

EMBEDDING WRITING INTO REHEARSAL (WITHOUT LOSING YOUR MIND....OR YOUR REHEARSAL)

#1 Concern: How to authentically incorporate writing into the curriculum in a meaningful way that supports critical thinking.

Writing in the music classroom should enhance music education. Period. Writing in your content should not become a cumbersome process of hoops and checklists that might satisfy administrators, fulfill evaluation requirements or help to repair low test scores. By developing meaningful writing activities for music content, you will provide additional avenues for students to learn to be great musicians and to learn through musical analysis and habits. Authentic writing will also provide you with meaningful feedback and assessment without adding extra grading duties that don't enhance your program.

Benefits to including writing into rehearsals:

- Allows for students to demonstrate mastery of the material in multiple ways.
- Provides another way for teachers to assess skills and knowledge.
- Provides physical evidence of learning outcomes that sometimes can be more easily explained to non-musicians.
- Provides tools for students to think at a deeper level of critical thinking.
- Allows for everyone to participate simultaneously during class besides just playing their instrument— which can be invaluable for very large classes.

4 Ways to Improve the Quality of Writing Your Students Turn In Without Becoming a Language Arts Class:

1. Be explicit with directions and writing prompts. If you want complete sentences you have to say it.
2. Use authentic prompts and relevant assignments. Don't just give a writing assignment for heck of it.
3. Model the kind of writing you want. You can do this by writing for them, reading professional examples or student examples.
4. Make writing a part of the norm. When writing is part of the routine, they are less likely to blow it off.

According to Common Core there are three kinds of writing:

Polished Writing

Writing that is publishable. This kind of writing requires multiple drafts, editing and at the middle level especially likely coaching from peers and the teacher.

Examples: Research papers, essays, speeches, etc.

Frequency of use in music classroom:

Performance based class: Never. This kind of writing seems inappropriate for a performance based classroom and does not meet the goals of the class.

Theory or Music Appreciation: Once a term, **if you feel comfortable teaching writing at this depth**. Examples would include program notes, composer essays, etc.

Readable Writing

Formal writing meant to be read by an audience. This kind of writing should be written with appropriate punctuation, transitions and organization. Writing conventions or lack thereof would probably contribute to the success of the writing.

Examples: Essay questions on a test, short answer questions on a test, reflections, discussion responses, etc.

Frequency of use in music classroom: Once a week to once a every 6-8 weeks depending on your preference.

Writing to Think

Literally any kind of writing meant to help improve critical thinking and/or provide an assessment tool for the teacher. Writing to think is meant to be graded on content, not on conventions and conventions shouldn't play a role when doing this kind of writing.

Examples: Lists, exit tickets, free writes, journals, thinking maps, annotations.

Frequency of use in the music classroom: Every day to once every couple weeks.

EMBEDDED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:

Readable Writing

Concert/Playing Test Reflection and Goal Setting

Reflection and goal setting are things I would do regardless of writing requirements. It's a great way to help students have some focus and track progress throughout the year. This assignment is something I've used for concerts and playing tests especially toward the beginning of the year. It's also a great way to get feedback about what's going on in class, literature and whether or not they understand behavior expectations at a concert.

The questions on this survey are explicit and specific. Every question talks about what kind of sentences and punctuation I want them to use. They also will be answers that we can reflect on later in the year.

Using a google form will also encourage better writing. Research shows that using technology to write actually increases engagement with the task and therefore the quality of writing. In terms of grading it also simplifies things because these responses end up in a spreadsheet that is easily sortable and cuts down on the amount of paperwork filling up your office.

Long Term Music Goals

This form will track students goals in music goals around practice, performance and understanding of music.

Your username (lreardon@jeffcooschools.us) will be recorded when you submit this form. Not lreardon? Sign out
* Required

Listening to your recording what are your thoughts about how you did? Think about whether or not you had correct notes and rhythms, good tone and clear articulations. *
Please write a short constructed response using complete sentences and correct punctuation.

If you were to make your performance perfect, what would have sounded differently? *
Please use complete sentences in a short constructed response.

What do you think is you think is your greatest strength as a musician? *
Please answer in complete sentences.

What do you think is the area you need to work on the most? *
Please answer in complete sentences.

Come up with a plan on how to improve your playing. Determine at least three action steps on how you will improve your playing on your own and in class. *
Please write a paragraph outlining your action plan. Don't forget your conclusion and evidence!

Identify at least 2 spots in each piece of your music that you need to focus on in your practice at home. Mark them in your part and write them below. *
Please write down the measure numbers of the spots you will work on in each piece and a few words describing what you are focusing on.

Advocacy

Ask students to write a well written paragraph answering this prompt:

What does music mean to you? Please use specific examples to support your response.

Parameters such as how you want the paragraph organized and who the audience is should be explicit. This is also a great opportunity to model the writing you want while simultaneously giving your students and inside look into why YOU think music is important.

Bonus Points:

Responses can be used as material to advocate for your program on websites, in newsletters, and concert programs.

Formal Test/Homework Questions

Adding some short answer questions to theory tests is an easy way to incorporate writing. Include explicit directions to the quality of writing you want to see.

Examples:

Describe the process you would use to determine the key of a piece of music. Please use complete sentences and correct punctuation.

Describe what to do when you see D.S. al Coda. Please use complete sentences.

Explain in detail everything you need to do to play forte on your instrument. Please use complete sentences.

Voting

There are times when we'll take a vote in my class on various things. Sometimes on literature, party plans, and awards for students at the end of the year. This is a simple way to incorporate some short writing by defending their vote.

Writing to Think

3-2-1

This is a great exercise to use as bellwork to prepare students for rehearsal by accessing prior knowledge or as exit tickets to review concepts learned in class.

Some examples as bellwork:

3 things you remember from yesterday's rehearsal
2 goals for rehearsal today
1 question for Mrs. Reardon

3 things you know about Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart from yesterday
2 areas of Eine Kleine Nacht Musik you need to work on
1 section you think you could demonstrate for the class

Some examples as exit tickets:

3 vocab words you used in class today
2 things you are going to remember about tuning your instrument
1 goal for your practice time at home tonight

3 individual responsibilities for students during rehearsals
2 positive outcomes of following class expectations
1 behavior goal for tomorrow

Quick Writes

This is kind of like a brain dump to prepare students for new concepts or class discussions. It allows students to get all their thinking down before speaking which can help encourage deeper critical thinking. This is a great activity during transitions or while you are working with individual sections. You can also use this for exit tickets.

Examples:

Write down everything you know about (key signatures, triplets, composer, style of music, etc.)

Describe what correct posture looks like.

Come up with a story that goes along with this piece of music. Use examples from the music to support your plot.

Why is it important to slow fast passages down during practice?

What are three key expectations for you during the concert?

Stoplight Sticky Notes

This one requires a little bit of prep but can be a valuable assessment tool. Create a large stoplight poster posted nearby the door to your classroom. At the end of class have students fill out a sticky note. They can answer in one of three categories.

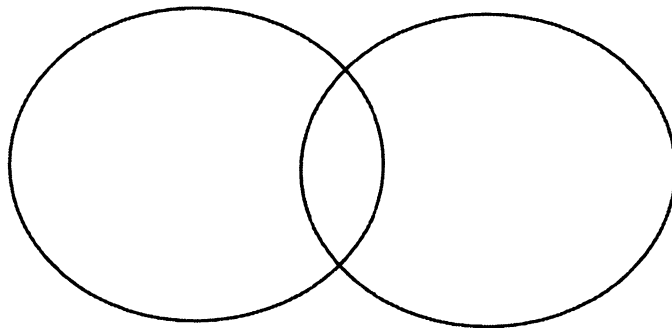
Green: Write down something you were awesome at today or something that now makes sense to you that did not before.

Yellow: Ask a clarifying question or write down something you are close to achieving but are not quite there yet.

Red: Write down something you do not understand or are struggling with.

Compare and Contrast

Use a Venn Diagram circle map to compare and contrast two pieces of music, instruments, styles of music etc.



Listening Journal

Have students write whatever comes into their head while listening to a piece of music. The only rule is their pencil must be moving on the paper for a certain duration, Usually about 3-10 minutes. This exercise can be useful to keep kids engaged during a listening activity and also helps develop comfort with writing and voice. This assignment should only be graded on completion if graded at all.