REFLECTION: GUITAR ENSEMBLE

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

I presented each “step” as a class lesson (class meets for one session each week). Step 4 was extended over 3 lessons. Students remained (basically) with the same group for step 3 and 4. Each student had his/her own guitar. Written reflections were introduced in the step 3.

What went well?

Each student had his/her own guitar (with larger classes, guitars were shared with a partner) and so had more playing time. Students had previous knowledge of the chords being used, and how to make the progressions sound “like a song”. Students, for the most part, demonstrated protocol when addressing each other. Giving each group responsibility to complete one song to performance worked well.

What was so-so?

There never seemed to be enough time for the writing reflection; more thought was needed. The “specificity” of feedback needed work; students tended to repeat themselves on general ideas.

What was the most challenging part of trying this?

Stepping back and letting each group work things out on its own; some groups took much longer than I had thought they would (and longer than I had planned!) to get the song up to “performance speed”. Videoing the students in the small space was a challenge.

What was the impact of this strategy on student learning? (specific examples)

Being in a small ensemble (no more than 4 in a group), students were more engaged as each was responsible for his/her group’s success. Weaker students gained confidence from being in a small group (and could not “hide”, as they might in a large ensemble), and stronger students became leaders. All had to think about and act on how to get the song to performance level – and, make sure all the members of the ensemble were successful performers.
What questions were raised for you as you implemented the assessment practice?

Would the students have accomplished more as individuals each practicing on his/her own, and then playing for and being assessed by each other? Should I do more modeling on the assessment procedure before having students assess each other?

What new insights or understandings are forming as a result of this experience? (share with group)

Next step - have students select their own songs to prepare for a performance for peers and/or parents. Insights – give students more time for reflection and practice. Refine the written checklist for ensemble playing and develop a rubric from it.

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

I need to continue the steps, and (I believe) create a more specific inquiry question.