

NAfME Recommendations for Music Teacher Evaluation



National Association
for Music Education

Cause for Action

Increasing numbers of states, as well as local school districts, are developing teacher evaluation systems. The issue is being brought to the front burner by talk of reauthorization of ESEA and Race to the Top requirements. It is important for our field to closely monitor this area of policy work.

How to Get Started

Teacher accountability models under consideration or in place can be divided into **three categories**. Find out which system is proposed for your state or local school system. Familiarize yourself with the system(s) that affect you.

A. Teacher evaluation linked exclusively to student outcomes

- Those that limit student outcomes to the Common Core tested subjects of language arts and math
- Those that allow for measurement and use of student outcomes in a teacher's area of instruction, using
 - a. Student outcomes in the arts, e.g. measures of student mastery and student growth; end of course examinations
 - b. Program evaluation measures

B. Teacher evaluations linked exclusively to teacher practice

You may want to familiarize yourself with models such as the Charlotte Danielson "Framework for Teaching"; the Marzano Model, which identifies the direct cause-and-effect relationship between teaching practices and student achievement; or the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET); the work of James Stronge; the work of Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McCrel); and others. (See **Resources** section at end of document.)

C. Teacher evaluations that combine measures of student outcomes and teacher practice

For example, student achievement tests, measures of skill proficiency, graduation rates, numbers of students enrolled in AP courses, attendance rates, participation or attrition rates, teacher portfolios, parent surveys, student surveys, etc. These may be program evaluation issues, but they can impact your professional evaluation.

What Can You Do?

If you learn that you and your colleagues are going to be subject to an evaluation system that does not adequately reflect your contributions as a teacher, you need to follow these four simple steps:

I. Educate yourself

- Find out if a certain type of evaluation is a state mandate, a district requirement, or your local school's decision.
- Do an informal survey. Get input from other music teachers, and from other arts and non-arts teachers in your school and district. What do they know? How do they feel about this? If possible, do this with your principal, or at least with his/her blessing.
- Find out if your teacher's union has a position on this issue and if they are able to offer any guidance.
- Read the NAfME position statement on this issue (linked at the end of this document). The statement sketches out guidelines for principals to follow as they work to evaluate music teachers.
- Be sure to include your state MEA in discussions.

II. Align with Allies

One-size-fits-all teacher evaluation processes create real challenges for music teachers. Many of the challenges in this area are shared by our colleagues in the other arts: dance, media arts, theater, and visual arts. The same challenges will have an impact on teachers in all non-tested subjects. As you proceed, make common cause with your colleagues! Remember that there are legal aspects to teacher evaluation. Make certain that you know what your contract says, and what your contract representatives are doing in this area.

III. Present questions—and solutions—to your Principal and/or Supervisor

- Ask for a meeting (or several) with your principal, and have a one on one. Or, find a way to set up a group meeting. Remember that this is not only a challenging issue, but also an opportunity.
- If your principal isn't available to discuss this with you, find someone at the administrative level who can explain/discuss.
- Remember (and you can ask to confirm), your principal may not have much leeway in how he/she evaluates you. The district may set the policy/criteria.

- Specifically, you may want to discuss/ask how your principal feels/thinks about this new approach (if it is new). Are you on the same page?
- Who sets policy on teacher evaluation, the district, state, or principal?
- What kind of evaluation does your principal support or prefer?
- Will all teachers be evaluated in this way?
- Will your evaluation be based only on student achievement in language arts/math; if not, what percentage will be based on other criteria, and what will that criteria be?
- Will you be permitted to supplement such an evaluation (mainly based on language arts/math achievement outcomes), with your own evaluation based on student achievement in music? (i.e. provide a portfolio, samples of student learning/tests, etc.)?
- Are the responsible parties interested in global student outcomes such as the 21st century skills? If so, will you have input into how those skills are assessed in your music classroom?
- Can the principal show you the criteria upon which you'll be evaluated?
- If one doesn't exist, could you create a teacher evaluation rubric based on music achievement?
- Will your principal be seeking input on a music assessment from music supervisors?
- Discuss with your principal how learning takes place in your classroom, and include specific strategies for developing 21st century skills in your students (creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication).
- Invite your principal into your class, and go over your planned curricular goals with him or her so that you are speaking a common language when discussing student achievement.
- Suggest that any evaluation should be a combination of several criteria, not just student achievement.
- Provide pertinent data that will be convincing. Data might include pupil/teacher ratios, for example, or the number of students and evaluation practices. Point out that the number of music education contact hours may not be equivalent to contact hours students have in English and math. This may be an opening point for discussions, especially about adequate time for individual student assessment.
- Suggest an in-service for district administrators and music teachers to educate, explain, and possibly work on a music teacher evaluation rubric based on music achievement.
- Provide concrete approaches (such as rubrics or plans from other districts or states) your principal can share with central administrative offices. In turn, central administration can share these details with school board personnel as needed.
- Help your principal understand the complexities of what you teach. If the principal is ready to go to bat for a more subject-oriented evaluation, offer to work with him/her in approaching/educating school boards/districts. Share sample assessments (e.g., how other districts evaluate music teachers) and refer to guidelines developed by NAFME.
- Clarify the nature of music achievement in the acquisition of 21st century skills, and how current rubrics can be used to assess the development of creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication in the music classroom.
- Suggest that your principal could speak with your state MEA for further input.

See the Next Page for Resources

If your evaluation contains a significant component that seeks to measure student learning, it is clearly in your best interests—and the best interests of the students—if you are evaluated based on your direct contributions to student learning. Though these contributions are not limited to learning in music, they should include recognition of that learning. Although we often think in terms of our teaching, evaluation must focus on student learning and engagement.

IV. Respectfully Offer Suggestions, Ideas, Solutions, Information, and Assistance

After speaking with your principal or supervisor and finding out who makes the appropriate decisions, address suggestions for improvement to the proper body: to your superintendent's office or other administrative personnel. If you contact the school board or other elected representatives, be aware that while you have every right to do so, some administrators may view that with some apprehension; work as collaboratively as possible to solve problems with administration closest to your sphere of influence, and go through the proper channels.

Resources

- ▶ 21st Century Skills Map (P21) http://www.p21.org/documents/P21_arts_map_final.pdf
- ▶ National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) <http://www.tapsystem.org/about/about.taf>
- ▶ Charlotte Danielson “Framework for Teaching” <http://www.danielsongroup.org/theframeteach.htm>
- ▶ Marzano Model <http://www.marzanoevaluation.com>
- ▶ James Stronge, Qualities of Effective Teachers www.ascd.org/Publications/Authors/James-Stronge.aspx?id=86102844001&nvid=a27b1
- ▶ McREL (Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning) online teacher & principal evaluation systems <http://www.mcrel.org/evalsystems/index.asp>
- ▶ Race to the Top <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>
- ▶ Sample, NYC schools Teacher Evaluation site <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/CommonCoreLibrary/Toolkit/TeacherEffectiveness/default.htm>
- ▶ NAFME Draft Position Statement on Teacher Evaluation <http://www.menc.org/about/view/nafme-position-statements>
- ▶ Education Week <http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/blogs/index.html?intc=thed#news>
- ▶ Your State Department of Education can be a good resource
- ▶ Higher education resources. Develop collaboration with your local institution of higher education.
- ▶ Your State MEA <http://www.menc.org/about/view/menc-federated-state-associations>
- ▶ “Electing Music Advocates,” Douglas C. Orzolek, Teaching Music, November 2004, p. 13 – 17. (not available online; contact advocacy@nafme2.org for a copy).

Questions? Contact advocacy@nafme2.org

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For today’s students to succeed tomorrow, they need a comprehensive education that includes music education provided by exemplary music educators.