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Section 2

**Journal 7**

Over the last week, we have been discussing the issue of assessment in the classroom. There are many different views on how children should be assessed, ranging from standardized testing to a system of no grades at all. I feel that in a classroom, I would lean towards the later method because music is something that cannot be numerically graded. My high school orchestra teacher (before coming up with an absolutely ridiculous extra credit system) would always give me a 99 in her class. Being the perfectionist I am, I would always ask what I needed to do to get a 100. I was very active in the orchestra, practiced a fair amount and got accepted into a lot of festivals. It seemed to me that I was doing all the right things. My teacher’s response to my query would always be the same, “I don’t give 100’s because I don’t believe anyone can be a perfect musician.” This answer would always confuse me because it didn’t seem like a logical grading system. If I was being graded on how “perfect” I was, than my grade would have to be much lower than a 99. What was my grade being based on? Who was I being compared to in my grade? Were my little mistakes in orchestra rehearsal keeping me from being “prefect”? As a student, questions like this would run through my head each grading quarter. It was honestly in those moments when my philosophy on assessment in the classroom started being shaped.

Unlike my teacher (and many others) who think grades should be based on how good the student is, I feel assessment should be based on improvement and growth. Just because someone is a good musician, doesn’t mean they put a lot of work into it. Similarly, just because someone is not quite at the level they should be at, doesn’t mean they didn’t put in work. Not every student is going to be at the same level and not every student will improve or learn as quickly as others. It is for this reason, that progress is the best way to assess students throughout the year. Let’s say, for example, one student (who may be behind the others technique-wise) has a hard time with vibrato. Throughout the year, I would give this student vibrato exercises to help him with his goal of learning vibrato. Assuming he practices, by the end of the year he would have hopefully met his goal. I feel that this student should receive full credit in the class for working hard and achieving a goal. On the other hand, if a student is way ahead of the others his goal may be much bigger. I would expect this student to work on a challenging piece or technical etude. Basically, I want to see some form of improvement in my student, and the improvement will appear differently in each student. I hope that this will help my students feel encouraged to earn something new in music. My goal is to make music enjoyable and satisfying for my students.