after dividing the class in half, I moderated group-to-group feedback on the opposite group’s tone and articulation. From this feedback, I also attempted to glean phraseology generated by the students for the intermediary levels.

Finally, students were instructed to mentally compose a 4-beat pattern using quarter and eighth notes to be played on a single pitch. Each student performed their pattern with a CD track and then wrote a statement on the reflection sheet about what they needed to work on most.

What went well?

Students readily knew what extreme descriptors were appropriate for “Getting Started” and “Standing Ovation.” They quickly recognize a tone that is too shrill or cold. They were enthusiastic about sharing their observations. We were successful to articulate a couple of intermediary gradations of quality.

What was so-so?

Parsing out the intermediary descriptors into distinct phases that are meaningful to the students is a struggle.

The group-to-group feedback was more general than I had hoped.

The final activity was rushed because of time.

What was the most challenging part of trying this?

Challenging for me was finding simple vocabulary to distinguish four phases of progress on the spectrum.

When students are called upon to write, it requires significant time and steals away some momentum that I am always looking for ways to remedy.

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What questions were raised for you as you implemented the assessment practice?

- At what point can the tool be converted into a typed version? Can I fill in the remaining gaps for them?
- How can I circumvent a view point from a student who believes they have “nothing to work on.”
- How can I help students really hear their own performance objectively?
- How can I better prepare students to offer feedback?

What new insights or understandings are forming as a result of this experience?

I need to make provision for more exemplars.

I should record early sounds of students' first attempts for the students to reflect on their progress later in the year.

How do the results of your action plan inform your inquiry question?

The tool with various types of feedback supplies the students with specific goals and a vocabulary to guide their improvement toward the ideal. Even if I was not able to propel them as far as I had originally projected, I am confident that they could recognize the better of two performances and state why, at least in terms of tone and articulation. ☺

Documentation to bring (student work, photos, writing, teacher journal, etc.):

Reflection sheets with students' personal comments.