Assessment in Elementary Music Education:

Perspectives and Practices of Teachers in Winnipeg Public Schools

By

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The University of Manitoba

A Thesis
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Abstract

Assessment and evaluation in music education presents one of the greatest

challenges for music teachers today. Elementary music specialists often question what it

is that needs to be assessed, how other music teachers are assessing, and how to best

facilitate successful assessment that is meaningful for students, parents, and teachers

alike. The purpose of this study was to examine the assessment perspectives and practices

of elementary music teachers in Winnipeg public schools.

A survey was sent out to 190 elementary music teachers asking them to respond

to a variety of questions focusing on assessment in music education. Approximately half

of the teachers returned the surveys. The amount of instructional time teachers devote to

assessment, the tools and strategies teachers used in their practice, the tools and strategies

that teachers considered to be most effective, the factors affecting teachers assessment

practices, and the beliefs music teachers hold about assessment are presented and

discussed.

Findings suggested that elementary music teachers believe that assessment is

valuable and they do use a variety of tools and strategies that they feel are most effective

when trying to assessment their students. Coping with the challenges of implementing

effective assessment and dealing with the many factors that make assessment difficult in

music learning contexts however, have left music teachers feeling that their assessment

practices are inadequate. This study establishes a starting point for music educators to

begin the task of examining many issues surrounding assessment and supporting the

profession in their quest to improve their practice.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale

The assessment and evaluation of student achievement in music education presents one of the greatest challenges for music teachers today. Assessment in music continues to be a controversial topic revolving around the personal philosophies and practices of individual teachers. As a practicing music specialist in Manitoba for the past eight years, I have developed a strong personal interest in music assessment. Over these years I have refined both my philosophy and practice and continue to reflect upon the true value of assessment and why it is so difficult to implement.

Today's educators are aware that the benefits of assessment include the motivation and reinforcement of learning, as well as the provision of information to students, parents, and administrators concerning individual levels of achievement. Assessment also provides for improved planning and instruction by teachers and the development of program support through informing all policy and decision-makers about student progress in specific subject areas. A dichotomy exists however, between the need for appropriate assessment and the problems inherent in music teachers' situations.

Brummett and Haywood (1997) capture some of the teaching challenges that confront a typical music specialist at the elementary level. These challenges include "more than 300 students, three to six different grade levels and extracurricular, and professional development responsibilities" (p.4). With further demands to individualize student learning, assess students authentically, and report detailed information about student progress with very limited contact time, one can understand the music teacher's plight with assessment.

Beatty (2000) claims that "the training of teachers in authentic assessment strategies will continue to be a growing challenge for both preservice and inservice teacher education" (p.207). Beatty suggests that teachers need to be aware of their beliefs concerning assessment and need to be able to reform past perceptions and practices when necessary. He reminds us that universities, school divisions, and administrators need to provide effective teacher training to promote the use of authentic assessment of student learning.

Throughout my beginning years as a music specialist in Manitoba, I, along with many other music teachers, found that the absence of an updated elementary music curriculum greatly contributed to our negative attitudes towards assessment and our under-developed techniques. *Music K-6* (Manitoba Department of Education, 1978) provides a scope and sequence for music learning and describes the knowledge necessary for skill development. It does not, however, provide any suggestions for assessment. The music teachers in River East-Transcona school division have created their own divisional music goals and outcomes in an attempt to address what to assess. Our teachers recognized that there was a definite need for new assessment ideas and how to incorporate effective assessment into the music program.

It was through my experience working on a divisional assessment committee in 2000-2001, that I started my journey with assessment in music. I have always believed that there is not enough dialogue among elementary music specialists in Manitoba, particularly concerning the area of assessment practices of music teachers. Some divisions have made their own decisions about what to assess and created their own divisional music goals and outcomes, while the other specialists have been left to develop

their own assessment criteria within their classroom programs. Differing philosophies about how assessment should be carried out, few professional development workshops pertaining to assessment, and a lack of opportunity to simply dialogue with co-workers have left us quite unclear as to what, if anything, anyone is doing concerning music assessment.

A primary challenge that arts educators face is the issue of accountability. It seems that in order to keep our music programs off the "chopping block" we are constantly trying to demonstrate the real "value" music education presents to all students. "If we want music to be included in the core curriculum, it becomes an advocacy issue. Music teachers know the standards and demonstrate the degree to which their students have met the standards" (Chiodo, 2001, p. 17). A large portion of my program "value" involves having documented evidence of student achievement. Music educators are responsible for not only documenting student growth, but also for communicating student learning via reporting procedures to students, parents, and administrators. Although I believe that the true value of music lies in the process of making music rather than the finished product, I require the necessary tools to gather critical assessment information for my students, program, and personal development.

Finding effective assessment tools and trusting my individual judgment to make decisions concerning the validity and authenticity of these tools has presented an enormous challenge for me throughout my teaching career. Like most music specialists, I work with hundreds of students in comparison to a regular classroom teacher who has anywhere from eighteen to twenty-eight students. Due to my schedule, which enables me to only teach every class for thirty minutes three times in a six-day cycle, I often feel that

I have too little contact time with these students to conduct any truly meaningful evaluation. In the face of so many daunting challenges, music teachers must surely question why they should even assess in music.

Why Assess Music?

Many arts educators have not missed the absence of assessment in their programs. Assessing content, curriculum outcomes, and many subjective activities present music teachers with challenges. Issues of time management, large class sizes, and the struggle to develop valid assessment tools can be daunting.

Prominent educational theorist Elliot Eisner (1996) believes that regardless of these arguments against assessment in music and the arts, the issue of accountability should be one of the driving forces behind the practice of assessment and evaluation. If teachers have no means of accounting for what students have learned and what the many programs have provided our children, how can one effectively demonstrate the value that each subject is intended to serve? "The absence of assessment in arts education – or in any other education enterprise – creates an intellectual vacuum that impedes the improvement of pedagogical practice" (Boughton, Eisner & Lighvoet, 1996, p. 3).

Eisner (1985) recognizes that developing student appreciation of music is a critical component of our music education programs. He explains that appreciation does not mean to merely "like" something, but involves a heightened awareness. The level of an individual's awareness or understanding can be judged thus providing a need for education. "… I conceive the major contribution of evaluation as contributing to a heightened awareness of the qualities of that life so that teachers and students can become more intelligent within it" (p. 92).

Boyle and Radocy (1987) argue that there are "many ways of knowing" and that music educators need to make judgments of students' subjective and objective realms of knowledge. Although many facets of music education involve the assessment of music behaviour that is subjective, Boyle and Radocy insist that teachers must also measure objective information. Testing procedures and other measurement techniques are the tools necessary for conducting objective evaluation. "…evaluation decisions are better when they have a strong information base, that is, a base including both subjective and objective information" (p. 2). Effective educational decision-making is dependent on a strong information base and student assessment is critical for this foundation.

Whereas Boyle and Radocy support more traditional forms of measurement and believe that evaluation and assessment are critical components of music education, other scholars put less emphasis on this area. Swanick (1988) suggests that, "to teach is to assess" (p. 149). Understanding how we as teachers develop our capacity to make music and respond to it helps us to better assess our students. Swanick holds an alternate view of assessment as criticism and claims that paper and pencil tests hold little relevance in the artistic world. Music educators must search for, "…appraisal of the folio, the poem, the dance, the improvisation, the performance, the composition, the design, the artifact; all those objects and events in the real world" (p. 150).

Swanick's ideas, although underdeveloped in 1987, were laying the foundation for adopting more authentic forms of assessment in music education. In his book *Music Matters*, Elliott (1995) reflects upon how to best assess and evaluate students' developing musicianship and refers to more authentic assessment ideas. He describes his idea of curriculum-as-practicum as "… the structuring of music teaching situations as judicious

models of genuine musical practices" (p. 269). Music educators are encouraged to decide first what music-making their students will pursue, the goals and outcomes that will be taught, teaching-learning strategies to be utilized, and how to assess and evaluate music skills.

Elliott (1995) refers to the research of Howard Gardner whose view of musicianship tends to best support Elliott's curriculum-as-practicum idea. Gardner's studies (as cited in Elliott) suggest, "...because musicianship is a multifaceted, progressive, and situated form of knowledge, music educators require a multidimensional, progressive and situated approach to assessment and evaluation" (p.282).

Gardner's (1999) theory of multiple intelligences started a major shift in education towards alternative ways of assessing. Gardner's seven forms of intelligence include: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and interpersonal intelligence. Recently, he has introduced the possibility of three new intelligences: a naturalist intelligence, a spiritual intelligence, and an existential intelligence. Gardner (as cited in Beatty, 2000) argued that "each intelligence displays a unique characteristic set of psychological processes, it is vitally important that these processes be assessed in an intelligence-fair manner" (p. 196).

Gardner supports the idea of assessment in music through the use of alternative assessment tools such as "the process-folio", and believes that music educators can collect rich evidence of musical thinking and understanding in this manner. Elliott (1995) describes his concept of creating the "process-folio" which captures the phases of a student's development in music, provides reflection, constructive criticism, and teacher

self-evaluation. The process-folio consists of a wide variety of assessment tools including listening logs, work samples, videotapes, critiques, surveys, and journals. As educators we need to take a broader view of our students' achievement and performance as they relate to individual modes of intelligence. Although the main rationale for assessment seems to centre around the need to determine student achievement and whether or not individuals have met music curriculum outcomes, the rationale runs even deeper. Evaluation and assessment provide music teachers with much needed feedback as to the overall effectiveness of their teaching and program planning and helps to target areas where students need further instruction.

Abeles, Hoffer, and Klotman (1994) discuss the importance of assessment and instruction. "Music teachers must spend time thinking about what the most important outcomes of music education are and plan their instruction and assessment strategies accordingly" (p.304). The way a teacher plans to instruct should affect the assessment techniques used. Teachers who "teach to the test" often do not cover important curriculum outcomes.

Providing a strong rationale for music assessment has been a major thrust of North American music educators in the last ten years. However, when assessment in music creates frustration, music specialists soon ask, "Why assess?" Chiodo (2001) suggests that the reasons are clear. The existence of music curricula and national standards demand that teachers evaluate students to determine their abilities to achieve objectives and outcomes. Assessment aids in the improvement of planning, instruction, and in motivating and reinforcing learning. Assessment is an effective way to communicate achievement and program success to students, parents, and administrators.

The issues of assessment and advocacy are intertwined. "If music educators want music to be equally valued with other core subject areas, evidence of student learning and program strength must be demonstrated through assessment" (Chiodo, 2001, p. 4).

Accountability

Why are we concerned with assessment when we know that the true value of music education lies in the process of learning and not the finished product? Elster (1998) attempts to address this issue by explaining that the primary challenge that educators face today in music and the arts is the issue of accountability. She believes that most music teachers are proficient in the areas of content and instructional strategies, but struggle with collecting data to verify student learning. "Effective data collection in music occurs when teachers have assessment tools that can get results" (p.6). It is having these assessment tools and understanding how to best measure student achievement that creates the biggest problem for music teachers.

Regardless of this struggle with assessment, Russell (as cited in Elster, 1998) stated in his paper, *Program Evaluation in the Arts*, that even though it is much more difficult to measure or evaluate in the arts, we must find a way to do so. "It may be true that school programs, or curricula, which are evaluated, are also valued, and as a consequence are likely to continue to exist or perhaps even attract more time, more students, more money, or more attention" (p.1).

Many music educators today have already experienced the loss of music programs in their schools due to budget decisions or cuts in allotted time or student numbers. Russell's argument entails that we must fight to prove the value of music education and in doing so we must take another look at assessment and evaluation. If we can

demonstrate what our students have learned, the importance of that knowledge, and the value of music education through the concrete data of assessment, our programs will prosper.

Assessment data is more often referred to as student documentation amongst music teachers. Smithrim (2000) explains, "Documentation is a key element in supporting assessment strategies. Although documentation takes time, money and attention, the specific details it provides students, parents and administrators is important for program strength and progress" (p. 217). Smithrim uses the example of videotaping, audiotaping, and photographing students as effective ways to document arts assessment. Recognizing the difficulty that this documentation presents to students, Smithrim suggests the teachers solicit parents and community volunteers to aid in the classroom. She goes on to suggest that combined with observation and anecdotal reporting, documentation of assessment strategies which are "rich in context, respect diversity, encourage different ways of exhibiting different strengths and develop the abilities of self-assessment" (p. 218) are critical for creating high standards in music education.

Statement of Significance

When educators engage in the implementation of assessment, they have "a commitment to the habit and practice of looking back in order to forge ahead" (Zessoules & Gardner, 1991, p. 55). We cannot make progress in music assessment without understanding where we have come from.

Some music educators believe that music learning and teaching are very difficult or seemingly impossible to assess. When teachers possess the musical knowledge of the

curriculum however, and can effectively present it to students, the foundation for building

assessment has already been established.

Although assessment cannot capture all the learning moments and exciting

performance experiences in music, we learn valuable information about our students and

ourselves through assessing. In recent years music teachers have been exposed to many

rationales for assessment presented by arts advocates, theorists and music educators.

Understanding the roles and functions of assessment, recognizing assessment as a critical

component of effective teaching and responding to government, and divisional and public

concerns regarding program accountability have been accepted by most music teachers.

The inherent struggle with assessment tends to lie with discovering what really

works, how to get it to work, and finding out if the assessment is meaningful to students

and teachers. Music educators Brummett and Haywood (1997) suggest that music

teachers, "re-examine and revise traditional assessment techniques in music, and search

for an 'authentic' approach that views the teaching, learning and evaluating as a

continuum" (p. 5).

Music teachers need to be at the very center of the development of assessment in

their programs. In order for this to happen teachers' feelings about assessment in music

and their current assessment techniques need to be explored. Teachers need the

opportunity to discuss and share with each other what assessment strategies they find to

be most effective and how they manage to incorporate assessment into their programs.

The significance of this study is that it will contribute to music education by

providing valuable information about the assessment perspectives and practices of

today's music teachers. This study reports the baseline data upon which we can suggest

possible professional development opportunities, new ideas for teacher training, and guidelines for improved practice.

Statement of Problem

Throughout the last seven years as a music specialist, I have pondered many questions. I have often wondered what it is I am trying to assess and if my assessment practices are real and meaningful to my students. During reporting periods I am undecided as to whether or not I've done enough assessing to get an accurate picture of my students' progress and achievements. When reflecting on my teaching, I question if I have found the tools that work best for me and I am curious about what other music teachers are doing with assessment. When I am struggling to assess my students under stringent time constraints, I have often asked myself if other teachers share my frustrations.

It has been my quest to answer these questions, and that has brought me to my research interest today. Given the importance of assessment, music specialists need to develop assessment tools and strategies for their music programs. The purpose of my study was to examine the assessment perspectives and practices of elementary music teachers in Winnipeg public schools. To this end, my research set out to: (a) determine the amount of instructional time music specialists devote to assessment; (b) identify the tools and strategies that music specialists use in their practice; (c) identify the most effective assessment tools and strategies employed by music specialists; (d) identify the factors affecting assessment practices in the music classroom; and (e) identify the beliefs music teachers hold about assessment.

Delimitations

There is a wealth of literature surrounding student assessment and evaluation that has emerged. The review of the literature was limited to those sources and documents that were most pertinent to music education and addressed the specific area of assessment in music.

This study could have been conducted with all elementary music teachers in the province of Manitoba. To make the study more manageable, cost efficient and less time consuming during the data collection period, the research was conducted with those elementary music specialists situated only in Winnipeg. A study like this could have been augmented with interviews, but was not within the scope of this research. This study involved music teachers at the elementary level only, and did not include music specialists in junior or senior high schools.

Overview of Research Design

This study set out to examine elementary music teachers' perceptions of practices, and experiences with assessment. A descriptive research methodology was selected because the study involved the collection of subjects' beliefs, attitudes, and practices. Descriptive research "focuses on making careful, highly detailed observations or measurements of educational phenomena" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999, p. 4) Descriptive studies "can be useful for theory building, for helping to shape interventions and for helping to understand the practices of a target or focus group" (Gersten, n.d., p.1).

Descriptive research involves instrumentation for measurement and observation. A survey was developed as the main data collection instrument for this study. After its initial creation, the survey was piloted with a small test group, revisions were made, and

the survey was mailed to 190 elementary music teachers. The survey instrument enabled

the researcher to collect data from a total population. Following collection of the surveys,

data analysis was conducted and the results and conclusions of the study were presented.

Definitions

The following list, arranged alphabetically, consists of terms used in this study:

Alternative assessment, authentic assessment, and *performance-based assessment,*

"are used interchangeably to refer to assessments that require students to generate their

responses rather than choose them. These types of assessment strategies require students

to accomplish significant tasks using prior knowledge, recent learning, and relevant skills

to solve authentic or real-world tasks. The assessment techniques go beyond traditional

paper-and-pencil tasks utilizing such alternative assessment ideas as performances,

investigations and portfolios" (Farrell, 1994, p. 2).

Assessment is the "collection, analysis, interpretation and application of

information about student performance or program effectiveness in order to make

educational decisions" (Asmus, 1999, p. 21).

Assessment tools/strategies are ideas, activities, tasks, and items that teachers use

to assess students. These tools might include journals, compositions, concept maps,

photographs, and so on. Assessment tools are divided into three categories for the

purpose of this study: teacher-created, student-based, and technology-based tools and

strategies.

Benchmarks are descriptions that provide information for measuring a student's

progress towards an established standard. (Music Educators National Conference,

1996b).

Criterion-referenced assessment involves "determining the value of a student's performance by comparing it to an absolute standard or specific requirement established prior to the student's performance" (Boyle & Radocy, 1987, p. 76).

A criterion is a description of the standard of performance for an assigned task.

Evaluation is "the collection of information involving the judgment or decision regarding the worth, quality, or value of experiences, procedures, activities or individual or group performances as they relate to some educational endeavor" (Boyle & Radocy, 1989, p. 7).

Measurement is the "use of systematic methodology to observe musical behaviors in order to represent the magnitude of performance capability, task completion, and concept attainment" (Asmus, 1999, p. 21).

Norm-referenced assessment is when a learner's achievement is evaluated in relation to that of others.

Outcomes-based assessment involves students being assessed on their ability to meet predetermined and specific music learning outcomes that reflect skills, processes, or concepts related to the curriculum.

Self-assessment is the analysis of one's own performances or abilities.

A *standard* represents the "desired qualities, criteria or characteristics that provide a basis for assessment or evaluation" (Radocy, 1995, p. 20).

Standards-based assessment is assessment that is "established from school, district, state or national standards of content and performance in a subject" (Asmus, 1999, p.21).

A *test* is "a tool used to collect information about the extent to which an individual demonstrates a specific behavior or set of behaviors" (Boyle & Radocy, 1989, p. 5).

Traditional assessment refers to the "most commonly used assessment tools of the recent past, namely, those tools that require the student to restate knowledge or skill outside a situational context" (Fransen, 1998, p. 17).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Assessment in the arts has been a highly discussed topic among educators in recent years. Music teachers now recognize that assessment plays an essential role in developing effective music programs. Assessment issues revolve around helping students to learn and improving the way educators teach. Assessment also involves issues associated with advocacy and curriculum expectations in music programs. Music teachers may have been insecure about assessment in the past, but recent literature has demonstrated that music educators are addressing the challenges of assessment, building on past strengths, and developing new ideas for the creation of new tools and strategies.

One is able to find a wealth of research and literature resources in the area of arts assessment. Today's theorists, teachers, and musicians have published much information surrounding the ideas of authentic assessment and alternative approaches – specifically in the field of music education. Music coalition groups in the United States and Canada have released several publications related to the national standards movement to provide assessment resources for music teachers.

Having previously discussed reasons for music assessment and defined music assessment, the purpose of this literature review is threefold. First, the National Standards movement in the United States, reform in Canadian music education, and current curriculum and assessment practices in Manitoba will be discussed. Second, the guidelines and characteristics of effective assessment will be identified. Finally, traditional and alternative strategies and tools that can be implemented in elementary music classes today will be described.

The U.S. National Standards Movement

There are benefits of effective assessment: the ability to clearly judge our own performance with courage and compassion and the ability to base decisions on personal standards …If we keep these long term benefits in mind when we create our curriculum and assessment models, we will not go wrong. (Hanley & Roberts, 2000, p. 222)

Today, attention to assessment and evaluation amongst music educators has become a critical matter. Many questions are raised in regards to what should be assessed and how things should be assessed in music education. One of the most prominent questions asked is, who decides the standards on which we base our assessment in music, and what are they? It was the issue of "standards" for music education that sparked a movement in the United States in the early 1990s.

The National Association for Music Education (MENC) is an American organization that has been a strong voice concerning music advocacy in music education. At the heart of this advocacy issue was assessment. The MENC believed that some public schools in certain states were providing excellent music programs, while other schools were struggling due to a lack of clear curriculum goals and systematic assessment.

In an attempt to improve the quality of music education in American public schools, the MENC produced a document called *The School Music Program: A New Vision*. This 1994 publication presented a description of the K-12 national standards and what they meant to music educators. At this time, the standards were voluntary and had been created in response to the American Federal Government's bill "Goals 2000:

Educate America Act". This bill recognized music as a curricular area, in which all

students need to demonstrate proficiency (Music Educators National Conference, 1996b).

As the standards movement continued in the United States, the MENC released its

next publication, *Performance Standards for Music Grades Pre K – 12: Strategies and

Benchmarks for Assessing Progress Towards the National Standards* (1996b). The

primary purpose of this publication was to help teachers, schools, school districts, and

states with assessment strategies and the interpretation of the music content standards.

The publication was geared towards helping teachers determine whether their students

were meeting the standards or not. Although the national content and achievement

standards are voluntary, the MENC hoped that these initiatives would encourage most

states to adopt the suggested framework.

The beliefs and assumptions presented in this publication concerning performance

standards and assessment are stated as follows:

1. Every student can learn music.

2. Music instruction should begin in the pre-school years.

3. Assessment in music is not only possible but necessary.

4. The purpose of assessment is to improve learning.

5. Assessment of student learning is not synonymous with evaluation of
   teaching or evaluation of instructional programs.

6. Assessment in music requires various techniques in various
   settings.

7. Reports to parents should be based on standards.

8.   Caution is needed in interpreting assessment results. (Music Educators

National Conference, 1996a, p.16)

Based on a rubric of three achievement levels – basic, proficient, and advanced

performance, the assessment strategies reflect the achievement standards and can be

modified for all stages of learning. However, two of the limitations of these assessment

strategies include a difficulty in making appropriate distinctions between the levels, and

the inability of some teachers to provide appropriate learning experiences in order for

students to demonstrate their proficiency (Music Educators National Conference, 1996b).

While the standards movement was in full force during the nineties, MENC

(1996a) released a third publication entitled *Aiming for Excellence: The Impact of the

Standards Movement on Music Education*. Based on a series of papers presented at a

Music Educators' National Conference at the University of Michigan in 1996, this essay

collection addressed a variety of questions. What are the effects of standards at the State

level? What are the effects in the music classroom, on teacher education and professional

development? What are the effects of standards on assessment practices? What is next

in educational reform?

Shuler (1996b), Boyle (1996) and Colwell (1996) contributed papers to this key

publication. Shuler believes that National Standards have had an impact on three areas of

assessment – teacher assessment, program assessment, and student assessment. He feels

that the Standards have helped teachers to clarify what they need to assessment, but have

also increased a public awareness of what students need to learn. Music teachers are now

more susceptible to criticism and need to be accountable for student learning. Shuler

explains that, "for teachers to be able to teach the Standards, they must have mastered the

Standards themselves" (p. 83). The National Standards have played an important role in teacher evaluation by providing a framework of skills that teachers need to be able to model in order to successfully teach and evaluate their students.

Many music educators have found that parents and administration have measured the success of their music programs solely on public performances. Constantly preparing for performances often limits the amount of music curriculum covered. The National Standards have now validated, "a broader definition of what quality music programs do" Shuler, 1996b, p. 86). This has provided music teachers with the curriculum support and guidance to move beyond performance-oriented goals and to develop more balanced and stronger programs.

Shuler (1996b) goes on to point out that the National Standards have had the greatest impact on student assessment. Music educators are now encouraged to collect data on student achievement in areas they might not have previously assessed. The introduction of new assessment strategies has enabled teachers to evaluate difficult content areas such as improvisation and composition. He feels that the Standards have encouraged music specialists to think "outside the box" when it concerns student assessment. Educators are now considering alternatives to standardized testing and have begun the process of "inventing quality assessment" (p. 87-88).

Boyle (1996) believes that the National Standards have brought forward the issue of evaluation and assessment with a new found focus on developing assessment strategies that improve teaching and learning. He suggests that teachers need to re-think "the balance between objective and subjective assessments" in their music programs and

argues the need to compare student achievement in our schools to those in other schools and districts (p. 114).

Although the National Standards have encouraged the continued growth and development of assessment in music, Boyle believes that the "voluntary" nature of the Standards is severely limiting in its' overall impact on music education in the United States. "When teachers are not mandated to teach to the nine content areas and do not hold the Standards as ideals, music programs will lack effectiveness" (1996a, p. 114). In Boyle's opinion, music teachers must successfully assess whether students have achieved the intended student outcomes or there is no valid way to measure the strength of music education.

Colwell (1996) seems to support Boyle's opinion that the National Standards need to be mandated for all states. He explains that:

> failure to adopt curriculum frameworks that reflect the nine content standards (singing alone and with others a varied repertoire of music, performing on instruments alone and with others a varied repertoire of music, improvising melodies-variations-accompaniments, composing and arranging music within specified guidelines, reading and notating music, listening to and analyzing music, evaluating music and music performances, understanding relationships between music -the other arts- and disciplines outside the arts, understanding music in relation to history and culture) causes difficulties for assessment and teacher education". (p. 121)

Colwell sites several examples of states that have adopted only three or four of the nine National Standards and explains that these music education programs are

incomplete. He suggests that music teachers across the United States need to assess what they know is successful concerning the Standards and what isn't working. Colwell raises criticisms related to the Standards three-point assessment levels of "basic", "proficient", "advanced" and indicates that many music teachers cannot demonstrate their own competency in all Standards areas. He encourages music educators to keep talking about assessment, teacher training, and to challenge small structural errors of the Standards, but not to "short-change" music programs by failure to adopt the National Standards.

Following the development of the National Standards, the U.S. Department of Education sponsored the first comprehensive National Assembly of Educational Progress in the Arts (NAEP) in 1997. Known as the "Nation's Report Card", the NAEP purpose was to provide a representative cross section of what students across the United States knew in dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts. A representative sample of 6,600 students from 268 public and private schools were measured "in their ability to demonstrate mastery of the National Standards in three artistic processes: creating new art, performing existing art, and responding to art as a member of the audience" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003, p.1).

Due to budget shortfalls, the 1997 NAEP was conducted only with eighth-grade students rather than the intended 4th, 8th and 12th grade student plan. The lack of dance programs resulted in the removal of dance from the arts areas targeted for assessment. Regardless of these changes, Phillips (2000) claims that the NAEP arts assessment was necessary to define what it means to be "arts literate" and the processes for determining students who have achieved those expectations.

The NAEP established new ground for measuring student achievement in a large-scale assessment using authentic measures. In addition, "The NAEP demonstrated that the arts could be assessed using innovative performance-based methods that employed new technology to gather evidence" (Phillips, 2000, p. 4). This effort produced a wealth of information about what eighth-grade students could do in music, theatre, and the visual arts. According to Phillips, it was also "a powerful engine for change" informing the public about the value of arts education" (p. 6).

Music education reform based on initiatives to improve programs through set standards, improve accountability, and define a federal – state partnership in education continues in the U.S. The impact of the National Standards has been felt across the United States border as Canadians have begun to re-evaluate their music curricula. Canadians are now considering nation-wide standards and have started to address the issue of assessment.

Music Assessment in Canada

The Canadian Music Educators Association (CMEA), a parallel Canadian professional organization to MENC, is also working to change the face of curriculum and assessment in music education in Canada. The most influential document, *Achieving Musical Understanding: Concepts and Skills for Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 8* (2000), was developed in collaboration with the Coalition for Music Education in Canada. It provides an in-depth description of what constitutes quality music curriculum for grades K – 8 and offers school boards across Canada a framework to develop "a balanced, comprehensive and sequential curriculum in music" (p.1). Although the Standards clearly

outline the elements of music to be taught within each grade, unfortunately, the document does not offer any assessment strategies for music educators.

Traditionally, music assessment in Canadian schools has been very product-oriented, as many teachers base evaluation or testing on the finished product or performance. Over time, music specialists have come to understand that authentic assessment involves measuring the child's process of learning as well as the finished product. The field of assessment, therefore, has undergone much reform in the past decade and music teachers continue to question issues concerning assessment. In addition, they are active in developing more effective strategies and tools for their programs. To have a better understanding of where we are going with music assessment in the future, it is important to recognize where we have been.

The topic of evaluation in music was brought to national attention in Canada during the Queen's University Symposium on Evaluation in Music Education in February 1990. According to Beatty (2000), "the results of the symposium suggested that widely divergent practices in assessment and evaluation existed in music education in Canada" (p. 195). Similar to the beliefs and assumptions published by MENC concerning assessment and evaluation, the following statement was drafted in an attempt to develop unity concerning assessment and evaluation in Canada.

1. All learning fundamental to achieving the goals of education must be evaluated.

2. Evaluation should be learner-centered and contribute to student growth.

3. Evaluation should reflect the objectives of the music program.

4. All dimensions of musical learning including attitudes, values, aesthetic responses, and critical judgment should be evaluated.

5. Evaluation should include a variety of planned qualitative and quantitative procedures which enable teachers and students to assess progress, improve instruction, monitor program effectiveness and provide a basis for reporting.

6. Evaluation should be an on-going systematic process using formative and summative techniques.

7. Student self-evaluation should be an integral part of the evaluation process. (Bates, 1992, p. 3-5)

Shortly after the Queen's Symposium, The Canadian Music Educators Association created a Task Force in 1991. The goal of the National task force on Evaluation in Music Education was to develop projects in evaluation and to suggest curriculum standards for music education. "Sub-committees in the areas of individual student assessment, evaluation of music classes and ensembles, program evaluation, and the role of the teacher were formed" (Fransen, 1998, p. 31-32). The CMEA played an important role in developing music standards for grades K-8 in 2000 and grade 9-12 in 2002, but needs to continue making its voice heard concerning assessment in the 21st century.

Canadian music educators continue to keep themselves updated with assessment research and attempt to practice authentic and effective assessment in their programs. There has been a nation-wide attempt to revise or create new curriculum documents from province to province. As music educators and curriculum writers work together to develop provincial documents, efforts are being made to focus on both

outcome-based curriculums and assessment frameworks. Although there is increased

activity across the provinces concerning curriculum and assessment, Canada has yet to

present a shared vision for music education. Provinces have been left to set the direction

for their own music programs at both divisional and government levels.

Curriculum and Assessment in Manitoba

Currently working with an outdated music curriculum *Music K-6* (Manitoba

Department of Education, 1978), music educators in Manitoba await patiently for a

revision. The revision of the provincial curriculum guide must encompass the

development of clearly defined outcomes, as well as provide assessment tools and outline

authentic evaluation techniques for today's music classroom. Although work on a new

provincial music curriculum has begun, much groundwork has been laid by music

teachers, consultants, and music advocates working at local divisional levels in

Winnipeg.

Individual school divisions began to address the need for a set of music learning

outcomes for the purpose of guiding and standardizing assessment and evaluation. By

2001, three Winnipeg school divisions – Fort Garry Division #5, River-East Division #9

and Transcona-Springfield Division #12, had worked with a facilitator – Dr. Francine

Morin of the University of Manitoba to create curriculum and assessment documents. Dr.

Morin and a sub-committee of co-coordinators and teachers re-fashioned the current

legislated K-6 music curriculum "to reflect new outcomes, curriculum models and

content areas deemed developmentally appropriate by the profession, (i.e., Music

Educators National Conference, 1996: Waterloo Country Board of Education, 1995), as

well as music curriculum and instruction practices in the divisional context" (Morin, 2001, p. 1).

As a member of the Transcona-Springfield School Division sub-committee, our group successfully created two documents. *General and Specific Outcomes for Grades 1-5 Music* (Morin, 2001) provided a new curriculum framework that was outcome-based for Transcona music teachers to follow. A second document titled *Music Development Profiles: Grades One to Five* (Morin, 2001) was prepared to assist and support music teachers with assessment and record keeping. With a focus on five curriculum areas in elementary music (performance skills, music literacy, critical listening and reflection, creative idea development, and interdisciplinary connections), the goal of the Transcona committee was, "for all learners across the division to strive for and attain the same high, consistent standards of achievement" (p. 1).

The "Art" of Assessment

Having outlined the strongest reform movements affecting assessment practices in North America today, one must then examine how to assess. The "art" of assessment encompasses the guidelines music teachers should consider when assessing, characteristics of effective assessment, and the many tools and strategies educators can utilize in the practice.

It is important for every teacher to develop their own guidelines that will support assessment practices within their individual music programs. Although Canada has not yet suggested or published a set of guidelines for assessment in music, the MENC guidelines are practical and have been adapted and modified to suit the needs of many teachers and school divisions in Canada.

1.   Assessment should be standards-based and should reflect the music

     skills and knowledge that are most important for students to learn.

2.   Assessment should support, enhance, and reinforce learning.

3.   Assessment should be reliable.

4.   Assessment should be valid.

5.   Assessment should be authentic.

6.   The process should be open to review by interested parties. (Music

Educators National Conference, 1996b, p. 7-9)

Music teachers have often opted for summative assessment, "which generally

takes place after a period of instruction and requires making a judgment about the

learning that has occurred" (Boston, 2003, p. 1). An example of summative assessment

would involve teaching a unit on the composer Beethoven and determining the students'

understanding of the information by grading or scoring a test or paper. While many

educators are highly focused on testing and summative assessment, recent trends have led

teachers towards more formative assessment.

"The diagnostic use of assessment to provide feedback to students and teachers

over the course of instruction is called formative assessment" (Boston, 2003, p. 1).

Formative assessment helps to create instructional directions, motivates performance, and

provides the diagnostic feedback necessary for teachers to evaluate and then

communicate that progress to students and parents. Assessment becomes formative when

the information is used to adapt teaching and learning to meet student needs. Research

findings of Black and William (as sited in Boston) found that, "efforts to strengthen

formative assessment produce significant learning gains" (p. 2). Music educators have

discovered that feedback given to students helps learners to become aware of any gaps that exist between their academic goals and their current knowledge and skills. Colwell (2002) suggests that ongoing assessments "must show the importance of thinking that occurs in reacting to music experiences" (p. 1154). Formative assessment is an excellent tool to aid teachers in making responsive changes in teaching and learning.

Music teachers need to take issues of reliability and validity into consideration when selecting assessment methods. The integrity of music education as an academic course of study depends upon assessment techniques that yield results that are not questionable. If there is doubt as to how reliable or valid music assessment is, the assessment provides little value in determining student understanding or achievement.

Several music educators have provided educators with their definitions of reliability and validity. Ables, Hoffer and Klotman (1994) offer the following explanations related to the measurement of musical ability. "Reliability focuses on the consistency and stability of a test or scale. When measurements are consistent over several data collections, they are said to have high reliability" (p. 306). Validity, simply put, is how well a good test measures the trait it claims to measure. It is important for educators to understand the close relationship between reliability and validity. If results are inconsistent then the assessment is not valid. These scholars go on to say that assessment that is reliable may not necessarily be valid if it isn't a good indicator of student understanding.

Measurement and Evaluation

Boyle and Radocy (1987) describe reliability and validity as critical measurements for music testing. They suggest that providing proper testing conditions

and clear instructions can strengthen reliability. Three types of validity are content, predictive, and construct validity. An effective test is high in content validity because it contains a balanced representation of the instructional content just like performance achievement test should be based on what the student was expected to study and practice. Predictive validity is the extent to which one form of measurement or assessment can accurately predict the outcome of another measurement. Construct validity is less used in the measurement of musical behavior due to the length and difficulty in establishing constructs. "A construct is a somewhat abstract concept or organizational perception of a psychological trait" (p. 71). Students can construct musical ability, aural perceptions, and various other traits for themselves, and the ability of a measure to yield results predicted by these constructs is construct validity.

More recent types of validity have emerged to better present the value of certain forms of assessment. Consequential validity involves an idea that questions the consequences for students who succeed or fail on the assessment in comparison to the consequences for the school. Sometimes failing on some assessment measures can have greater consequences for students than passing them. "Systemic validity involves examining systemic changes in how students are educated" (Colwell, 2002, p. 1139-1140). Adopting new programs and revising school structures requires assessment for these changes. The ability of the chosen assessment to effectively demonstrate major change is systemic validity.

When selecting criteria for effective assessment methods, choosing assessments that are consistent (reliable) and assessments that test what they are designed to test (validity) are important. Music teachers must use identical procedures and have the same

expectations for each student in every class. Reliability also means that another music teacher testing the same child will get consistent responses to those of the original teacher. Assessments are only valid if they measure what they are intended to measure. According to Paul Lehman (1998), "It is unfair to grade students on criteria not based on written curricula, explicit objectives, goal-driven teaching materials, systemic instruction, and valid assessment strategies" (p. 15).

Developing assessment tools that are reliable and valid are two key components of effective assessment. Ensuring assessment that is "authentic" is another element that contributes to successful teaching practices. When assessment tools test the essential nature of the knowledge or skill under review by the teacher, the task is considered authentic.

There has been much said about the importance of educators using authentic assessment as an alternative to traditional approaches. The importance of integrating assessment within the learning process, as opposed to using "standardized" testing, has opened the door to a wealth of new tools and ideas. "Advocates of alternate modes of assessment want to move closer to modeling developmental learning processes with their assessment tools" (Abeles, Hoffer and Klotman, 1994, p. 320).

Many authentic assessment strategies try to represent "real world" tasks or performances. "Authentic assessment of formal educational outcomes essentially is an assessment procedure based on skills necessary for applying school-based learning in the world beyond the school" (Radocy, 1995, p.19). Music seems to be a subject that lends itself well to authentic assessment and "real world" performances due to its "learning-by-doing" nature. It seems logical to assess a student's ability to play the recorder by having

them actually play – not by giving them a written test on fingering, posture, and breathing technique.

Radocy (1995) believes that two characteristics must be evident in authentic assessment. The existence of evaluation criteria which students clearly understand, and frequent public presentations or sharing of student work is critical. The definite performance-oriented discipline of music can easily encompass these characteristics which are designed to provide the student with a more genuine learning experience. Presentations and performances are excellent ways to demonstrate learning through the application of acquired knowledge in a concrete situation.

In his paper, *Assessing for Success in Music Education*, Beatty (2000) argues that music teachers must embrace authentic assessment and guide their students to "think outside the box" by exploring open-ended problems. Inspiring and motivating students to make their own connections and helping them to develop high-order thinking skills makes learning more meaningful. Wolf (as cited by Beatty, 2000) states that "Authentic assessment provides a powerful qualitative view of students' abilities to formulate new questions, to reflect critically and develop self-knowledge, to pursue work over time, and to arrive at performance standards of excellence" (p. 197).

Arts PROPEL was one of the largest multi-year project aimed at developing qualitative modes of authentic assessment in the arts. A team of researchers from Educational Testing Service, Harvard Project Zero and Pittsburgh Public Schools came together to re-examine instruction and assessment in 1985. Their goal was to explore alternative forms of assessment in music, visual arts, and creative writing. "Our goal was

to make students' learning more visible to the students themselves and to others and, in turn, to make the assessment process itself foster further learning" (Winner, 1992, p.5).

Several researchers including Howard Gardner, Dennie Palmer Wolf, Drew Gitomer, and Kathryn Howard were involved in the project's success. The *Arts PROPEL Handbook for Music* (Winner, 1992) offers a framework for teachers and administrators to adapt production, perception, and reflection (ways of knowing) into instruction and assessment. It introduces three main authentic assessment components which include domain projects, process-folios or portfolios, and reflective interviews. Domain projects such as individual performance projects, ensemble rehearsal critiques, and inventive notation projects involve the development of independent problem solving (Beatty, 2000). Process–folios or portfolio documents contain student work, develop written reflection, and show the stages of student learning (Winner, 1992). The portfolio provides the teacher with an opportunity to understand the development of student thinking processes in order to best understand the planning of effective instruction. According to Wolf, (as cited in Beatty, 2000), the reflective interview allows the student to critique their work, develop a self-awareness of one's learning, and understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Authors of the *Arts PROPEL Handbook for Music* recognize that their ideas about authentic assessment might be difficult to implement considering the many demands placed upon the music teacher. Supporters suggest, however, that individual assessment which includes evidence of production, perception, and reflection will increase educational credibility and foster both student and teacher learning (Winner, 1992, p.14).

Projects such as the Arts PROPEL not only brought the issue of authentic assessment into the public eye, but also began to inspire music teachers. In order to "assess for success", music teachers began to re-think their traditional assessment ideas and began to carve out new plans to gather evidence of student learning which, in turn, could better guide their teaching. Once music educators accepted the rationale for alternative assessments, and embraced the benefits of authentic tasks for students, there was a need to understand the structure, logistics, and characteristics of this new undertaking.

Farrell (1994) outlines the common characteristics of authentic assessment as: (a) involving "worthy" tasks from the "real" world that require knowledge in use; (b) not relying on unrealistic and arbitrary time constraints; (c) being more appropriately public, involving an audience or a panel; (d) offering known, not secret, questions or tasks; (e) extending over a time period like portfolios or a "season" of games (not a one-shot); (f) requiring some collaboration and co-operation with others; (g) recurring – and are worth practicing for, rehearsing, and re-doing; (h) making assessment to students central; and (i) allowing students to test in life what they have learned in drills. (p. 3)

As music teachers begin to employ various assessment strategies, there needs to be a clear understanding of which strategies are used to examine student processes of learning and student products. Conferences, interviews, journals, learning logs, student self-evaluation, and teacher observations are some authentic tasks used to evaluate the "process" of learning. Essays, projects with rating criteria, surveys, solo and ensemble

performances, and attitude inventories provide teachers with tools to assess finished end-products of student achievement (Farrell, 1994).

Establishing a true, authentic classroom culture for authentic assessment is also critical. Farrell (1994) draws on Gardner's research to identify four classroom conditions that are important for authentic assessment. Teachers must first nurture complex understanding. Students must be encouraged to think critically, take responsibility, and present their own ideas as musicians. Second, teachers must develop reflective thinking among students as a habit of mind. The more students can reflect upon their work, the more insight they gain about themselves as active learners. Third, the documentation of students' evolving understandings must occur to provide evidence of students' changing abilities. Finally, teachers must make use of assessment as a moment of learning. Treating authentic assessment as a part of the ongoing learning process and integrating it into daily instruction helps yields the most effective results.

Once music teachers have identified assessment that is standards-based, valid, reliable, authentic in nature, and supports and reinforces learning, decisions need to be made in terms of specific assessment tools and strategies. Some music teachers may choose to test traditionally, while others may use only alternative assessment methods that are deemed more authentic. A final option involves the specialists whose program reflects a balance of both traditional and alternative modes of assessment.

Research Related to Music Teachers' Assessment Perspectives and Practices

A search was conducted of dissertation abstracts, ERIC, and music education/research websites to locate studies related to music teachers' assessment perceptions and practices. Key terms used throughout the computer search included

"teachers' perspectives on music assessment", "assessment practices in music", and "teachers' perspectives on assessment". Although the search uncovered several studies related to teacher perceptions and assessment practices in other disciplines, only one 1994 study was found in the field of music.

A research team led by Dr. Roberts (1994) conducted a cross-Canada assessment study with high-school music programs. A questionnaire was sent to 1500 high school teachers in different provinces. The teachers responded to questions about their academic backgrounds, learning and assessment priorities, assessment methods, and record keeping strategies. Although the response rate was only 35% (527 surveys), all provinces were represented and conclusions were drawn in each survey area. Performances, individual, and group projects were listed as the top assessment methods used in high school music programs across Canada (Roberts, 1994).

"Tools of the Assessment Trade"

Tests have long been the assessment practice of traditional music programs and there are many types that are used today. Radocy (1995) states that, "considerable expertise exists regarding item construction, enhancing test reliability and validity, and standardizing tests to make the scores interpretable in relation to a designated population" (p. 23). Some music specialists, however, would argue that true "assessment" is the process of gathering information to meet a variety of evaluation needs, while testing is a uni-dimensional measurement (Farrell, 1994). Boyle and Radocy (1987) also acknowledge some of the limitations of testing as: (a) providing a sample of an individual's behavior under specific conditions; (b) assessing behaviors rather than intelligence, ability, or achievements; (c) too much focus on preparing and teaching to the

test and claims that testing programs raise and maintain educational standards. Regardless of the pros and cons, educators continue to utilize traditional test methods, but need to interpret the data with test limitations in mind.

When selecting tests as assessment tools, music teachers need to consider the behavior being measured and what they intend to do with test results. Most music teachers are concerned with assessing the outcomes of their instruction. In order to determine the level of mastery each student has achieved concerning skills and concepts presented in units of instruction, teacher-made achievement tests are created. "Such tests are used by teachers to assess in a class and to help determine the effectiveness of various modes of instruction" (Abeles, Hoffer & Klotman, 1994, p. 309). Standardized achievement tests are also created when there is a desire to compare the skill levels of students in one school to those in another school or across the country.

Boyle and Radocy (1987) refer to three specific types of tests in their research: norm-referenced tests, criterion-referenced tests, and objectives-referenced tests. Norm-referenced testing occurs when a relative standard is employed and people are compared with each other. Music festivals utilize a norm-referenced approach as students perform towards supposedly specific standards of achievement but are inevitably compared with one another. Criterion-referenced tests, according to Glaser (as cited in Boyle and Radocy, 1987), are tests that make comparisons with an absolute standard as opposed to a relative standard found in norm-referenced tests. Finally, in an objectives-referenced test, tests are based on specific one-to-one correspondence with objectives. Most often used to evaluate instructional programs, objectives-referenced tests report the percentages of people who can attain specific objectives.

Although music educators may use traditional types of testing in their music programs, there has been a great movement towards the use of tools that use criteria for judging student performance. Scoring criteria, guidelines, or rubrics are terms that involve "a description of the dimensions for judging a student performance, a scale of values for rating those dimensions and the standards for judging performance" (Farrell, 1994, p. 14).

Authentic assessment in music often involves judging both the quality and process of arriving at the finished product or task. Developing assessment tools in which the music teacher can consistently apply scoring criteria is critical. Checklists, rubrics, and a variety of rating scales have found their way into the assessment toolbox of many music educators. Clear, fast, and effective, these tools when properly designed can yield consistent, valid, and informative results.

Checklists consist of a simple *yes* or *no* rating by the teacher based on whether a student can demonstrate a skill or not. The checklist can be a list of dimensions, elements, activities, characteristics, or behaviors that may occur during a single or group event (Farrell, 1994). Chiodo (2001) suggests that busy music teachers can assess an entire class in minutes by utilizing a three-point checklist scale where minus (-) equals inadequate work, a check mark (√) is satisfactory work and a (+) indicates work that exceeds the standards. Furthermore, she explains that checklists are helpful when assessing assignments with many steps to completion. She suggests five steps in creating checklists for the music teacher:

1.   Select the assessment task that the student is doing.

2.   Analyze the task and determine the components involved.

3.   List the components across the top of the form and the student's name
down the left side of the checklist.

4.   Have students perform the assessment task.

5.   Utilize the checklist to evaluate and record student achievement of the
task. (p. 6)

Although checklists provide an efficient way to record observational data, many
teachers will find the "yes-no" response fails to offer enough detailed information. Scott
(2001) argues that when music teachers struggle to assess students in the process of
acquiring performance skills, educators must look beyond the checklist to rubrics and
rating scales.

Rubrics are assessment tools that are generally defined as having clear rules,
guidelines, or standards. Rubrics have been popular assessment tools for many music
teachers as they can clarify performance objectives, help to focus student effort, and are
extremely motivating for academic achievement (Colwell, 2000). Rubrics foster student
learning as they explain the steps and outline the process of acquiring skills and concepts
for students.

According to Chiodo (2000), there are four essential elements that rubrics must
contain. First, rubrics are based on standards of achievement so before writing the rubric
the learning objective must be identified. Second, the learning objective or task needs to
be broken down into its components and students must be aware of what to do to succeed
at each stage. These components are the criteria against which teachers judge the quality
of student work. Third, rubrics tend to have four levels of quality of student achievement,
yet this is at the discretion of the teacher. Finally, rubrics contain detailed descriptions of

student work at each level and enable teachers to measure students according to appropriate achievement stages.

Many music educators have found that writing rubrics with a class not only helps students take an interest in their learning, but also encourages them to take ownership and responsibility for their assessment. Eppink (2000) provides guidelines for teachers to help their students create fair rubrics for achievement assessment. Teachers must set clear objectives by focusing on the skill or objective and writing down the components needed to master the skill. A decision should be made concerning who will write the rubric. Teachers should provide examples but allow each student to write their own rubrics and then work together. When implementing the rubric, have students perform the skill and then practice using the rubric. Finally, assess the rubric and take time independently and with your class to revisit its effectiveness.

Through her extensive research on assessment tools, Scott (2002) found that using skill-based rubrics to assess student achievement and mastery helps teachers to improve their own practice. Rubrics can aid in clarifying instruction. She asserts, "Their primary benefits are their facility for recording observations in a way that is accessible to both teachers and students and their suitability to both teachers and students proficiencies is a wide range of skills associated with learning in music" (p. 21).

Another useful measurement tool in elementary music is the rating scale. Numerical rating scales use numbers or points on a continuum performance. The number or points along the scale can vary in length although larger scales often make assessment more difficult as it is a struggle to differentiate student achievement among many points. Farrell (1994) contends that scales with less points tend to present fewer differences

between student abilities and yield inadequate information for teachers. Similarly, Popham (as cited in Scott, 2001) refers to scales with few numerical points as hyper-general rating scales, "one in which the evaluative criteria are described in exceedingly general terms" (p. 8). Although these scales are easy to create and are useful for quick assessment, more skill-specific rating scales can contribute greater detailed data.

Lange (1999) explains that music teachers can create both additive and continuous rating scales. Similar to a checklist, one point is assigned for each criterion a student achieves. Continuous rating scales resemble a hierarchy model in which each criterion is built upon the next criteria with the highest level of achievement matching the highest number on the scale. If a continuous rating scale consists of ten levels, a student who measures a ten is proficient in all nine levels of achievement before the tenth criteria.

Rating scales that are qualitative in nature use adjectives rather than numbers to characterize student performance. These types of scales are often found on report cards and can be described as evaluative. Farrell (1994) states that "descriptive scales label student performance but don't necessarily make explicit the standard underlying the judgment while evaluative scales incorporate judgments of worth grounded in underlying standards of excellence" (p. 16).

Regardless of the different types of rating scales, there are a variety of uses for these assessment tools. Students can be rated both individually or in small groups. Rating scales may be given to students for self-assessment to improve awareness of their abilities. Using rating scales are particularly helpful for teachers who are identifying "trends" in musical behaviors. In Lange's (1999) opinion, a typical, busy music teacher

can discover that more teaching time is needed on a particular skill when her students rate low on several assessments.

In their research, Webster and Hickey (1995) used rating scales to assess children's compositions. Webster and Hickey created two kinds of scales (explicit and implicit) to measure music content that was specific and global. Explicit items on the scale were very descriptive, while implicit items were more vague and open to interpretation. These researchers found that the implicit rating scale was very reliable when rating global music content because judges appreciated the subjectivity when making decisions. The explicit scale was most predictive when rating the constructs of originality, creativity, and aesthetic value. The results of the study discovered that rating scales can be viewed as valid assessment tools for musical quality in children's compositions.

In addition to tests, checklists, rubrics, and scales, teachers informal assessment practices are widely popular among educators due to their more unobtrusive nature. "The intent of unobtrusive measurement is to assess situations and/or individuals without the risk of evoking responses that may be characteristic only in an assessment situation" (Boyle & Radocy, 1987, p. 226). When students become aware that they are being assessed, there are often negative consequences. Test anxiety and other behaviors may evolve during formal assessment thus distorting the normal response that a student would ordinarily demonstrate in a learning situation.

Many music teachers partake in systematic observation, whereby they observe classroom behaviour and record observations. It is critical to develop an observation system to record the behaviors in a consistent manner. Seating charts and anecdotal notes

are a quick way for teachers to locate each student for observation of individual achievement of skills and concepts. Lange (2000) describes how seating charts can be dated and labeled with each skill being observed. As students perform or participate, the teacher can easily record her observations of each child.

Boyle and Radocy (1987) refer to three basic types of systematic observations: sign systems, category systems, and multiple-coding systems. Sign systems involve the observer looking for and recording a list of events that are significant in a brief amount of time. In category systems, the observer records classroom events and categorizes them into particular behaviors such as performance skills and verbal skills. Multiple-coding systems involve the observation and recording of specific events in two or more categories.

Systematic observation can reveal a wealth of information about a student as a "learner" if a teacher can develop observational criteria. Elster (1998) offers her own observational checklist with six categories and several questions to help assess student learning. Her six categories include: learner's engagement, learner's independence, learner's ability to make connections, learner's ability to engage in group dynamic, learner's attitude towards learning, and learner's ability to move forward and make connections. These are broken down into smaller observable behaviors. For example, under the category of learner's independence, two checklist questions ask; "Does the learner ask questions? Does the learner contribute to group work?" (p. 8). Although Elster provides her personal detailed observation checklist, music teachers can easily adapt or change the categories to suit their teaching assessment needs. Regardless of the

system that a music teacher uses to organize data, systematic observation is an excellent tool for understanding student learning and improving instruction.

It is often a combination of both formal and informal assessment tools that enable teachers to best evaluate their students. Searching for tools that reflect authentic learning experiences yet produce reliable and valid information has encouraged music teachers to rethink their traditional assessment methods. Balancing assessment with the challenge of evaluation in music has resulted in the search for alternative assessment approaches.

Alternate Assessment Approaches in Music

The most popular alternative assessment tools created by teachers include: open-ended tasks, projects/exhibitions, culminating exhibitions, individual/group performances, enhanced multiple-choice questions, concept maps, writing tasks, research papers, and technology-supported tasks. Other alternative assessments that embody authentic learning opportunities include self-assessments, peer assessments, student portfolios/process-folios, and conferencing.

Open-ended tasks "challenge students to respond in writing or through musical expression (e.g., composition, performance, movement to music, dramatic interpretation to music, critique, etc.)" (Beatty, 2000, p. 202). The tasks or "problems" must be clearly defined by the teacher, yet multiple responses are accepted. It is the student's ability to reason, solve, and communicate their ideas that is most valued with open-ended tasks.

Farrell (1994) asserts that when task assessments are expanded and involve "defining" the problem, developing a plan, producing a project, and explaining the results, they are referred to as projects or exhibitions. The size and scope of projects are flexible, but require students to demonstrate organization, discipline and, creativity.

Teachers can assess both the learning process and finished product presented through projects or exhibitions, and students take pride in work ownership.

If music teachers develop projects that end with culminating exhibitions, students can be assessed on their ability to perform or present their work as a polished project. Beatty (2000) states that "culminating exhibitions encompass both written and oral skills and students often describe and defend their work to peers, a teacher or a panel of educators" (p. 204).

Individual and group performances can reflect visual, written, musical or oral forms, and students can work both with and without teacher guidance. Farrell (1994) cites a variety of individual and group performances that provide excellent assessment opportunities: visual displays, written reports, panel discussions, dramatic, or musical performances. When students work together on group performances, teachers can assess co-operative learning strategies. When practicing for a performance, "students actively help each other master the material and enjoy the joint success" (Takagi-Keenan, 2000, p. 18).

Traditional multiple choice questions have been criticized for their ability to measure simple factual knowledge and rote learning. Enhanced multiple choice questions however, are teacher-created assessments that assess student knowledge or skills and concepts and their ability to apply these understanding to new concepts. According to Farrell (1994), using comparing and contrasting skills and deductive reasoning, students apply previously learned information to select one correct answer. Scott's (2003) research suggests that although enhanced multiple choice questions are not easy to construct, they

do require a student to, "demonstrate higher-level thinking skills such as inference analysis and interpretation" (p. 4).

In recent years the technique of concept mapping has been developed as a metacognitive tool, yet music teachers have incorporated this alternative assessment into their "tool boxes". Brophy (1996) describes concept mapping or webbing as "one format through which a student's understanding of a particular concept can be exhibited" (p. 22). Students start with a main concept such as "harmony" and write it in the middle of their paper with a circle around it. Lines are drawn outward from harmony and new bubbles of connected ideas and subordinate concepts such as "tonic, dominant and root" are mapped out. Concept maps allow children to demonstrate their conceptual understanding in a non-threatening manner and they can be used to demonstrate "thinking" before and after lessons.

Students are often assigned writing tasks in the form of essays or reports. Written tasks rated according to teacher-specified criteria offer another way for music teachers to determine acquired knowledge in content areas. Susan Farrell (1994) suggests that both critiques and writing choice assignments are excellent opportunities for extended response writing.

Music specialists have made use of technology for a variety of alternative assessment tools. Photographs, tape-recording, and audio and videotaping can be helpful tools when trying to assess large numbers of students in short periods of time. Photographs provide visual evidence of skill acquisition and serve to document behaviour. For example, after a music teacher has taught a skill with several steps such as good posture when singing or playing an instrument, pictures can be taken of students

modeling the skill. Takagi-Keenan (2000) suggests that when students have successfully achieved the skill, their photograph can be displayed as evidence and to promote further discussion between student, teacher, and parents.

Tape-recording students as they are in the process of learning choral or instrumental material enables student to take ownership of their assessment as they can record themselves independently in and out of school. Classroom activities and student performances can be audio and videotaped, offering teachers the ability to teach without the disruption of taking observational notes. Chiodo (2000) identifies one of the major benefits of audio and videotaped assessments as providing the opportunity to, "view the tape after class to apply a rating scale or rubric, even rewinding the tape if necessary to make an accurate judgment" (p. 8). Audio and videotapes can be viewed by students for self, peer, and group assessments and can be incorporated into individual portfolios.

As computer technology continues to advance, various software programs can be used for drill and practice, composition skills, and song recording. Depending on a music teacher's access to school computer labs and advance equipment, computer programs can offer another realistic option for music assessment. Although not an assessment tool, one must make mention of the electronic grade book. Developed in recent years, this computer program has been used by many music teachers as an effective way to manage their assessment records on student achievement.

More recent trends in music assessment show that teachers are placing more responsibility on students to think about what they are learning and how they can improve. The practice of self-assessment involves repeated questioning and reflecting, investigating one's strengths and weaknesses, becoming aware of personal growth and

creative potential, and developing respect for the artistic process. (Farrell, 1994). There are a variety of self-assessment tools that can be employed in the music room. Attitude inventories, surveys, learning logs, and reflective response journals provide a wealth of information and knowledge concerning what students have learned, their challenges, and how teachers can improve instruction to meet individual learning styles. Eichenlaub (1996), for example, researched the use of journals in music. After having her students record their reflections once each week for the majority of the school year, Eichenlaub discovered that she knew her students personalities and learning styles better than former classes. "I could immediately see who understood the concept I was teaching and more importantly, who did not. I learned what they found interesting, what was confusing and what they particularly enjoyed" (p. 41).

Student surveys and questionnaires have also been used to collect assessment information from large numbers of students. Research conducted by Darrow, Johnson, Meeker and Williamson (2002) attempted to explore the predictive value of student self-report questionnaires as a means for assessing the music outcomes of junior high choral students. The research findings suggested that "the reliability correlation was high between self-reports and achievement tests indicating that students seem to know what they do and do not know" (p. 10). Valuable ideas such as these have been taken from both research and classroom experimentation concerning the value of self-assessment. Although self-assessments should not take the place of all other tools for assessment, they help students to become self-directed in their learning and can provide accurate information about what students know.

Peer assessments offer music teachers another avenue in which to involve students in the evaluation of learning. "Peer assessments allow students to collaborate and converse with others through discussion, sharing, and learning from the perceptions of others" (Beatty, 2000, p.200). Working with partners or small groups, students engage in the critique of both finished products and works-in-progress. Music students learn to value the creativity of others and contribute their perspectives when assessing their peers.

Freed-Garrod (1999) is an elementary music specialist who questioned whether her grade three students, if provided the appropriate background and ability to articulate evaluation criteria, could be effective partners with their teacher in evaluating their own and peer compositions. After evaluating individual, peer, and teacher assessment of the student compositions, Freed-Garrod came to the conclusion that students' understanding, reasoning, and creativity increased after their experiences making and judging compositions. Critiquing by peers was also internalized and used by the students in the future and the co-evaluation helped with aesthetic development of musical vocabulary. Freed-Garrod believes that her research supports the value of involving students in their own assessment and that of their peers. Peer, self-evaluation, and open communication between teacher and students helps to "promote a partnership with common goals of excellence, relevance and growth" (Garrod, 1999, p.59).

One of the most authentic, alternative assessment tools introduced to music educators in the 1980's through the Arts Propel project is the portfolio.
A portfolio is best described as a collection of student work in the three stages of learning - prepatory, in-process, and finished product. The portfolio is, "a purposeful collection of student work over a period of time that tells the story of the student's efforts, progress, or

achievement in a given area" (Arter & Spandel, as cited in Beatty, 2000, p.201). Colwell (2002) explains that portfolios "help students to develop concepts, theories, strategies, practices, and beliefs that are consistent with the ways of knowing, arguing and exploring" (p.1150). Traditional portfolios have contained only samples of the owner's best work but portfolios in elementary music are viewed more as "process-folios" showing student work at all stages as it develops over time. "The goal of a general music portfolio is to provide profiles of student development instead of snapshots offered by one-time tests" (Smith, 1997, p.12).

Portfolios house a collection of student works such as research papers, projects, and journals. They can also consist of self and peer evaluations, surveys or inventories, tests, observational data, videotapes, audiotapes, and conference profiles. The portfolio offers a truly comprehensive view of the student as a learner. Umberson (1996) found that her students have the opportunity to create, revise, and reflect upon their work in music through the use of portfolios. Like many music teachers who have the same students for several years, Umberson allows her children to view their portfolios from year to year. "Students recognize and value what they have produced over a number of years…what a treasure it can be to have a composition each year from kindergarten through to grade eight" (Umberson, 1996, p. 15).

Portfolios do not simply store student work. Teachers incorporate portfolios into their instruction as they help students to reflect upon their own creativity to internalize artistic standards and to make critical judgments. Farrell (1994) suggests that teachers review portfolios in one-on-one student conferences. When conferencing, Farrell believes that students need to use the following questions to guide discussion: "Does my work

show development? Have I been effective in expressing myself and sharing what I know? What problems and challenges have I been working on and what strategies have I used in taking them on?" (p. 23)

The purpose of Fransen's (1998) study was to determine an effective process for using student portfolios in the music room and to develop assessment tools appropriate for inclusion. Students ranging from grades four to six participated in a six-week portfolio study and completed exit slips, listening logs, observation responses, video recordings, self assessments, surveys, and conferences. Fransen found the portfolios to be both an effective form of music assessment and a beneficial learning tool for her students. She stated, "In my teaching situation, I am able to see students acquire a deeper level of musical thinking-interest in quality of process and product. My students enjoyed their experience with music portfolios" (p. 81). Although portfolios require intense organization on the part of both teacher and students, portfolios provide a wealth of assessment information and can tell the story of student learning over time.

Conferences can be incorporated into portfolio use or can stand alone as an effective assessment tool. The primary function of conferencing is to establish communication between the teacher, student and in many cases the parents. Varying in length, style and format, conferences can have project, content, or learning process foci (Farrell, 1994). The true value of conferencing is its ability to provide a forum for students and teachers to share classroom learning with parents.

Summation

In order to assess music students successfully, teachers can utilize a variety of tools ranging from traditional testing, checklists, and rating scales to alternative

assessment techniques including self and peer assessments, portfolios, and many teacher-created assessments. To experience effective assessment, music teachers need to find a balance of strategies that they can incorporate into their individual programs which reflect student achievement of curricular goals and objectives.

The task of implementing effective assessment practices in elementary music presents many challenges for music educators. Issues involving contact time with students and a lack of teacher training in authentic assessment strategies continue to present music teachers with great frustration. It seems that these challenges must first be addressed by exploring how today's music teachers are assessing and what tools they find to be most successful.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will outline the purpose of the study, research method and design

utilized, as well as describing the study subjects. The sources of data, collection

procedures, development of the survey instrument, and procedure for data analysis will

be presented. A discussion of the scientific standards related to the study and limitations

of the methodology also follows.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine what perspectives elementary music

teachers have concerning assessment and to discover their particular assessment

practices. Several specific questions were considered in this study: (a) What is the

amount of instructional time music specialists devote to assessment? (b) What tools and

strategies do music specialists use in their practice? (c) What are the most effective

assessment tools and strategies employed by music specialists? (d) What are the factors

that affect music assessment practices in the music classroom? and (e) What beliefs do

music teachers hold about assessment?

Research Method and Design

A descriptive research methodology was selected because the nature of the study

involved the collection of information pertaining to music teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and

assessment practices. "Descriptive research typically use data derived from surveys, case

studies or more qualitative methods for gathering information, generating clearer

questions or needs identification and focuses on specific projects or settings" (Key, 1997,

p.1). Descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the current status of

the phenomenon and to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. "In a descriptive study the nature of the sample and instrumentation are key to understanding the results" (McMillan & Wergin, 2002, p. 13). The type of descriptive research to be used in this study is a field survey.

Study Subjects

The survey in this study was sent to 190 music specialists in the following school divisions located in Winnipeg, Manitoba: River East Transcona; Winnipeg; Seven Oaks; Louis Riel; Pembina Trails, and St. James-Assiniboia. All full and part-time music specialists teaching music in any of the elementary schools found in each of the divisions were invited to participate in the study.

As the focus of this study involved collecting information from one target group – elementary music teachers, a non-probability sample technique was used. The goal of the survey was to yield data from the highest proportion of music teachers in Winnipeg as possible, thus all teachers were approached as subjects.

Data Sources

The main source of data was information contained on the surveys collected from all elementary music teachers who chose to participate in the study.

Data Collection Procedure

Initially a survey instrument was designed, piloted, and later revised. Letters were sent to six music coordinators explaining the importance of the study and asking for a mailing list of all of the schools within their respective divisions which employ elementary music teachers. Upon receipt of the mailing lists from all music coordinators,

surveys were distributed to each teacher at their school. Surveys were sent out in mid-October 2003 and returned by the first week of December 2003.

Returning the survey to the researcher was made possible via a pre-paid and addressed envelope. Other techniques for increasing the survey response rate included a sponsorship cover letter from Professor Francine Morin of the University of Manitoba asking music coordinators to encourage their music teachers to participate in the survey. Follow-up letters from the researcher were sent as reminders for participants to complete the survey if they had not done so by early November.

Due to the anonymity of the surveys, responses were tracked using color coding methods. A different color of survey paper was chosen to represent each of the six school divisions in the study enabling the researcher to know immediately which division the participants had responded from. When the surveys were returned, the researcher was able to determine which school divisions had low response rates thus requiring follow up letters. This tracking method ensured the confidentiality of each participant as no names were recorded or documented in the data. The completed surveys were stored in a locked cabinet that was accessible only to the researcher.

Participants who wanted a copy of the study results included their name and e-mail addresses on a post card provided by the researcher which were later returned with the survey. Due to the nature of this investigation, results were gladly shared with any interested music teachers via e-mail. The music coordinators for each division received a written copy of the study results.

Development of Survey Instrument

When I decided to examine the assessment perspectives and practices of a large focus group of elementary music teachers, developing a survey instrument seemed to present the most logical approach. I began by reviewing a variety of music assessment research which utilized a survey as its central data collection tool. "Survey research is a form of descriptive research that involves collecting information about research participants' beliefs, attitudes, interests, or behaviour through questionnaires, interviews, or paper-and-pencil tests" (Gall, Gall & Borg, 1999, p. 4).

After examining related survey research, I moved next to finding examples of well-developed surveys. Goddard's (1999) survey, an excellent model examining music teachers' and principals' perceptions of music teacher evaluation, contained 28 question items in a clear, presentable, 4-page format. The survey questions were well-balanced with a combination of open and fixed response items. The first portion asked questions about subjects' educational and teaching backgrounds in order to help her form a good understanding of the subjects. A detailed cover letter, consent form, and self-addressed, stamped return envelop, completed the package.

In addition to following other models, I consulted the resource book *Designing Surveys That Work: A Step-by Step Guide*. After selecting my target group of music teachers and identifying the information I wanted to gather concerning assessment, I began to create my survey items.

The first portion of my survey collected demographic information which "describes the characteristics in a study and provides a way to form subgroups in order to make comparisons" (Thomas, 1999, p. 36). By asking questions related to teaching

experience, educational background, current teaching position, details concerning class size, contact time with students, and extracurricular participation, I was able to make some connections between these variables and assessment.

The second section contained 8 fixed-response items. Item #15 is a checklist which asked teachers to simply select the assessment tools and strategies they use, while item #16 asked teachers to rank their top five assessment tools. These items helped me to determine which tools and strategies they use most frequently. Items #17 through to #21 were set up using Likert-type rating scales and focus on a series of belief statements surrounding the value of assessment in music and teacher confidence in their practices. The statements aimed at clarity with the rating anchor found at the top of both pages containing the items. Following the guidelines provided by Thomas (1999), each statement contained only one concept, was concise, avoided a leading question, and was not offensive. The statements met the research needs and there was a balance between positive and negative items. Survey item #22 was designed as an adjective checklist aimed to gather information about how music teachers feel about assessment in elementary music.

The final section of the survey contained open-response items. These items enabled the researcher to "…understand the respondent's thinking about some topic, including reasons or details or both" (Thomas, 1999, p. 46). The open response items appearing on the last page of the survey are neutral in form. Procedures for scoring and summarizing teacher responses are discussed in the data analysis section of this chapter.

After completion of the initial survey, I created a cover letter explaining the study to participants. It was accompanied with a self-addressed, stamped, return envelope. I

worked with my advisor to draft a letter of endorsement and explanation for music co-coordinators. Thomas (1999) refers to such a letter as a "gatekeeper letter". These letters enable the researcher to obtain access to members of the target group. It is through this letter that I received both a mailing list and permission to send the surveys to every elementary music teacher in Winnipeg. A consent statement was written at the top of my survey explaining the voluntary nature of the study, and indicating that by completing the survey music teachers were giving their consent to participate.

The survey was piloted with eight individuals who represented my target group. The pilot group consisted of four music seminar classmates who are elementary music specialists and four teacher colleagues in the River East-Transcona School Division. The participants were asked to provide feedback in the following areas: clarity of items, clarity of directions, format and layout design, and over-all survey suggestions.

The pilot proved to be a successful experience from which I gained valuable feedback. The original survey had asked two questions pertaining to connections between assessment practices and reporting. The participants suggested that I eliminate these items as they did not specifically relate to my research goals. Information uncovered about reporting practices could become another study. As a consequence, these items were removed from the survey.

In terms of overall format, layout and clarity of the survey items, the pilot participants commented that it was "aesthetically pleasing", "easy to follow" and "easy to understand". Three teachers suggested that the length should not exceed four pages as other teachers might not take the time to complete the survey. I was questioned about the relevance of asking music teachers for personal information about their training,

experience, workload, and extra-curricular schedule. The question was asked, "How exactly were these issues pertinent to my assessment topic?" Some of the participants felt that other teachers might feel inadequate in responding to the survey if they had not completed some of the some of the university courses indicated on the survey.

These items were revised as my goal was to encourage, not discourage, all music teachers to respond. I decided to delete an item that read, "Check the courses you have successfully completed", (Orff level 1, 2, 3, Kodaly etc). I fine-tuned a detailed, extra-curricular music question to simply read: "Estimate the amount of time you spend each week/cycle on extra curricular activities". It was also decided that all other personal questions would provide me with a greater understanding of each "music teacher" completing the survey. It was agreed that information dealing with student numbers, contact time, overall qualifications and training, teaching, and extra-curricular loads are factors that may influence and affect individual assessment practices.

Based on the topic of the research and the explanation in the cover letter, pilot teachers were asked if they would respond to the survey. Both my colleagues and classmates found the study to be worthwhile and agreed that they would complete the survey. Some comments were made that much dialogue is needed concerning assessment in music and perhaps this survey would get teachers thinking and talking about their practices with each other.

Analysis of Survey Data

The survey was analyzed in three sections and raw data were formatted on a spreadsheet using Microsoft Excel. Part one of the survey analysis involved organizing demographic data. The second section utilized measurements and statistics using SAS

(Statistical Analysis System) (1999) which enabled the researcher to determine frequencies, percents, rankings, and so on. The third section involved qualitative methods to establish emerging themes and ideas.

Thomas (1999) explains the importance of organizing data using spreadsheets to permit simple calculations as well as creating graphs and charts of results. A category was created for each participant information survey item and responses were collected and recorded under each category. These categories were considered variables that may or may not impact the music teacher's attitudes towards assessment or affect their practices. Examples of the variables from survey items #1- 14 include years of experience teaching, educational background, class size, amount of contact time with students, and amount of time spent on extra-curricular activities. These variables were compared with responses given in parts two and three of the survey concerning assessment beliefs and practices to determine if a relationship existed.

Section two of the survey involved the use of measurement scales for data analysis. Item #15 asked teachers to select which teacher-created, student-based, or technology-based assessment tools and strategies they use in their classrooms. Each tool and strategy was listed on a spreadsheet and the number of items selected by each teacher was calculated and recorded under the specific tool/strategy. This simple measurement plan enabled the researcher to indicate, for example, that 75 teachers use portfolios, 65 use written tests, and 40 use checklists. Survey item #16 asked teachers to rank their top 5 assessment tools and strategies. An ordinal measurement scale was used to analyze this item by assigning numbers to indicate relative standing. Items #17 to #21 asked questions related to teacher beliefs concerning assessment using a Likert rating scale. When the

Likert responses were added up to determine specific amounts for each scale item, this was considered an interval measurement. Scores for each survey item were calculated and recorded. The last item in section two of the survey was an adjective checklist. Responses for each adjective were tallied and recorded on a spreadsheet containing each adjective.

The final portion of the survey contained open-response items. They were analyzed using a qualitative approach. All responses were read and the researcher looked for emerging themes and ideas. The researcher calculated frequencies to determine which themes were dominant.

Scientific Standards

"Developing a sound methodology and a well designed data collection instrument are critical for effective survey research" (Knupfer & McLellan, 2001, p. 1). Having piloted the survey has helped to ensure that the data collection instrument was reliable. The pilot enabled me to develop more consistent and comparable survey items thus reducing the level of error and increasing internal validity.

As low survey response rates have serious implications for reliability and non-response can introduce bias, steps were taken to encourage a maximum level of response. Follow up letters were sent as reminders for participants to complete the survey if they had not done so by early November.

To meet the requirements for generality/external validity, an urban music teacher sample was selected that is representative of a wider population. With a large representation of music teachers and an acceptable return rate, there is a possibility for study replication.

The researcher hoped to establish trust amongst her readers by explaining the importance of her investigation as it relates to and affects her own career as a music educator.

The validity of the survey as a measurement instrument was demonstrated when the data was collected and themes began to emerge from the music teacher responses. The research question was clear and the fixed and open response items accurately reflected what they intended to measure.

Limitations of the Methodology

Although descriptive research has gained acceptance as a valid form of research in education in recent years, there were some limitations when conducting the survey research. Some disadvantages of a mail survey included the risk of a low response rate, the long time duration involved in data collection, and mistakes that could originate from possible low quality address lists. The researcher did not know actually who completed the survey although it is assumed that only a music teacher would possess the knowledge necessary to participate. There were higher costs associated with this survey research to cover mailing expenses and follow-up letters.

Some limitations associated with the specific fixed response items on the survey included the respondent's inability to express degrees of feelings or beliefs about a topic. (Thomas, 1999, p. 160) This was balanced however, by providing suitable open response items that could reflect personal beliefs, feelings, and experiences.

A limitation of sampling exists within this study. Surveys were not sent to music teachers outside of Winnipeg resulting in lack of rural representation.

One final limitation of the survey was that unlike an interview which allows for new and interesting angles to be followed up, no new direction could be pursued with set survey items.

Summation

A descriptive research methodology presented the opportunity for me to collect valuable information pertaining to my investigation regarding assessment in music education. The development of my survey instrument enabled me to yield rich data concerning teachers' assessment perceptions and practices. By gathering descriptions of "what are" the current assessment practices in music and discovering today's challenges in assessment, educators can see the areas that need to be addressed.

Although the study does not include a rural representation sample of music teachers, scientific standards of reliability, validity, and generality are upheld. It is hoped that the findings resulting from this descriptive survey research can lead to new instructional and curriculum ideas when we consider the future direction of elementary music education.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussions

This chapter presents the response rate of all six divisions participating in the survey study and details demographic information about the music teachers surveyed. It reports on useful assessment tools and strategies, top selected/useful assessment tools and strategies, and music teachers' beliefs about assessment. Specific information was uncovered regarding teacher education and professional development related to assessment in music, the role of assessment, and factors that affect the implementation of assessment procedures. Critical open-ended comments provided by music teacher-participants are also revealed.

Response Rate

During the three weeks leading up to the initial survey deadline of November 7th, fifty-nine surveys were received. A reminder letter sent out one week after the first deadline helped to yield another twenty-one surveys. A third and final reminder was faxed to each elementary school at the end of the first week in December which resulted in the return of eight more surveys. Out of 190 assessment surveys sent out to elementary music teachers throughout six Winnipeg school divisions, 88 were returned within the data collection period. Two surveys were returned after the deadline and were not included in the study.

The survey response rate was 46%, which is considered successful for this type of research. According to Thomas (1999), for a larger audience such as the 190 music teachers surveyed, representativeness of the population becomes most critical. Such representation was achieved for this study. A fairly equivalent number of teachers from

all six divisions participated in the survey and relevant characteristics (age, gender, years of experience) of sample surveyed are similar to those that exist in the larger population. An expert in educational measurement and evaluation from the University of Manitoba, Dr. Robert Renaud, states that, "...it is how well your sample represents the population that is one's main concern for survey research" (personal communication, January 22, 2004). The response rates of the six divisions, referred to as sub-groups, are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of Music Teacher Respondents by Sub-Group (School Division)

Sub-Group	Number of Respondents	Percent of Total
1	13	36%
2	13	37%
3	22	65%
4	11	53%
5	7	47%
6	22	32%

Data collection was complete in early December and statistical analysis occurred shortly after this time. The written response portion of the surveys was also analyzed during this period using qualitative methods.

It is important to note that much interest in this assessment survey was expressed as 45 postcards requesting copies of the results were returned as well as several unsolicited letters. Most of these letters from music teachers indicated that an inquiry into

the assessment practices of music teachers is well overdue and that there is a need to find out what "others" are doing in this field and how we can best share this information with one another.

Demographic Findings

All survey data were calculated using SAS (Statistical Analysis System, 1999) software program. Music teachers were asked to respond to items which would provide the researcher with personal information such as years of experience and educational training, to details about their class size and contact time with each class. The purpose of collecting this personal information was two-fold. First, the researcher wanted to provide readers with a general idea of the traits that participants possessed. Secondly, this demographic information was required to determine if any correlation existed between specific traits that some music teachers had, such as years of experience and educational background, and the way that these groups of teachers responded to certain assessment questions.

The survey asked for specific information about each participant's teaching situation within their schools. The average total number of students taught is 303.2 and the highest percentage of teachers surveyed teach Kindergarten to Grade Six. In order to determine the average amount of teaching contact time, the number of minutes per class was multiplied by the number of classes taught in one cycle. This calculation resulted in the average contact time being 95.3 minutes that teachers see each class in a one-week cycle. Music teachers average number of classes taught is 15, with an average class size of 25 students.

Music teachers were asked to estimate the amount of time they spend each week/cycle leading extra-curricular activities. Their responses indicated that they spend an average of 2 hours and 9 minutes leading musical activities outside of scheduled teaching time. When asked if they were presently teaching academic subjects in addition to music, only 28% of the teachers indicated they do teach other curriculum areas. Means (or averages) for each survey item of this section were calculated SAS (1999) and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographic Information of Survey Participants

Survey Item	Average	Range
Number of years in current school	6.2	0-33
Total number of years teaching	12.5	1-33
Percent of teaching time in music	77%	20-100%
Total number of students taught	303.2	88-900
Contact time (minutes) per cycle	95.3	60-160
Amount of time (hours) devoted to extracurricular activities	2.09	0-12
Number of classes taught per cycle	15	5-48
Class size	25	17-30

* 37% of respondents teach K-6 (highest percentage)
**78% of respondents teach only Music, 28% teach additional subjects

The ranges of responses are also included in Table 2 and are interesting to observe for specific questions. Of 88 music teachers that participated in the survey, the average number of years employed with their present school was 6.2, while the average total number of years teaching in public schools was 12.5.

When asked to identify the degree that each teacher held, 64% of 88 had a B.Ed, 26% have a B.Music, 31% have the combined B.Music + Education degree, only 10% have a B.A., and 28% indicated that they possess other degrees such as Master of Education. In total, 48% of those surveyed obtained 1 degree, 45% obtained 2 degrees, and 6% have 3 or more degrees (see Table 3 and 4).

Table 3

Educational Background of Survey Participants

Percent of Respondents	Degrees Held
64%	B. Ed.
26%	B. Music
31%	B. Music & Ed.
10%	B. A.
28%	Other

Table 4

Number of Degrees Held by Music Teachers

Percent of Respondents	Number of Degrees
48%	1 degree
45%	2 degrees
6%	3 or more degrees

The average percentage of time that survey respondents teach music is 77%, with the majority of them (85%) teaching in one school and 15% teaching in two schools (see Table 5).

Table 5

School Placement of Music Teachers

Percent of Respondents	Schools
85%	Teach in 1 school
15%	Teach in 2 schools

This information has clearly established some interesting traits about the 88 music teachers surveyed. Although there is a range in years of teaching experience, all teachers have at least one degree and almost half have two degrees. These music teachers appear well educated. All of the specialists teach multiple grades, large numbers of students and an average class size of 25 students, which is quite high. Contact time with students is approximately three times a cycle for only thirty minutes – a brief time allotment at best when compared to the time given to other subject areas. To get a feel for how dedicated, yet busy, these music teachers are, one only needs to look at the additional two hours spent on extra-curricular activities each week. All of these elements indeed factor into and influence the teachers' beliefs, perceptions, and practices regarding assessment in music education.

Useful Assessment Tools and Strategies

Music teachers were asked to indicate which of the teacher-created, student-based or technology-based assessment tools and strategies they would use in their classrooms.

The percentage of respondents throughout all divisions reporting usage of various assessment tools and strategies is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Aggregated Tool/Strategy Usage

Teacher-Created Tool/Strategy	Percentage	Rank Order
performances/exhibits	92.0	1
written tests	89.7	2
systematic observation/roaming	85.2	3
checklists	71.6	4
rubrics	68.1	5
rating scales	55.7	7
class discussion	55.7	7
compositions	43.2	8
projects	36.4	9
listening logs	25.0	13
surveys/questionnaires	13.6	17
concept maps	6.0	19
critiques, essays	4.5	20
Student-Based Tool/Strategy	Percentage	
self-assessment	64.8	6
portfolios-processfolios	36.4	9
peer-assessment	28.4	12
interviews/conferences	23.9	14
self-reflection	19.3	15
Technology-Based	Percentage	
audio-tapes	31.8	10
video-tapes	29.6	11

(table continues)

photographs	14.8	16
computer presentations	12.5	18

Within the teacher-created tool/strategy category, performances/exhibits (92%) was reported to be used most often, followed by written tests (89.7%), systematic observation/roaming (85.2%), and checklists (68.1%). The next most used tool was reported as self-assessment (64.8%) which is located in the student-based category. There were lower numbers of teachers who reported the use of other student-based and technology-based tools and strategies. The majority of the music teachers tended to use tools and strategies within the teacher-created assessment category.

I was interested to discover if there were any major differences in the assessment practices of music teachers employed by different divisions. In order to determine such differences, comparisons between sub-groups regarding the proportion of teachers utilizing each tool were made using Pearson Chi-squared statistical tests at an alpha = 0.05 level of significance. The statistical analysis indicated that although most divisional selections were quite similar, some differences were found to exist in the specific assessment areas of interviews and conferences (Chi-squared = 11.70 with 5 degrees of freedom and p=0.0392). Music teachers in Sub-Group 5 did not report using interviews/conferences, while more that half of Sub-Group 1 teachers reported to use these tools.

It is important to note that both student-led conferences and interviews are very authentic yet sometimes difficult forms of assessment to implement as they require the scheduling of large amounts of time with students. One must wonder then if teachers

within Sub-Group 1 have been trained to utilize this assessment technique or if there has perhaps been a divisional focus to assess in this manner.

The findings illustrated in Table 7 demonstrate the percentages of assessment tools and strategies used by school division sub-group and the comparison of these percentages show similar usage patterns, with the exception of interviews and student-led conferences.

Table 7

Tool/Strategy Usage by Division (Sub-Group)

Teacher Created Tool/Strategy	Sub-Group 1	Teacher Created Tool/Strategy	Sub-Group 2	Teacher Created Tool/Strategy	Sub-Group3
written tests	92.3	written tests	92.3	performances/exhibits	95.4
systematic observation/roaming	92.3	systematic observation/roaming	92.3	written tests	90.9
performances/exhibits	84.6	rubrics	76.9	systematic observation/roaming	86.3
rubrics	76.9	performances/exhibits	76.9	checklists	81.8
class discussion	76.9	checklists	69.2	rubrics	72.7
checklists	61.5	rating scales	61.5	class discussion	59.9
rating scales	61.5	compositions	46.1	rating scales	59.1
compositions	46.1	listening logs	30.8	compositions	40.9
listening logs	30.8	projects	30.7	projects	27.3
projects	30.7	class discussion	30.7	listening logs	18.2
surveys/questionnaires	23.0	concept maps	0.0	surveys/questionnaires	13.6
concept maps	15.4	critiques, essays	0.0	critiques, essays	4.6
critiques, essays	7.7	surveys/questionnaires	0.0	concept maps	0.0
Student Based Tool/Strategy		**Student Based Tool/Strategy**		**Student Based Tool/Strategy**	
self-assessment	76.9	self-assessment	76.9	self-assessment	59.1
peer-assessment	53.9	interviews/conferences*	30.8	portfolios-processfolios	40.9
interviews/conferences*	53.9	portfolios-processfolios	30.7	peer-assessment	31.8
portfolios-processfolios	46.1	self-reflection	23.1	self-reflection	27.3
self-reflection	23.1	peer-assessment	23.1	interviews/conferences*	9.0
Technology-Based		**Technology-Based**		**Technology-Based**	
video-tapes	46.1	video-tapes	30.8	video-tapes	31.8
audio-tapes	46.1	audio-tapes	30.8	audio-tapes	27.3
photographs	15.4	computer presentations	15.4	photographs	9.1
computer presentations	7.7	photographs	15.4	computer presentations	4.6

(table continues)

Teacher- Created Tool/Strategy	Sub-Group 4	Teacher- Created Tool/Strategy	Sub-Group 5	Teacher- Created Tool/Strategy	Sub-Group 6
performances/exhibits	100.0	written tests	100.0	performances/exhibits	95.5
written tests	90.9	performances/exhibits	100.0	written tests	81.8
systematic observation/roaming	81.8	checklists	85.7	systematic observation/roaming	77.3
rubrics	63.6	systematic observation/roaming	85.7	checklists	72.7
checklists	54.6	rating scales	71.4	rubrics	54.5
projects	54.6	rubrics	71.4	class discussion	50.0
compositions	54.6	class discussion	71.4	projects	45.5
class discussion	54.6	compositions	57.1	rating scales	45.4
rating scales	45.5	projects	28.6	compositions	31.8
listening logs	36.4	listening logs	28.6	listening logs	18.2
concept maps	0.0	surveys/questionnaires	28.6	surveys/questionnaires	18.2
critiques, essays	0.0	concept maps	14.3	critiques, essays	9.1
surveys/questionnaires	0.0	critiques, essays	0.0	concept maps	9.1
Student- Based Tool/Strategy		**Student- Based Tool/Strategy**		**Student- Based Tool/Strategy**	
self-assessment	63.6	self-assessment	28.6	self-assessment	68.2
peer-assessment	36.4	portfolios-processfolios	28.6	portfolios-processfolios	36.4
portfolios-processfolios	27.3	peer-assessment	14.3	interviews/conferences*	22.7
interviews/conferences*	27.3	self-reflection	0.0	self-reflection	18.2
self-reflection	9.1	interviews/conferences*	0.0	peer-assessment	13.6
Technology-Based		**Technology-Based**		**Technology-Based**	
video-tapes	36.4	computer presentations	28.6	photographs	27.3
audio-tapes	36.4	audio-tapes	28.6	audio-tapes	27.3
computer presentations	18.2	photographs	14.3	video-tapes	18.2
photographs	0.0	video-tapes	14.3	computer presentations	13.6

* p < .05 level of significance

The average number of different strategies and tools music teacher participants used was also calculated. The aggregate summary presented in Table 8 shows that within the teacher-created category, the majority of the participants selected 5 to 8 diverse tools. Under student-based assessments, most people chose only one or two tools and over half of the teachers indicated that they don't even use technology-based strategies. When looking at all of the assessment tools and strategies combined, six to ten choices were most frequent for all divisions.

Table 8

Aggregate Summary-Number of Tools Used per Assessment Category

Teacher-Created

Number of Tools	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Total	0	0	3	12	16	14	16	14	7	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Shaded Area Indicates	68% tended to select 5-8 tools																	

Student-Based

Number of Tools	0	1	2	3	4	5
Total	18	20	28	14	6	2
Shaded Area Indicates	55% selected 1 or 2 tools					

Technology-Based

Number of Tools	0	1	2	3	4	5
Total	47	17	11	11	2	0
Shaded Area Indicates	53% do not use technology					

All Tools

Number of Tools	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Total	0	0	1	6	5	13	8	4	13	11	6	7	3	3	4	2	1	0	0	0	1
Shaded Area Indicates	6-10 assessment tool/strategy choices were most frequent amongst all Sub-Groups																				

Most Useful Assessment Tools and Strategies

Music teachers were asked to indicate the top five tools/strategies that they use most often in the classroom. Teachers assigned a number "1" to the tool that they used most frequently, a number "2" to the tool used second most frequently and soon, all the way to the fifth most frequently used tool.

In order to determine the top ranking assessment tools, a point system was devised in which an item ranked number 1 would receive a score of 5 points, 4 points if it was ranked number 2 and so on for all 5 tools ranked. As "systematic observing and roaming" was ranked number 1 by 41 teachers; 15 teachers ranked it second, 8 ranked it third, 4 teachers ranked it fourth and 3 ranked it fifth. Seventeen teachers did not indicate any use of this tool. Consequently, "systematic observing and roaming" received a total score of 300 points, (41 X 5 + 15 X 4 + 8 X 3 + 4 X 2 + 3 X 1) = 300. Table 9 provides the outcome of how all of the assessment tools and strategies were ranked, how many teachers ranked each of the tools/strategies, and the total score for the complete survey item.

Table 9

Aggregated Ranking of Assessment Tools/Strategies

| Score | Ranking | | | | | Teacher Ranking | | |
	1	2	3	4	5	All	None	Total Score
Systematic	41	15	8	4	3	71	17	300
Performances/ Exhibitions	11	12	21	13	7	64	24	199
Rubrics	16	12	12	5	2	47	41	176

(table continues)

Checklists	12	18	7	9	5	51	37	176
Written Tests	2	15	16	16	10	59	29	160
Rating Scales	6	6	9	4	4	29	59	93
Self-Assessment	6	3	3	4	5	21	67	64
Class Discussion	1	1	1	8	4	15	73	32
Projects	1	2	0	4	6	13	75	27
Portfolios/ Processfolios	1	2	1	3	4	11	77	26
Compositions	0	1	2	3	7	13	75	23
Self-Reflection	0	1	1	2	1	5	83	12
Listening Logs	0	1	0	1	4	6	82	10
Audiotapes	0	0	2	1	2	5	83	10
Videotapes	0	0	0	2	4	6	82	8
Interviews/ Conferences	0	1	0	0	3	4	84	7
Peer Assessment	0	0	0	2	3	5	83	7
Playing/Oral Test	0	0	1	0	1	2	86	4
Surveys/ Questionnaire	0	0	1	0	0	1	87	3
Computer Presentation	0	0	0	0	1	1	87	1
Concept Maps	0	0	0	0	0	0	88	0

Critiques/Essays	0	0	0	0	0	0	88	0
Photographs	0	0	0	0	0	0	88	0

After applying the scoring system to all of the selected assessment tools and strategies, "systematic observation and roaming" received the first place ranking with 300 points. "Performance and exhibits" ranked second with 199 points followed by a third place ranking shared by "rubrics and checklists" with 176 points. "Written tests" received the fifth place ranking with 160 points. Viewing these scores it appears clear that "systematic observation and roaming" is the tool most preferred by those responding to the survey.

Following the identification of the total score for all assessment tools, the relative frequency data was charted in a bar chart displaying the top ranked tools. This is called a stacked bar chart and provides a clear visual representation of the ranking with the height of the bar representing the total number of teachers ranking the item (see figure 1).

Figure 1 Aggregated top five ranked assessment tools/strategies.
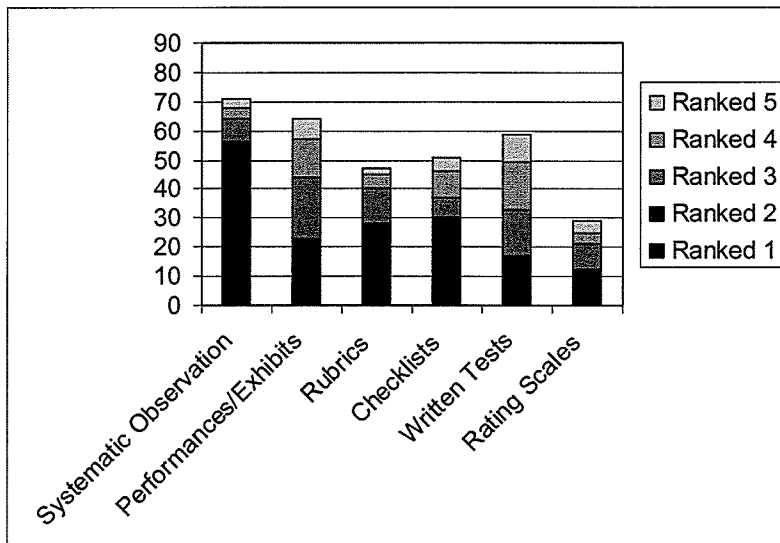
On this chart you can see that 71 respondents (out of 88 respondents in total) selected the tool/strategy "systematic observing and roaming". "Performances and exhibitions" which was selected by 64 teachers followed this. It is interesting to note that in a similar survey study conducted by Roberts (1994) which asked high-school music teachers across Canada to list their top assessment methods, "performances" ranked amongst their top tools, as it did for the elementary teachers in this study.

Within each bar of the Figure 1 chart, there are up to five shadings which represent the five possible ranks that a tool could have received. "Systematic observation and roaming" was selected by the most teachers and also received the highest number of first place rankings. The bar charts enable one to get a complete sense of exactly how each tool was viewed by the teachers. It is interesting to note that while "rubrics" was selected by fewer teachers than the tools "checklists" or "written tests", it received a higher "total score" because those who did select it chose it first, second or third, thus giving it greater weight in the survey. Rating scales have been included in the chart simply to show the dramatic decline in the selection of other tools/strategies after the first five were chosen and charted.

Music Teachers' Beliefs About Assessment

Music teachers were asked to respond to a series of belief statements about assessment. They ranked each statement according to a Likert scale, which read as: 1 – *strongly disagree*; 2 – *disagree*; 3 – *neither agree nor disagree*; 4 – *agree*; 5 – *strongly agree*. Percentages of their rankings to each statement appear in Table 10.

Table 10

Percentages of Respondents' Ratings of Belief Statements Regarding Assessment

Belief Statements	Likert Scale Ratings				
	1	2	3	4	5
Assessment is an important part of my music program.	3.4%	8.0%	17.1%	43.1%	28.4%
Music is a subject where assessment is not critical.	52.3%	27.3%	8%	10.2%	2.3%
I feel confident that my assessment practices are well developed and meet the needs of my students and overall program.	2.3%	14.8%	36.4%	31.8%	14.8%
I feel that there is room to improve my assessment practices in my music program.	4.6%	9.1%	12.5%	42.1%	31.8%
I believe that there are few or no benefits for both students and teachers who use assessment in the music program.	58%	28.4%	6.8%	3.4%	3.4%

Note. Likert scale rating as follows: 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree,3-neither agree nor disagree, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree

When asked to respond to the statement, "Assessment is an important part of my program", the highest majority of all survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed (71.5%). Most music teachers strongly disagreed or disagreed (79.6%) however, with the statement that Music is a subject where assessment is not critical. When asked if they felt confident that their assessment practices were well developed and met the needs of their students and overall program, there was not as much certainty in their responses. The

highest response (36.4%) was "neither agree nor disagree", followed by (31.8%) of those who agreed with the statement. It appears that most music teachers' feelings regarding confidence in their music assessment practices are mixed and variable.

This finding is supported through the sentiments expressed by music specialist Patricia Chiodo (2001) whose journal article depicts the overwhelming feelings that she and her other music teacher colleagues experienced when struggling to assess students. Unsure about how effective her tools and strategies were, never finding enough time to assess, and feeling that she could never, "prove what her students had learned in music" (p.17), made Chiodo insecure and eventually resulted in her quest to improve her assessment practices.

It is evident the majority of music teachers feel that there is room to improve their assessment practices in as much as 73.9% strongly agreed or agreed with survey item number 20. This response tends to support the stated lack of confidence these teachers expressed on the previous Likert question and it appears evident that they recognize a need to develop assessment within their music program. When responding to the statement, "I believe that there are few or no benefits for both student and teachers who use assessment in the music program", 86.4% of the music teachers responded that they "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed" with the statement. It is interesting to note that there is still a slight representation-(6.8%) of teachers who do believe that there are few benefits to assessment.

When examining the Likert scale ratings between divisional Sub-Groups, music teachers tended to respond to each statement in a similar fashion. These relatively small

differences between responses would indicate much consensus among music teachers

regarding their beliefs about assessment and can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11

Music Teachers' Response Summary to Belief Statements Regarding Assessment by Sub-Group

Likert Statement	Sub-Group 1		Sub-Group 2		Sub-Group 3	
	Mean	Likert Rank	Mean	Likert Rank	Mean	Likert Rank
Assessment is an important part of my music program.	4.0	4 = agree	3.8	4 = agree	4.3	4 = agree
Music is a subject where assessment is not critical.	1.7	2 = disagree	1.7	2 = disagree	1.5	2 = disagree
I feel confident that my assessment practices are well developed and meet the needs of my students and overall program.	3.5	4 = agree	3.4	3 = neither agree nor disagree	3.3	3 = neither agree nor disagree
I feel that there is room to improve my assessment practices in my music program.	4.1	4 = agree	4.1	4 = agree	4.5	5 = strongly agree
I believe that there are few or no benefits for both students and teachers who use assessment in the music program.	1.8	2 = disagree	1.5	2 = disagree	1.3	1 = strongly disagree

(table continues)

Likert Statement	Sub-Group 4		Sub-Group 5		Sub-Group 6	
	Mean	Likert Rank	Mean	Likert Rank	Mean	Likert Rank
Assessment is an important part of my music program.	3.5	4 = agree	4.3	4 = agree	3.3	3 = neither agree nor disagree
Music is a subject where assessment is not critical.	1.9	2 = disagree	1.7	2 = disagree	2.3	2 = disagree
I feel confident that my assessment practices are well developed and meet the needs of my students and overall program.	3.4	3 = neither agree nor disagree	3.6	4 = agree	3.5	4 = agree
I feel that there is room to improve my assessment practices in my music program.	3.9	4 = agree	4.1	4 = agree	3	3 = neither agree nor disagree
I believe that there are few or no benefits for both students and teachers who use assessment in the music program.	1.4	1 = strongly disagree	1.4	1 = strongly disagree	2.2	2 = disagree

It is interesting to note that the music teacher respondents from one school division (Sub-Group 6) assigned a ranking of 3–"neither agree nor disagree" to item 20–"I feel that there is room to improve my assessment practices in my music program". In contrast, all other divisions agreed that there is room to improve their assessment practices.

The question arises as to why teachers in one school division seem to reflect a somewhat non-committal attitude towards the effectiveness of their assessment practices, as opposed to other teachers who appear to be more clearly expressing their lack of confidence with current assessment practices. These questions could be examined with further study.

The percentages of respondents selecting specific adjectives to describe how they feel about assessment in elementary music present a clear picture of music teachers'perceptions. The adjective selections are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Percentages of Respondents Selecting Adjectives Describing Their Feeling About Assessment

Adjectives	Percent of Total
Informative	80.0%
Challenging	78.4%
Useful	77.3%
Needed	69.3%
Important	68.1%
Stressful	51.1%
Frustrating	35.2%
Inconvenient	19.3%
Fulfilling	16.0%
Unpleasant	8.0%
Unnecessary	1.0%
Worthless	0.0%

The large majority of music teachers (80%) selected "informative", followed closely by "challenging" (78.4%) and "useful" (77.3%). Music teachers recognize that assessment is "needed" (69.3%) and, although 68.1% felt that assessment was "important", they did not select this adjective as their top choice. About half of the teachers (51.1%), indicated that assessment is "stressful." Lower proportions of music teachers selected the more negative adjectives; "frustrating" (35.2%), "inconvenient" (19.3%), "fulfilling" (16%), "unpleasant" (8.0%), and "unnecessary" (1.0%). No music teachers selected the adjective "worthless."

It appears that music teachers consider the role of assessment in music programs to be one of great value. This is reflected through their responses which indicate that assessment is "informative", "useful", "needed" and "important" in their music programs. This is a surprising finding as teachers are more positive and not as stressed about assessment as anticipated. Music teachers did indicate however, that assessment is very challenging and this suggests that more supports are needed to help with the implementation and development of assessment tools and strategies. Steps need to be taken to help music educators with their assessment challenges.

Survey respondents were organized into three sub-groups according to their years of teaching experience – 1 to 6 years, 7 to 14 years, and 15+ years. The percentages of teachers considering each tool as one of their most useful are presented in Table 13. These percentages were compared among experience levels using Pearson Chi-squared tests at an alpha = 0.05 significance level. Respondents beliefs about assessment were

also compared among experience levels using Pearson Chi-squared tests at an alpha

= 0.05 significance level.

Table 13

A Comparison of Percentages of Respondents' Most Useful Assessment Tools

Assessment Tools	Years of Experience		
	1 to 6	7 to 14	15 +
Written Tests	75.9	65.3	61.1
Checklists	58.7	56.5	58.3
Rating Scales	31.0	43.5	27.8
Rubrics	58.6	52.2	50.0
Systematic Observation/Roaming	82.8	80.6	78.3
Projects	13.8	22.2	4.3
Compositions	20.7	26.1	2.8
Concept Maps	0.0	0.0	0.0
Class Discussions	17.2	21.7	13.9
Listening Logs	6.9	4.3	8.2
Critiques / Essays	0.0	0.0	0.0
Surveys/Questionnaires	0.0	0.0	2.8
Performances / Exhibits	65.5	73.9	77.8
Self-Assessment*	34.5	30.4	11.1
Self-Reflection	3.4	8.3	4.3

(table continues)

Peer-Assessment	6.9	0.0	8.3
Portfolios/Processfolios	13.8	8.7	13.9
Interviews/Conferences	3.4	4.3	5.6
Computer Presentations	3.4	0.0	0.0
Photographs	0.0	0.0	0.0
Video-Tapes	6.9	0.0	11.1
Audio-Tapes	6.9	8.7	2.8

* p < .05 level of significance

When trying to determine if the pattern of ranking specific assessment tools/strategies varies by years of teaching experience, there was only a significant difference to report regarding self-assessment (Chi-squared = 20.71 with 10 degrees of freedom and p=0.0232). This comparison of years of experience revealed that only 11% of the 15+ years of experience group ranked self-assessment as a tool they utilize while over 30% of the teachers in the other years of experience groupings ranked self-assessment as one of their top assessment tools. When examining the beliefs of respondents by years of experience, no significant differences were found.

These differences might have occurred because more experienced music teachers have used self-assessment and have found it to be a less effective form of assessment, and developed other tools and strategies. It also could be that these teachers were not introduced to this option of assessment earlier in their careers, and therefore do not use it because of lack of training or skill in self-assessment use. This would be a question worth pursuing in future studies. When examining the Likert scale responses in relation to the

three teaching years of experience categories, no significant correlations were determined.

Teacher Education and Professional Development Related to Assessment in Music

The last section of the survey asked all music teachers to respond to five short answer questions related to their previous course or professional development experiences addressing assessment, tools and strategies they would like to learn more about or receive more training in, the role of assessment in their music programs, factors that positively and /or negatively affect their assessment practices, and any additional comments related to assessment.

An analysis of respondents' written comments regarding personal educational and professional development experiences addressing assessment revealed very clear themes and patterns of responses. The majority of teachers said that the annual Manitoba Music Educators' Special Area Group Conference (SAG) was the primary source of professional development related to assessment. More specifically, a session on rubrics and checklists lead by Dr. Sheila Scott of Brandon University in 2001 was referred to most often, as well as sessions on assessment tips offered as part of Dr. Denise Gagne's SAG presentations in both 2002 and 2003.

Several music teachers mentioned that they were offered one or two divisional workshops or sharing sessions from year to year. At these times various clinicians were brought to work with music teachers or they were asked to bring examples of their most effective assessment techniques and tools to share with the group. Recently, many teachers mentioned working with Dr. Francine Morin of the University of Manitoba to develop and restructure divisional goals, outcomes and assessment frameworks in their

music programs. Music teachers in St. James, Pembina Trails, and River East Transcona

School divisions reported attending an assessment workshop coordinated by Susan

Farrell several years ago and described using her assessment resource books. It is worth

noting that many teachers mentioned how valuable the assessment sharing sessions were

and that they wished these divisional sessions were organized or offered more frequently.

In addition to the annual provincial conference and occasional assessment

sessions offered by different school divisions, survey participants mentioned that in the

past, some music education organizations such as the Manitoba Orff Chapter and Kodaly

have offered assessment-related material. Assessment issues have been incorporated into

various workshop settings but have not often been presented as an independent workshop

session or theme.

The only assessment-related courses that were mentioned throughout the survey

responses included Curriculum and Instruction in Music Education offered at the

University of Manitoba, the summer Orff certification program, and choral conducting.

Music teachers indicated that they had gained exposure or "touched" on elementary

music assessment throughout these courses but had not covered the topic in any real

depth.

Although over half (55%) of the music teachers indicated that they had

experienced some form of professional development or training related to assessment,

very few gave much detailed information. One music teacher stated that, "I've had a few

divisional training sessions about assessment techniques and we covered the topic a bit in

my summer Orff course" (Sub-Group 2). It is interesting that 45% of the teachers had no

response to this question or could not recall having received any professional

development related to assessment. Comments such as, "I can't recall anything directly related to assessment – especially in music" (Sub-Group 5), and "… no course or professional development sessions that I have attended has really focussed on just assessment" (Sub-Group 3), were strong themes that emerged from music teachers' responses. These findings are similar to those reported by Beatty (2000) who claimed that music teacher training in assessment strategies and the provision of assessment supports from universities, school divisions and administrators is critical for effective teaching practices and the overall success of music assessment.

The reported lack of training and professional development opportunities voiced by Winnipeg music teachers are serious findings and should be of great concern to many. Teacher-training and university programs may need to address the content area of assessment more rigorously. Music education organizations and school divisions should examine the possibility of offering more professional development related to assessment and creating further assessment resources. Action must be taken to address music teachers' need for support and training in the area of assessment.

Music Teachers' Requests for Further Professional Development

Teachers' responses to the opened-ended questions regarding further training served to identify specific assessment tools and strategies they would like to learn more about. A common response was that any assessment training would be greatly appreciated. The training on tools and strategies that many teachers were most interested included: the creation and development of rubrics for early and middle years, technology-based assessment, portfolios, and self-evaluations. The need to develop better checklists for music assessment was also a frequently mentioned issue among the music teachers.

One theme that was constantly intertwined with many responses to this question was a critical need to find tools that can help a music teacher assess quickly, easily, and effectively. One respondent stated, "I need to find the perfect checklist for every grade that is fast but works". Another wrote, "Any tools like rubrics or self and peer evaluations that make assessment faster is definitely what I want to learn about". These comments help to identify some of the assessment training and support that music teachers would like to have offered to them.

When examining the responses of each division sub-group to this training question, Sub-Group 6 had the fewest number of teachers indicating an interest in learning more about assessment tools. This matched their Likert rankings which indicated that teachers in this division were more confident in their practices than the other five divisions.

Several teachers in Sub-Groups 1, 2 & 4 requested information on any tool or strategy that might enable them to assess individual students while also keeping larger groups engaged and focussed on the task. To illustrate, one wrote, "I want to know how other teachers assess singing or recorder individually without the rest of the class derailing" (Sub-Group 1). A similar perspective is evident by this comment, "I do a lot of group testing but I need to test individually for some performance skills and I don't know what to do with the rest of my class" (Sub-Group 2).

Sub-Group 3 appeared to be the division that wanted training in more than just the most frequently mentioned and ranked assessment tools and strategies (rubrics, technology-based, portfolios, self-evaluations). There were requests to learn more about concept maps, listening logs, compositions, and audio and videotapes. Even though

several teachers in this division appeared to be more open minded towards trying new tools, there were still requests for "on the run" assessment, simple and clutter-free evaluation techniques, as well as tools that don't require "the loss of so much teaching time".

Sub-Groups 3, 5 and 6 had the highest number of teachers who suggested that they valued learning about new approaches to assessment and that sharing and keeping up with the latest research in the field of music education are critical. Working together to develop assessment in elementary music programs has been expressed as being by far the most favored approach to training, and educating one another in our subject area.

Role of Assessment

When commenting on the role of assessment in their teaching, several central themes emerged. Most felt that assessment is critical for giving direction to one's teaching and helps teachers to establish direction for instructional planning. They said that assessment provides students with valuable feedback, that it is a way to track individual progress, and it often motivates student learning. The fact that assessment provides teachers with an opportunity to identify the skills and concepts that need to be addressed was an issue of primary importance to most respondents, as was the idea that assessment was a bona fide method of evaluating programs and the effectiveness of individual teaching practices. The role that assessment plays for many music specialists is clearly illustrated by their comments.

Assessment helps me focus on student needs and gives valuable feedback on lessons I've taught. (Sub-Group 5)

Assessment is necessary for student understanding of concepts. It defines the

goals and needs of my program and propels my students towards independence.

(Sub-Group 3)

For me assessment is ongoing. If the majority of my kids can't achieve my goals,

we revisit those concepts. (Sub-Group 2)

Assessment makes me an effective teacher ... I assess for comprehension,

mastery and I evaluate my own teaching tools. (Sub-Group 6)

Assessment is very much an advocacy issue for elementary music teachers. The

majority of the teachers made comments like, "... assessment is important to validate my

subject of music to my school and community" (Sub-Group 3). It is critical that the music

program is valued equally with all other subject areas and teachers need documentation

and evidence of student learning. One respondent put it this way: "Frequent assessment

makes music seem more "up to par". The kids view it as equal to their other subjects"

(Sub-Group 1). Determining marks for students and reporting formally on student

progress offers evidence of learning to those individuals who make important school

decisions. A representative comment is, "Assessment provides 'proof' of understanding

and improvement for 'mark-based' parents and administrators" (Sub-Group 1).

Assessment, then, helps demonstrate that music teachers are accountable for their

teaching and also communicates student growth and progress to school administrators

and parents. One respondent stated, "Assessment is vital for administrators and parents.

They need to know that music is not just about having fun and performing but that the

kids are learning skills and concepts too" (Sub-Group 4). Similarly, another teacher

indicated, "Assessment makes us accountable and brings credence to what we do" (Sub-Group 3).

Another dominant theme that surfaced while teachers discussed the role of assessment in their programs was how assessment was incorporated into daily teaching. Several teachers stated that they have managed to work assessment into their lessons and that on-going assessment is very valuable. Assessing all aspects of the music class from the welcome song to daily music games seems less stressful for students and provides the teacher with much data to make informed judgments of student growth. On-going assessment also provides the teacher with a sense of curriculum direction so lessons can be structured accordingly.

Although several teachers discussed the role of on-going assessment in their programs, more tended to express their struggle with incorporating assessment into daily lessons. They described their frustrations at feeling pressure to do large amounts of assessment around reporting time and admitted that assessment becomes stressful. There appears to be a great "need" for teachers to develop ways to introduce some form of consistent assessment schedules in lesson planning. The following excerpts serve to illustrate:

I need to spend less time assessing at report card time and try to work it more into my daily lessons. (Sub-Group 5)

I leave assessment until the last minute before reports and then have major stress. (Sub-Group 5)

I try to assess more regularly but school pressures don't allow me to be consistent. (Sub-Group 1)

My biggest struggle as a first year teacher is trying to figure out what to assess and how to fit it in everyday. (Sub-Group 3)

The final theme to evolve from the question of role was the need to establish "balance" in a music program. Music specialists recognize the need for, and importance of, assessment, but they do not want it to overshadow their primary goal of instilling a love and appreciation of music within their students. When the focus is solely on one aspect of our teaching, this can be detrimental to both teacher and student.

Many teachers stated that keeping music "fun" and "enjoyable" is the key to keeping students engaged in music. Teachers do not want to risk losing "engagement" power through an over emphasis on assessment. Sample comments follow:

I'm always adding to my assessment practices but I want my students to learn and they do this best when they are having fun. (Sub-Group 4)

Assessment is helpful but too much if it takes away from the joy of music. (Sub-Group 1)

My general goal is to promote a love of music. Assessment is a very small piece of the pie. (Sub-Group 6)

Assessment is important but there needs to be a balance to make it enjoyable for teacher and student. (Sub-Group 6)

Factors that Affect Assessment

Teachers were asked to list the factors that positively and negatively affect their assessment practices. Responses to this question produced few positive factors and resulted in teachers describing an overwhelming number of factors that negatively affect their music assessment.

The most frequently mentioned factor affecting assessment in a negative way is lack of time. Teachers clearly stated that not enough contact time with students was most detrimental when attempting to teach and assess. Music periods that are too short and teaching a class only two or three times in a six day cycle present major challenges for music teachers. Not finding enough time to conference with and provide feedback to students on their progress was another major struggle faced by teachers. Time constraints also make it difficult to test on an individual basis and to schedule re-test times for students. Excerpted comments serve to illustrate:

> Time is a negative factor. There is not enough time to assess. (Sub-Group 5)

> Conferencing with kids after testing is critical but I never have time to do it. (Sub-Group 4)

> Can someone help me figure out how to assess 25 kids in 30 minutes when I only see them two times each week? Heaven forbid if I have to re-test anyone. (Sub-Group 4)

> Time is so short, curriculum is so big and performances are always around the corner. I'm lucky if I can assess three times in one term. (Sub-Group 6)

Large class sizes, attendance, discipline problems, and programming for a variety of student levels were also recognized as major factors affecting assessment practices. Music teachers were quick to establish class sizes of 25 students or more as challenging enough to teach, let alone trying to assess in small groups or individually with any consistency. Student absenteeism, situations whereby students are regularly pulled from music class, and severe discipline issues also tend to put a "kink" in the assessment process. Furthermore, all teachers are expected to adopt or modify programs for

individual students. Having to develop specialized music curriculum for students throughout the entire school, experiencing a lack of resource time, and having few classroom supports (teacher assistants) compound the implementation of plans by music teachers. Here is what three teachers said about these matters.

> I try to assess as quickly as I can because when my students get bored there are discipline problems. (Sub-Group 5)

> With a class of 29 grade fives, behavior issues and disruptions during class-assessment can be a nightmare. (Sub-Group 2)

> It's hard to introduce, teach and assess concepts in each music strand with so little time. Lots of my kids are on individualized learning plans which further complicate assessment. (Sub-Group 3)

Many teachers commented that working with an outdated curriculum, and having report card marks and comments that neither reflects what a student has learned or how they have been assessed are frustrating. Reporting on hundreds of students and struggling to convert assessment data to marks and percentages add to the already daunting tasks of evaluating students. These views are reflected in the following:

> I struggle with % for grade 4 and 5. How do you translate your assessment and observations into a percent mark? (Sub-Group 5)

> I would say that reporting on hundreds of students is definitely a factor that negatively affects my assessment. (Sub-Group 2)

> My report cards do not accurately reflect what I know about my kids – this is frustrating. (Sub-Group 3)

I don't feel good about working with an outdated curriculum … I question the

validity of my assessment. (Sub-Group 6)

And finally, two additional negative factors that affect assessment for many music

teachers are a constant pressure to perform and allotting time to work with students in

extra-curricular activities. Several teachers expressed that parents and administrators

often judge the success of a music program on well-received performances and the

frequency of public musical exhibitions. It often seems that assessment and

demonstrating what a child has learned in music class is of secondary importance to a

spring concert. Teachers admit to pulling time away from assessment activities in order to

meet the demands of performance or extra-curricular activities while still covering the

music curriculum.

There were some factors described by music specialists that affect assessment

positively. These included having good resources, motivated students, and supportive

colleagues. One teacher said, "A colleague of mine just gave me a book to assess a

child's development through Orff and it is fantastic. Sharing resources that work really

helps with the assessment battle" (Sub-Group 1). Another music teacher from Sub-Group

4 explained that, "When my students are excited about getting tested and are motivated to

achieve, I find that this affects my assessment practices positively."

Despite these few positive factors, the majority of specialists talked far more

about the negative factors that affect assessment. Lack of contact time to assess students

appears to prevail as the most difficult and most challenging factor that music teachers

have to overcome.

Music educators Brummett and Haywood (1997) report that factors such as hundreds of students, multiple grade levels, extracurricular responsibilities, individualized student programming, and limited contact time are some of the major challenges that elementary music teachers confront when trying to assess. Responses of the Winnipeg music teachers would indicate that all of these negative factors must be addressed and examined by specialists, administrators, parents, and curriculum developers in order to make the challenges of music assessment more attainable and less daunting.

Open-Ended Comments

It is quite interesting to note that when given the opportunity to comment freely on assessment and how it relates to them as teachers, their students, school divisions and overall music programs, many similar ideas resonated throughout the written data. Music specialists recognize that assessment is important on a variety of levels and that in order to implement it successfully, more support is needed. Teachers would like to see more professional development on assessment, as well as training on the use and development of assessment tools and divisional opportunities for sharing amongst colleagues. One teacher stated, "Assessment is critical but difficult. We need help divisionally and provincially. We need to help each other and share what works" (Sub-Group 1).

All music specialists are not going to fit a common assessment model, as assessment is an individualized practice. Many teachers have suggested that there is a great need to develop some sort of framework of assessment standards that all could follow. Comments such as needing "something across the board" or "consistency would

be nice divisionally and provincially", demonstrate that music teachers are not satisfied with the inconsistency of assessment practices in Manitoba.

Many calls for a new or updated elementary curriculum were expressed through this question. Developing a new curriculum is viewed as a critical starting point for improving assessment practices and strengthening public music programs in general. Comments like the following were common:

> We need a provincial music curriculum for uniformity in what students are learning and then we could base our assessment on specific curriculum outcomes. (Sub-Group 3)

> Assessment in our division is varied due to a lack of professional, properly sequenced curriculum. We are looking for strong vision and sensitive leadership to co-ordinate proper, consistent assessment across the division. (Sub-Group 3)

At the school level, numerous music teachers described their report cards as useless tools for communicating student growth and progress in music. Teachers have reiterated that assigning grades or percentages to students is often subjective and challenging. Developing rubrics that truly demonstrate what skills and concepts a student has acquired in music seems to be a highly sought after idea. Although these music teachers value assessment in music, there remain many concepts that they struggle with concerning this aspect of their teaching. Issues for elementary music teachers that need to be addressed include sharing, support, leadership, training, and looking for solutions to the many factors that complicate assessment. Music teachers should be well equipped to handle all aspects of their music program. One respondent stated, "I believe that

assessment is important but I haven't got it fine tuned enough to enjoy it or to feel good about what I am doing in this area" (Sub-Group 4).

Summation

Using survey research to investigate the assessment practices and perceptions of elementary music teachers throughout six Winnipeg school divisions, proved to reveal valuable information and a series of critical findings were discovered. It is clear that the 88 music teachers surveyed possess a variety of traits specific to their positions such as large numbers of students, limited teaching time, and extra-curricular pressures which directly influence their assessment practices. The findings have established that these teachers do use a variety of tools and strategies to assess, may be open to incorporating new assessment tools and strategies into their daily practice, and have currently identified systematic observation, performance, rubrics, checklists, and written tests as their most used and most effective tools and strategies.

Music teachers hold strong beliefs about assessment, understand its many roles and recognize the importance it has within their programs. Coping with the challenges of implementing effective tools and strategies and dealing with many factors that negatively impact upon this process have left music teachers feeling that their assessment practices are inadequate. Lack of training, professional development opportunities, resources, and assessment standards have been identified as other issues for music teachers to contend with. It is evident that music educators must now begin the process of examining these many "issues" in order to support teachers in their quest to improve their assessment practice.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

Chapter one of this thesis provided an introduction and rationale for this study by addressing the value of assessment in music education, providing both a statement of significance and of the research problem, outlining delimitations, overviewing the research design and highlighting the definitions used in the study. Chapter two reviewed current and relevant literature related to assessment and specific to the area of music education. It also presented other research investigations related to music teachers' assessment perspectives and practices. Chapter three described the purpose of the study, explained the descriptive methodology design and detailed all aspects of the research conducted. Chapter four presented findings gleaned from the survey and chapter five will now serve to summarize and conclude the study.

When I set out to examine the assessment perspectives and practices of elementary music teachers in Winnipeg public schools, I hoped to shed some light on several issues that I had been struggling with personally throughout my years of teaching. In many ways this has happened. The information gathered from my survey research has impacted the way that I think about my own teaching practices and has satisfied my curiosity beyond my expectations as to what other music teachers are doing with their assessment practices.

After forwarding the survey to all elementary music teachers in the city of Winnipeg, I was pleased to receive a return rate of almost 50%. The study results are representative of urban music teachers' perspectives on assessment since subjects from

all six Winnipeg school divisions chose to be involved. Although the surveys were anonymous, many teachers wrote personal notes extending best wishes and support and expressing their excitement in seeing someone take an interest in the issue of music assessment. One message that really struck a responsive chord with me stated: "Assessment is a timely issue that needs to be addressed as we have no consistency from school to school. Hopefully this survey with be a starting point for improving assessment in music programs in Manitoba". The participation and support of so many elementary music teachers who are in search of the same answers to questions regarding assessment has validated my personal quest for answers and the importance of the study.

Conclusions

The conclusions drawn were based on data obtained from conducting a structured opinion survey with 88 music specialists. The following points constitute limitations of the methodology in reaching these conclusions:

1. The survey was limited only to teachers employed in Winnipeg divisions to the exclusion of all rural school divisions;

2. The content analysis was conducted by a single researcher;

3. The researcher's personal relationship with some of the teachers could bias their responses and possibly impact the results.

The data collected from my survey enabled me to answer the following research questions. My first research goal was to determine the amount of instructional time music specialists devote to assessment. The following findings related to instructional time assigned to assessment were revealed:

1. All teachers indicated that they spent some time on assessment;

2. Teachers fell into two groups when assessing, those who use on-going assessment, (time spent assessing during each class), and those who assess on a less consistent basis (mostly prior to reporting times);

3. Less consistent assessment was reported as being more stressful, difficult to schedule and left teachers with inadequate amounts of assessment data;

4. Those using on-going assessment reported less stress and greater success in assessing;

5. The majority of teachers do not use on-going assessment.

The second goal of my research set out to identify the tools and strategies that music specialists use in their practice. The following was discovered:

1. Music teachers tended to select 6 to 10 strategies that were primarily in the teacher-created category;

2. The most frequently selected assessment tools and strategies were performance/exhibits, written tests, systematic observation/roaming, rubrics, self-assessment, rating scales, and class discussions;

3. All other tools and strategies were chosen by fewer than 50% of the teachers.

4. Student- and technology-based tools were the least used of all tools and strategies; and

5. Many teachers indicated a desire to learn more about utilizing both student- and technology-based assessments in their classrooms.

My third research goal involved having music specialists identify those assessment tools and strategies that they believe are the most effective. The five most effective tools were ranked in this way:

1. Systematic observation and roaming;

2. Performance/exhibitions,

3. Rubrics and checklists; and

4. Written tests.

As a follow-up, the factors that affect assessment practices were examined. My fourth research question asked music specialists to describe those factors that positively and negatively affect their assessment. The factors are as follows:

1. The lack of contact time is the most critical factor;

2. Short music periods, music classes scheduled only two or three times in a teaching cycle make it difficult to assess;

3. Large class sizes, absenteeism, disciplinary issues, and extra planning required for students with special needs complicate the assessment process. Music specialists selected systematic observations, rubrics and checklists in their top five choices of assessment tools because these tools can be used for quick and effective assessment and can be helpful when working with large numbers of students;

4. Frequent pressures to perform and to lead extra-curricular activities detract from the time available to conduct assessment;

5. There are no set standards for assessment;

6. Report cards that do not accurately reflect a student's learning; and

7. There is an outdated elementary music curriculum.

I found it interesting that most music teachers chose to reflect upon the factors that negatively impacted their assessment practices and in fact could not identify any positive factors impacting on assessment practices.

My study had set out to obtain more than just information about the assessment practices of elementary music specialists, hence, my last research goal lead me to examine teacher perspectives on assessment. Educators are aware that assessment is a personalized practice and recognize that an individual's personal beliefs will affect how they will assess. Three sections of my survey were dedicated to revealing more personal information on the participating music teachers along with their perceptions and beliefs about assessment. The demographic information I collected about each participant, that is, years of teaching experience, educational background, and details about their position enabled me to present a general idea of what the "average" Winnipeg music teacher's training and job is like. I felt that it was important to present the data showing that music teachers' positions are very different from that of a regular, academic classroom teacher and that this difference might be reflected in certain beliefs or perspectives that music educators held. The Likert scale survey item clearly confirmed and established specific beliefs about assessment held by those teachers surveyed.

The average elementary music specialist surveyed has worked at least six years in their current school. They have accumulated an average of 12.5 years of teaching experience overall and hold one or more university degrees. Although some work in two schools, the majority of them work only in one school and teach approximately 300 Kindergarten to Grade 6 students. Teaching/student contact time for most music specialists are 30 minute classes on a frequency basis of 3 times in a teaching cycle. The

average music teacher surveyed appeared to be very busy and dedicated at least two hours each week to extra-curricular activities.

Having established a basic composite profile of a Winnipeg elementary music teacher, I was able to determine their specific beliefs and perspectives from the Likert scale responses. Most music teachers agree that assessment plays an important role in their music program and the majority of them believe that assessment in music is critical. Those who were surveyed are less confident about their assessment practices and felt that there is definitely room to improve their skills, as well as the applicability of available tools and strategies. Finally, the majority of the teachers surveyed strongly believe that there are many benefits that result for both students and teachers who use assessment.

Through the use of an adjective checklist I was able to determine how teachers feel about assessment. Although they report that they find it informative and useful, they also report finding it challenging. The participants recognized that assessment is important and needed. On the negative side was the revelation that finding effective tools and strategies and implementing assessment create stress for them.

After revealing important characteristics of the average elementary music teacher and providing an overview of what they believe about assessment, I was curious to see if there were any notable differences between sub-groups of respondents with varying years of teaching experience, and the tools/strategies they use, and their beliefs. There were few significant differences except that teachers with more than 15 years experience tended not to use self-assessment as an assessment tool. There were no differences found between sub-groups and beliefs about assessment.

Utilizing surveys as a research tool enabled me to uncover a wealth of information about the assessment practices and perspectives of Winnipeg elementary music teachers. The teachers that responded to the survey recognized the value of assessment and utilized a variety of tools believed to be effective for assessing their students. However, these same teachers reported a lack of confidence in their assessment practices and saw themselves as being negatively impacted by a lack of contact time with students, large class sizes, performance pressures, and a variety of other factors specific to music teaching. The information obtained from this study has provided a strong foundation with which to begin addressing the needs of Winnipeg music teachers in the area of assessment in music education. Music teachers need to determine what action can be taken to improve some of the factors that plague their assessment practices and to identify supports that can help to improve the effectiveness and success of assessment practices.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are several directions that additional research could take from this study. Extending the study to incorporate the perspectives and practices of rural elementary music teachers or replicating the study in another city like Winnipeg, could strengthen this study's initial findings as well as potentially uncover further information concerning assessment.

Although the written survey responses provided a wealth of assessment information, conducting in-depth interviews with music specialists could allow teachers to freely express their perspectives on and practices with assessment. Interviews have the

potential to delve deeper than written surveys, as well as bring further meaning and explanations to each individual's assessment experiences.

Studies designed to address those factors identified by music teachers as impacting negatively or impeding the progress of assessment practices should be conducted. One could research for instance, whether or not increasing the length of music periods from 30 minutes to 40 minutes could significantly improve the music teacher's ability to assess more successfully.

Lack of confidence with assessment practice appeared to be a major issue for responding teachers. Research related to the role of teacher training and development on both a divisional and provincial level seems necessary. The latter would naturally complement research on the expansion and design of assessment strategies and further learning opportunities for all elementary music teachers.

The obvious lack of "standards" that logically guide the application of assessment practices could lead to research into assessing a newly anticipated provincial music curriculum. Research could be conducted to determine if there might be any benefits in adopting national music standards to help bridge the assessment consistency gaps that appear to exist currently.

Issues of contact teaching time and class size as they affect assessment practices need to be explored. This could also include an examination of current strategies and recommendations for successful assessment in challenging classroom situations.

One final, and perhaps the most important recommendation emanating from this study, would be to examine the possibility of conducting research to identify teacher needs and supports for the development of classroom assessment resources. Research

could prove the need to develop a resource book that would include a series of quick and effective rubrics, checklists, and authentic assessment strategies and tools. This resource could be used to assess all grades and all skills and concepts covered in the existing elementary music curriculum guide. Having a single, central resource to provide "tried and true" and "standardized" successful tools and strategies would save planning time and build consistency among music teachers. It could help to promote ongoing assessment practices and could bolster teacher confidence. The creation of such a resource would be a tremendous support for all music teachers.

The study provided evidence that there is much work ahead of us in the field of music education. It has shown that assessment is important and that time spent assessing, although valuable, is difficult to find due to conflicting demands. Music teachers operate differently from regular classroom teachers. Performance demands and extracurricular activities, as well as all other factors that were identified by the participants, are such that the techniques and strategies that work in a regular, academic classroom do not work in a music class.

Music teachers also work differently from one another and there appears to be a need for more consistent assessment practices for all Winnipeg music teachers. Finding out what tools and strategies are most effective and learning how to best implementing plans for assessment into daily teaching must be shared with all music teachers.

The most important outcome of this survey is that it provides a starting point for further research in the training in and development of assessment tools/strategies and resources that will work for music teachers. The results of the study establish a starting

point that will provide music teachers with a vision to help fuel our search for future

effective assessment practices.

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Appendix A

Survey

Assessment in Elementary Music Education:
Perspectives and Practices of Teachers in Winnipeg Public Schools

Completion of this survey is voluntary. By completing this survey you are giving your consent to participate in this study. Completing this survey is completely voluntary and you may quit at any time.

Please return the survey by November 7th, 2003.

Complete the following information.

1) Number of years employed with your present school as an Elementary Music Teacher _____

2) Total number of years teaching music in the public schools _____

3) Degrees held: (Please check)
   _____ B. Ed   _____ B.Mus.
   _____ B.Mus. & Ed   _____ B.A.
   _____ other (please specify) _____

4) What percentage of time are you hired to teach music:
   _____ Full time   _____ Part-time (specify%)

5) In how many schools do you teach? _____

6) How many students do you teach? _____

7) What grades do you teach? _____

8) How many classes do you teach? _____

9) How many periods do you teach in one day? _____

10) How many minutes is each period of instruction? _____

11) How many times in a six day cycle or week do you see each class? _____

12) What is your average class size? _____

13) Are you presently teaching subjects in addition to music? _____ (Yes/No)

14) Estimate the amount of time you spend each week/cycle on extracurricular activities. _____

15) Please indicate which of the following teacher-created, student based or technology based assessment tools and strategies that you use in your classroom. (Use a check)

Teacher-Created	Student-Based
_____ written tests	_____ self-assessment
_____ checklists	_____ self-reflection (journals)
_____ rating scales	_____ peer-assessment
_____ rubrics	_____ portfolios or processfolios
_____ systematic observing/roaming	_____ interviews or conferences
_____ projects	**Technology Based**
_____ compositions	_____ computer presentations
_____ concept maps	_____ photographs
_____ class discussion	_____ video-tapes
_____ listening logs	_____ audio-tapes
_____ critiques or essays	
_____ surveys/questionnaires	
_____ performances/exhibits	

Specify any other assessment tools/strategies if not listed.

_____

_____

_____

16) Out of your chosen assessment tools and strategies please indicate the top 5 tools/strategies that you use most often in your classroom. Assign "1" to the tool that you use most frequently, "2" to the tool you use second to most frequently etc.

Rank	Teacher-Created	Rank	Student-Based
____	written tests	____	self-assessment
____	checklists	____	self-reflection (journals)
____	rating scales	____	peer-assessment
____	rubrics	____	portfolios or processfolios
____	systematic	____	interviews or conferences
____	observing/roaming projects		
____	compositions		**Technology Based**
____	concept maps	____	computer presentations
____	class discussion	____	photographs
____	listening logs	____	video-tapes
____	critiques or essays	____	audio-tapes
____	surveys/questionnaires		
____	performances/exhibits		

Using the scale of: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree, please circle the number that best represents your beliefs about the following statements;

17) Assessment is an important part of my music program.

     1   2   3   4   5

18) Music is a subject where assessment is not critical.

     1   2   3   4   5

19) I feel confident that my assessment practices are well developed and meet the needs of my students and overall program.

     1   2   3   4   5

20) I feel that there is room to improve my assessment practices in my music program.

     1   2   3   4   5

21) I believe that there are few or no benefits for both students and teachers who use assessment in the music program.

      1   2   3   4   5

22) Circle each word that describes how you feel about assessment in elementary music.

Unnecessary	Informative	Needed	Challenging
Inconvenient	Frustrating	Useful	Stressful
Important	Worthless	Unpleasant	Fulfilling

23) Describe or list any courses and/or professional development experiences that address assessment in music education.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

24) Are there any assessment tools and strategies that you would like to learn more about and/or receive training in?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

25) Please comment on the role of assessment in your music teaching.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

26) List the factors that positively and/or negatively affect your assessment practices.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

27) Do you have any further comments to make about assessment as it relates to you, your students, your school division and your overall music program.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you very much for assisting with this research project. Your input is appreciated.

If you would like a copy of the result of this study please include your name and address on a separate piece of paper.

Please return the completed questionnaire to:

Kristen Hepworth - Osiowy

Appendix B

Introductory Letter to Study for Music Consultants

October 17, 2003

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Kristen Osiowy and I am graduate student at the University Of Manitoba. I am currently conducting a thesis study entitled - *Assessment in Elementary Music Education: Perspectives and Practices of Teachers in Winnipeg Public Schools.* The purpose of this research is to: 1) determine the amount of instructional time music specialists devote to assessment; 2) identify the tools and strategies music specialists use in their practice; 3) identify the most effective assessment tools and strategies employed by music specialists; 4) identify the factors affecting assessment practices in the music classroom; and 5) identify the beliefs music teachers hold about assessment.

With your permission, I would like to send the following survey to each of the elementary music teachers in your school division in mid-October. I am requesting that you facilitate my communication with your music teachers by providing me with a list of each elementary school that employs a full or part-time music teacher in your division.

I believe that there is not enough dialogue existing amongst elementary music specialists in Manitoba concerning the area of assessment. The absence of an updated elementary curriculum raises questions among teachers about what to assess and how to assess appropriately. It is very difficult to identify the assessment practices of music teachers as some divisions have created their own divisional music goals and outcomes while other specialists have been left to develop their own assessment programs. Few professional development workshops pertaining to assessment and different philosophies as to how assessment should be carried out have left us quite unclear as to what if anything anyone is doing concerning music assessment.

The music teachers in your division will be invited to participate in the study by completing a survey which will take about 15 minutes. There is no risk with this survey as participation is voluntary. Teacher confidentiality will be ensured as no names will be attached to the survey and identities can not be revealed in final published reports of the research. All surveys will be stored in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researcher, and data will be retained for one year until the study is complete and then destroyed. Music teacher participation in the survey is critical and the information contributed will be valuable knowledge to the field of assessment in music education.

Your support and role of encouraging your teachers to participate in this study is important. If a large number of music specialists in Winnipeg respond to the survey, this project could yield important findings about music teachers' perspectives on assessment and their practices. A written copy of this study's findings will be provided to you after the completion of the research.

Elementary school lists and addresses can be faxed to me at the number provided below or sent to me via the pre-stamped envelope included with this letter. If you have any further questions or concerns in regards to this thesis study, please feel free to contact me at the number below or my advisor Dr. Francine Morin.

Thank you for your participation.

Kristen Hepworth-Osiowy (researcher)

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you mav contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at

Kristen Hepworth-Osiowy (Researcher)
home phone (   )
work phone(   )
fax(   )
  @   .ca

Dr.Francine Morin
(Thesis Advisor)
University if Manitoba
telephone(474-9054)
fmorin@cc.umanitoba.ca

Appendix C

Introductory Letter to Study for Teachers

Dear Music Teachers,

This invitation, a copy of which should be retained for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

My name is Kristen Osiowy and I am graduate student at the University Of Manitoba. I am currently conducting a thesis study entitled - *Assessment in Elementary Music Education: Perspectives and Practices of Teachers in Winnipeg Public Schools.* The purpose of this research is to: 1) determine the amount of instructional time music specialists devote to assessment; 2) identify the tools and strategies music specialists use in their practice; 3) identify the most effective assessment tools and strategies employed by music specialists; 4) identify the factors affecting assessment practices in the music classroom; and 5) identify the beliefs music teachers hold about assessment.

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I would like to invite you to participate in the study by completing a survey which will take about 15 minutes. There is no risk with this survey as participation is voluntary. Your confidentiality will be insured as your name will not be attached to the survey and your identity can not be revealed in final published reports of the research. All surveys will be stored in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researcher, and data will be retained for one year until the study is complete and then destroyed. Your participation in the survey is critical and the information you contribute will be valuable knowledge to the field of assessment in music education.

Please complete the survey and return it in the included pre-stamped large envelop by **NOVEMBER 7th, 2003.** If you would like a copy of the research findings,

please include your name and e-mail address on the included post card and insert it in the small envelop when you return the survey.

Completing and returning the survey indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agreed to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions form their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Kristen Hepworth-Osiowy	Dr.Francine Morin
(Researcher)	(Thesis Advisor)
home phone ( )	University if Manitoba
work phone ( )	telephone (474-9054)
fax ( )	fmorin@cc.umanitoba.ca
.@. .ca	

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the human ethics Secretariat at

Thank you for your participation.

Kristen Hepworth-Osiowy (researcher)

Appexdix D

Request for Results Post-Card

If you would like a copy of the

Research results

please provide your

e-mail or mailing address below

And return this post card

Thank-you

_____

_____

_____

_____