Designing an Effective Music Teacher Evaluation System (Part Two)

Amy Clements-Cortés

Wilfrid Laurier University, notesbyamy2@yahoo.ca

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.wlu.ca/musi_faculty

Part of the Elementary Education and Teaching Commons, Music Pedagogy Commons, and the Secondary Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Designing an Effective Music Teacher Evaluation System (Part Two)

Amy Clements-Cortès

Peer Review Corner features articles that have been submitted for review by a panel of music educators. The jury completes a “blind” review of manuscripts, offers suggestions for revision, and the revised article is either accepted or rejected based upon consultation with the journal editor and others on the editorial board. If you wish to submit an article for review, please send it to Dr. Lee Willingham (lwillingham@wlu.ca).

Abstract: Danielson & McGreal (2000) state that an effective teacher evaluation system must contain three elements: a) a coherent definition of the domain of teaching – “What,” b) techniques for assessing all aspects of teaching – “How,” and c) trained evaluators who can make consistent judgments about performance – “Who.” In part one (which appeared in the previous issue of this journal) I examined some of the issues associated with these three areas. In part two below I designed a potential music teacher evaluation system that contains these elements for the school system in Ontario, Canada. On the whole, the proposed system is designed to help teachers feel that they have been fairly evaluated by professionals with relevant pedagogical knowledge, as well as from other parties who have an interest in their role as a teacher, and that they have had a voice in their evaluation. Careful consideration to levels of performance, weighting, and score combining were taken into account when designing the system alongside the evaluation being informed by multiple data sources.

Proposed Music Teacher Evaluation System

This evaluation system is designed to conduct summative evaluations of teacher performance. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide useful information and feedback to the teacher and his/her supervisor on areas where the teacher is doing well, and areas to improve, as well as to provide direction to administrators on staff development practices. Additionally, it is designed to assess whether or not teachers are meeting the teaching standards as outlined below, and to recognize and reinforce outstanding service.

An inclusive approach that offers several viewpoints on the teacher’s performance will be implemented through the use of multiple data sources, which are an effective way to obtain the most accurate picture of performance. Essentially, the use of multiple data sources will: enhance the validity of the performance measurement, as accuracy is enhanced by using several different sources; increase reliability of results by looking at a more complete picture than that provided by just one or two classroom observations; and, increase the comfort level of both the evaluator and the teacher, as they can feel more confident that the assessment is more accurate and complete.

What

Teaching will be assessed in five domains and by the teaching standards as outlined by the Ontario Government: commitment to pupils and pupil learning; professional knowledge; teaching practice; leadership and community; and ongoing professional learning (Ministry of Education, 2010). Input from teachers, parents, students, trustees, and school administrators will be considered in forming an overall definition, philosophy or mission statement of teaching at the individual school level.

Levels of performance

The system uses five levels of performance for all teachers: unsatisfactory, below average, satisfactory, above average, and exceptional. The exceptional category is reserved and utilized only when a teacher has outperformed the description in the above average category. It would not be realistic for a teacher to be ranked exceptional on the majority of the standards, otherwise the ranking will lose its true meaning. Descriptions will be provided for all of the standards in each domain, and there will be two sets of descriptions for levels of performance for each standard which will be based on experience: one set for new teachers (those in their first three years of teaching); and a second set for all other teachers. (Descriptions for all of the levels are beyond the scope of this article).

Weighting

Evaluations will be comprised of three parts. Part one will include a classroom observation that is conducted by an evaluator, and the results will be discussed with the teacher. Part two will be teacher-assembled portfolios evaluated by the evaluation co-ordinator. For part three teachers will be given a choice about what data sources they may include in their evaluation from a list of the options provided, including for example, student surveys in order to assemble their log of teaching practice (Appendices F & G, Ministry of Education, 2010). Teachers may select all sources of data, or only one or two. These three components of the evaluation will be given equal weight. Once all the data sources have been collected, the evaluation co-ordinator will have the responsibility for analyzing them and providing and presenting the complete evaluation to the teacher.

Score combining

For each of the five domains the evaluation co-ordinator will determine an overall domain ranking based on the majority of rankings in each domain. The domains will not be combined to form one overall score or description.

Frequency of evaluations

Teachers who are in their first three years of teaching will be evaluated for each of these years. Teachers will not be expected to have an evaluation each year, but it will be required that the evaluation be conducted within the school year. Teachers who have been evaluated within the past three years will not have to be reassessed.
to develop a portfolio until their third year of teaching. This will allow them the additional time in their first years of teaching to become comfortable in their role as a teacher. Essentially the third year's evaluation will encompass all components described here. After that year, teachers will be evaluated every two years thereafter. All teachers with more than three years of experience will be evaluated every other year. New teachers may be evaluated earlier in the school year, as they will not be required to assemble the portfolio. The comprehensive evaluation for all other teachers should be finalized towards the mid to later part of the school year to allow portfolios to be assembled during the beginning of the year. Additionally, as teachers will have an evaluation every other year, in the year they are not evaluated they can collect items to use in their portfolios. In the first year of implementation of this evaluation system, teachers could potentially be randomly distributed into the evaluation cycle to determine what year they will be evaluated.

How

Part one – classroom observations

A trained evaluator, who will generally not be the evaluation co-ordinator, but a neutral party with relevant pedagogical knowledge, will conduct systematic classroom observations. (For example, a music specialist would conduct the observation.) New teachers should be observed by the same evaluator three times within a 60-day period, and teachers with additional years of teaching expertise should be observed two times within a 60-day period. Teachers will be notified that they will be evaluated within a certain timeframe (for example during the week of Nov. 6th), but classroom visits will be unannounced. Observations should not begin until the month of November, as teachers will have a better sense of their students by that point, and their teaching strategies should be more effective and focused on the students currently in their class. Observation guides, which provide performance indicators for each curriculum standard, will be utilized by trained evaluators to help them determine the rankings. There will be a standard observation guide for each grade in elementary school and each course in high school, as well as guides for specific subject areas taught at the elementary level, such as music. Needless to say, additional time will be needed to develop these guides. Guides will be developed by evaluation specialists and will be based on the research area.

Evaluators will be specialists in either the subject or grade they are observing, and in addition to their training as evaluators, they should have several years of teaching experience. The evaluator will discuss the results of the observations with the teacher and the evaluation co-ordinator within a few weeks of the last observation. The written comments will be used by the evaluation co-ordinator along with the other data sources in preparing the comprehensive evaluation. Should the observation evaluator conclude that the teacher is performing at the unsatisfactory level on more than 25% of the standards, then a second series of observations will be scheduled within two months, and the teacher will be expected to implement the suggestions made by the evaluator and/or evaluation co-ordinator. This will be carried out for a third time if needed, after which the evaluation co-ordinator may suggest possible termination of the teacher's contract if the results have not improved. All relevant teacher commitments along with this potential outcome should be made clear to teachers before the evaluation begins, and essentially should take place at the time of hiring.

Part two – teacher portfolios

Teachers will be asked to assemble portfolios no greater than 15 pages in length. In initiating the implementation of this tool in a system that did not previously utilize it, teachers will be given an in-service presentation regarding how the portfolios should be assembled. (This is potentially something that could be included at a professional development day.) Examples of items or documents for the portfolio could include: teacher designed tests; copy of grading policy; sample lesson plans; and, student work samples (Tucker, Stronge, & Gareis, 2002). The most appropriate and reasonable way to implement portfolios will be to encourage teachers to collect documents over the period of the school year, and then submit the portfolio for evaluation towards the mid-point or end of the school year. Freedom will be granted in creating the portfolio; however to ensure that there is some standardized way for the portfolios to be assembled, a school's or province's articulated standards of performance for teachers could be used to organize the portfolio. In this way the standards are providing the necessary structure for the evaluation of the portfolio to be more systematic. The following link provides five additional links with information and examples on how to prepare a teaching dossier.

http://www.uwindsor.ca/ctl/links-pd

Part three – Log of teaching practice including teacher selected data sources

Teachers must select one or any combination of the following to utilize in part three: student surveys (for those teaching grade two or higher); parent reports; peer evaluation; and/or student achievement data in preparing their log support materials. Allowing the teacher to select data sources will provide the teacher with a voice in the evaluation process. If a teacher selects only one source, the results will form the sole score for this component; if a teacher chooses more than one source, the data from each source will be equally weighted and combined to make the total score for part three.

Surveys (students and/or parents):

Samples of student and parent surveys will be made available to teachers, and they may either select one of the pre-prepared surveys or implement their own, as long as the surveys are written following the guidelines as described earlier in this article. If a teacher decides to implement his/her own survey it should be approved by the evaluation co-ordinator. Student surveys should be anonymous, and if possible, should be administered to the students by the evaluation co-ordinator or designate (as opposed to the teacher being evaluated). Parent reports should be returned to the evaluation co-ordinator. For both student and parent surveys, a response rate of 75% is required in order to use this data source. It is the teacher's responsibility to follow-up with parents who have not returned surveys. If a teacher is not able to receive a 75%
response rate, then he/she will have to use another source. Teachers will be informed by the evaluation co-ordinator of those who have not returned the surveys.

Peer-evaluation: Peer-evaluation reviewers will be selected from a list of music teachers available within the school board. Peer reviewers should be currently teaching music at the grade level that is being evaluated and should have similar work experience to the teacher being evaluated. Peer-evaluation teams should consist of two or three evaluators. Teachers will be on a list to be contacted to do peer evaluations in the year that they are not being evaluated. Teachers within their first three years of teaching will not be expected to do peer-reviews.

Student achievement data: While it would be preferable to utilize a system such as the TVAAS described earlier to gather student achievement data for teacher evaluations, it appears to be cost intensive, especially if statisticians are required to interpret the results. Perhaps such an elaborate system is not warranted in part three, as this is not a requirement of the teacher evaluation, but a choice that teachers decide to include. The selection of this source is better suited to experienced teachers who may like to vary the data sources they submit for evaluations. Therefore student achievement data will be gathered based on a suggestion from Danielson and McGreal (2000). Teachers prepare an instructional music unit based on one of the curriculum standards. They teach the unit and administer a pre and post assessment on the content. Learning gains demonstrated by the students provide the measure of teacher effectiveness.

Who
Trained music evaluators with relevant pedagogical and grade knowledge will be used to conduct the systematic classroom observations. The principal or administrators from a particular school should not be designated as evaluation co-ordinators for the teachers that are under their leadership. If budget constraints do not permit outside persons to be hired as evaluation co-ordinators, then principals should conduct evaluations for teachers at a different school, and thus provide the required neutrality. Training will be provided to principals on their role as evaluation co-ordinators.

Meta-Evaluation of the System
According to Taebel (1992) the evaluation system should be subject to evaluation, and a meta-evaluation of it should be carried out once it has been in place for two or three years. An outside panel comprised of evaluation specialists, parents, teachers, school administrators and potentially high-school aged students should have input into this evaluation. Evaluation of the system would entail assessing such components of the teacher evaluations as: whether or not teachers feel they are being provided with constructive feedback; the feasibility of including the various data sources; the reliability and validity of the data sources; and, the frequency of evaluations.

Summary
The proposed teacher evaluation system presented above includes the three elements of an effective teacher evaluation system as described by Danielson & McGreal (2000): a definition of the domain of teaching; techniques for assessing all aspects of teaching; and trained evaluators. It adheres to Ontario curriculum standards, and cost of implementation has been given consideration to align with the realities of budgetary constraints in today's education system. In order to obtain the most accurate picture of teacher performance, the use of multiple data sources across five domains has been implemented. This is perhaps the best method of addressing some of the issues and problems that are inherent in relying solely on one source of data to assess performance. It also allows for input from all who are impacted by the results: students, parents, administrators, and the teachers themselves, who are given a say in the process, and who will help to evaluate their peers. Different levels of experience are managed appropriately within the system, and a practical schedule for implementation of the various parts and levels has been outlined.

On the whole, the proposed system should help music educators feel that they have been fairly evaluated by people with relevant pedagogical knowledge, as well as from other parties who have an interest in their role as a teacher, and that they have had a voice in their evaluation. It is believed that this evaluation system will be useful in providing constructive feedback that is useful to the individual teacher in approaching the challenges they face each day in the classroom.

References


Dr. Amy Clements-Cortés is assistant professor in music therapy at the University of Windsor. She has extensive clinical experience working with older adults in long-term and palliative care, adult mental health, complex continuing care, developmental delay and children with varied diagnoses. She holds a Masters and PhD from the University of Toronto, and an undergraduate degree in music therapy from the University of Windsor. Amy teaches voice through her company Notes By Amy and has been given consideration to align with the realities of budgetary constraints in today's education system. In order to obtain the most accurate picture of teacher performance, the use of multiple data sources across five domains has been implemented. This is perhaps the best method of addressing some of the issues and problems that are inherent in relying solely on one source of data to assess performance. It also allows for input from all who are impacted by the results: students, parents, administrators, and the teachers themselves, who are given a say in the process, and who will help to evaluate their peers. Different levels of experience are managed appropriately within the system, and a practical schedule for implementation of the various parts and levels has been outlined.

On the whole, the proposed system should help music educators feel that they have been fairly evaluated by people with relevant pedagogical knowledge, as well as from other parties who have an interest in their role as a teacher, and that they have had a voice in their evaluation. It is believed that this evaluation system will be useful in providing constructive feedback that is useful to the individual teacher in approaching the challenges they face each day in the classroom.

References


24 | WINTER 2011