

A Collaborative Journey to Better Music Teaching Through Authentic Assessment

and

Evaluation: A Narrative Inquiry

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

Assessment and evaluation in music education has been a topic of great discussion over the past number of years. This study investigates the practices and experiences of four music teachers from the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board in Nova Scotia, Canada. The narratives of one teacher's experiences and understandings will serve to inform the development and implementation of more authentic assessments in classrooms where the integrated arts are promoted. Her reflections will be supported by direct quotes from the other three. It is hoped that the reflections shared will prompt others to examine their practices and to explore the assessment and evaluation methods that work best for their students.

Strategies explored by these teachers include portfolio assessment, performance-based assessment, rubric design and implementation, self and peer assessment, and managing assessment with large numbers of students. These strategies developed by the four teacher participants and the story of their journey together during their school district pilot shed important light on where we are with assessing students' learning through the arts and where we need to go. The narrative quality of this study will enhance the reader's understanding of the personal journey of each participant.

The arts community is one of sharing. Hopefully, the experiences shared here will inspire other teachers to step beyond their comfort zones, challenge the status quo, and transform current practices toward a more meaningful, authentic assessment process in music education and beyond.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would not have been able to complete this work without the support and assistance of many people. I will begin with my family: My mother who has always supported me throughout all of my studies and continues to support me every day; and my best friend and companion, Kevin MacNeil who waited while I went off to Prince Edward Island for ten months and put up with all of the late nights and endless hours at the computer. His love has given me strength throughout this process.

My undying gratitude goes out to the three women who gave of their time and expertise to help me with this project. Their words give weight to mine and I am forever grateful. Carol Ann MacDougall, Cathy MacNeil and Mary Jane Ross, I am eternally indebted to you.

I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board and the Cape Breton District Local of the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union for their support in the form of my educational leaves. Without this time away from my teaching assignment completion of this study would not have been possible.

Last, but certainly not least I would like to thank Dr. Eric Favaro for inspiring me to start my work with authentic assessments and Dr. Basil Favaro for seeing me through the writing of this thesis. Their guidance has served me well and I hope my work will inspire others.

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INTRODUCTION

When you were a child, did you ever wonder how teachers came up with your report card marks for work that was not on paper? Did they base their decisions on your behaviour or some other criteria? How were you marked on something as personal as your musical ability? These questions still go through the minds of students, teachers and parents (who were students themselves once upon a time). As a young teacher I had to ask myself “Where will I get the marks that I will record on students’ reports?” This question terrified me and I must confess that my early years of assessment and evaluation were fine examples of improvisation.

The goal of this thesis is to relate to you, the reader, what happened to me as a music educator through the use of new assessment and evaluation practices. I want you to get a sense of how I grew as a teacher through my learnings and to recognize that I am not the same teacher I was when this journey began.

The route I took on this journey began in 1996 with the establishment of a group that would pilot authentic assessment and evaluation strategies in fine arts education with the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board (CBVRSB). I became a member of this group and was joined by several others, three of whom have agreed to make this journey with me. This thesis explores our experiences and describes our feelings in our own voices as we piloted new strategies in our classrooms.

My interest in this topic began with the realization that my assessment techniques were weak. This was due in part to lack of experience, as well as lack of training. I became a member of this group out of personal need.

A year or so before the formation of the pilot group I was called upon to justify a mark that I had given to a student on a report card in November. Other staff members at the school asked me to change the student's music mark based on his performance in other subject areas. The excellent standard he later achieved in music was not apparent at that time. I responded to his parents' request to change his mark by affirming that he had not demonstrated the skills I felt warranted a higher mark. What I hadn't taken into account was the fact that I was new to the school and therefore new to the student. He was a shy boy who didn't know me and I really didn't know him. Once he became comfortable with me I could see that he was indeed a fine student and I was happy to change his mark accordingly later on.

His parents related to me how devastated he was by the evaluation I had given him. He commented that he didn't know why he received the mark and he was very conscious of the fact that it was not as good as his other marks. I became acutely aware of the impact this evaluation had on the boy and I felt terrible. I had so little information in November on which to base the evaluation but I felt pressured to give all of my students a mark and at the time all I had to go on was what I was observing in class. He was a quiet, reserved boy who did not appear to be doing a lot and so his mark was less than fantastic. He did not actively participate in class activities, he often had to be prompted to take part in singing games and he did not volunteer to answer questions that were posed to the class.

He just wasn't ready to let me know him that well. I realized years later that I was not conducting appropriate assessments for this type of student. I was not giving him appropriate opportunities to succeed.

This event changed the way I looked at student assessment and evaluation. It helped to bring all of my inexperience and insecurities to light. Because of this experience, I realized my assessment and evaluation skills were inadequate and that I was not serving my students in the manner that I could. Like many of my colleagues, I had received little or no formal training in assessment and evaluation practices in my teacher training. The questions raised by other classroom teachers, administrators and parents were beginning to get to me. I needed help.

Through participation in the pilot project I developed new assessment strategies and tools, which changed the way I teach. I became interested in exploring the changes that may or may not have taken place in the teaching practices of other members of the pilot group. Would our stories have an effect on other music teachers? Would others examine their assessment practices in a more reflective manner, keeping their students in mind and not just the final grade and dreaded report card? What did we learn? Are we better teachers for our experiences? Has our method of teaching improved the levels of success for our students? What were the best methods of assessment that we tried in our classrooms? How did we accomplish our goals? Are we satisfied with our progress? From my perspective, where do we go from here? What do the terms *authentic assessment* and *evaluation* mean? I must confess that when I started this process I really didn't know. I

wasn't aware of the difference between the two. The Nova Scotia Music P-6 Curriculum defines assessment and evaluation as follows:

“Assessment: the systematic process using a variety of procedures for gathering information on the progress of student learning. Evaluation: the process of analysing , reflecting upon, and summarizing assessment information and making judgements or decisions based upon the information gathered” (p.195).

Having the distinction between the two clarified for me was enlightening. Even though I didn't know it, I had been performing both tasks, just not as effectively as I would have liked. The tools I was using for assessment were not authentic because I was not using a variety of procedures and I was not relating the assessments to my students' understanding of what had been taught. I was relying mostly on teacher observation and a few tests. That is not to say that what I was doing wasn't valid. It just wasn't enough. I was not getting a broad picture of all students because I was not taking into account the varying learning styles of my students.

Svinicki (2004) states that authentic assessment means that the assessment strategy is based on student activities that replicate real-world performances as close as possible. Some would call this performance assessment. Wiggins (1998, in Svinicki) lists characteristics for authentic assessment as follows:

1. The assessment is realistic; it reflects the way the information or skills would be used in the “real world.”
2. The assessment requires judgement and innovation; it is based on solving unstructured problems that could easily have more than one right answer and, as such, requires the learner to make informed choices.
3. The assessment asks the student to “do” the subject, that is, to go through the procedures that are typical to the discipline of study.

4. The assessment is done in situations as similar to the contexts in which the related skills are performed as possible.
5. The assessment requires the student to demonstrate a wide range of skills that are related to the complex problem, including some that involve judgement.
6. The assessment allows for feedback, practice and second chances to solve the problem being addressed. (p.24)

Assessment and evaluation in music education have undergone changes over the past few years. Teachers need to be apprised of the latest developments in this area. The main problem with the literature is its source. Most of the refereed research literature originates in the United States with little from Canada. However, within the past ten years Canadian arts educators have been exploring and writing about the topic (Beatty, 2000; Farrell, 1994; Hanley, 2002; and Smitherin, 1998). This research has influenced the practices of many Canadian teachers. While there have been projects like ours undertaken in assessments more recently, there is little to be found by way of written research reports. Much of the discussion on the topic held in Nova Scotia went into developing the guidelines for assessment in the curriculum documents. This is likely the case in many of our provinces.

Is it really necessary to assess students in the arts?

The literature supports the practice of assessing and evaluating students in the arts, even during the early elementary years (Beatty, 2000; Bell & Bell, 2003; Goolsby, 1999; Lehman, 1992, 1997; McGregor, Lemerise, Potts & Roberts, 1994; Niebur, 1994; Robinson, 1995; Sabol, 2004; Willingham, 1992; Wright, 1994). They give reasons that range from program accountability to developing awareness of program with peers and most importantly enhancing student learning and growth. Their reasons for assessing were

supported in our practices. You will hear how we have come to value assessment as part of our teaching and not just a task that is added on at the end of the month.

How do teachers perform such assessments?

What are the criteria for assessment?

In reviewing the literature it became clear that the strategies for assessment and evaluation are quite varied and depend almost entirely on the experience and preferences of the individual teacher (Lehman, 1997; Niebur, 1994; Porter, 1992; Puurula & Seija, 2000; Robinson, 1995; Stauffer, 1999; Willingham, 1992). The individual teacher is responsible for setting the criteria for her assessments, at times, based on the prescribed curricula (Bell & Bell, 2003; Lehman, 1997; McGregor, et al. 1994; Niebur, 1994; Porter, 1992; Robinson, 1995; Willingham, 1992). This we also found to be true. Within our small community, we four teachers do things very differently. If you were to ask each teacher within our region how they assess certain skills you will find some similarities but you will also find as many unique strategies and criteria as there are teachers.

Are there more effective assessment methods that could be used and did we find them?

Indeed there are, and yes, we did! It is just a matter of teachers being made aware of practical and productive assessment tools and given appropriate training in their use. The literature explores the use of performance-based and portfolio assessments as well as the use of rubric development and scoring for specific projects (Beatty, 2000; Bell & Bell, 2003; Eisner, 1999; Leahy, Lyon, Thompson, & Wiliam, 2005; Lehman, 1997; Niebur, 1994; Robinson, 1995; Scott, 2002). Other methods of assessment discussed and suggested

were embedded assessments, checklists, and self and peer evaluations (Burrack, 2002; Chicodo, 2001; Goolsby, 1999; Sabol, 2004).

Beatty (2000) states that

Authentic assessment accentuates the significance of the process of learning as well as the product. When teachers employ a variety of authentic assessments, students are guided to advance beyond “one correct answer” type of thinking to explore the open-ended problems that encourage higher order thinking skills....Teachers who employ these types of assessments clearly plan authentic and meaningful learning tasks so students will engage in learning opportunities. (p.198)

Do the assessments have any meaning for students?

Do alternative assessments have a positive effect on student learning?

More recent literature (Andrade, 1998; Burrack, 2002; Chappuis, 2005; Hickey, 1999; McTighe & O'Connor, 2005; Sabol, 2004; Sandoval & Wigle, 2006; Winger, 2005) supports the belief that authentic assessments give students a sense of ownership of their work and their involvement in the learning process thereby increasing their understanding of the subject matter and level of involvement in their work.

My former curriculum consultant, Dr. Eric Favaro, supported this belief. I must explain here that in the coming pages when I refer to Dr. Favaro as Eric I mean no disrespect. In fact, I hold him in high regard as a mentor, leader and friend. It would feel extremely awkward to call him Dr. Favaro when he has been known to me as Eric for so many years. In the mid-90's, Eric was the Fine Arts Consultant to the CBVRSB. Under his leadership, we were introduced to the concept of authentic assessment and what it would mean for us as teachers and for our students.

In the winter of 1996, we were fortunate to have a full-day inservice on authentic assessment and evaluation with Susan Farrell. Farrell is a music educator from Calgary, Alberta and author of *Tools for Powerful Student Evaluation: A Practical Source of Authentic Assessment Strategies for Music Teachers* (1994). Most of the teachers within our school board had never heard of authentic assessment before the inservice. That workshop was the bait, and many of us were hooked. Through role-play and demonstration we came to a deeper appreciation of the complexities of the assessment process, particularly in the context of music education. Eric told us that day that in the next school year a project would begin to explore more meaningful ways to assess our students. I was intrigued by the work we had done in the inservice and gave serious consideration to the idea of working more in this field.

In the fall of 1996, some fine arts teachers volunteered to establish a pilot group within the fine arts department of the CBVRSB. The purpose of this group was to explore and experiment with authentic assessment and evaluation. This project developed from a perceived need by the district administration and teachers. Previous evaluations appeared to have been mainly subjective, with little meaning and relevance to parents and students. Authentic assessment strategies would "...require students to actively accomplish significant tasks using prior knowledge, recent learning and the relevant skills to solve authentic or real-world tasks" (Farrell, 1994, p.2). They would also "Stress the importance of the process of learning as well as the product. Using a variety of authentic assessments, students are encouraged to move past the search for the one right answer to explore the many possibilities inherent in open-ended, complex problems, and to draw their own

inferences and connections” (p. 4). The goal of this pilot group was to develop more authentic assessment strategies for evaluation in the Arts and to make recommendations to other teachers within the school board. I was a member of this group as were the three other teachers you will come to know through this study.

Over the next few years our group met to discuss our explorations and to develop new report cards for our school board. We continued to work during inservice sessions, at after school and supper meetings, and shared articles that we found on the internet and in journals. Our work was ground breaking. To our knowledge there was no other group like ours anywhere in the Atlantic provinces. We sensed we were leading the way in assessment and evaluation in our disciplines. When we implemented our new report card it was the only one of its kind in Nova Scotia.

I have always had a keen interest in professional development (PD). When I first started teaching in 1987 I took part in whatever PD sessions were offered within the school board but I did not take any evening or summer courses. Within the following year I felt a need to continue to find out more about music education. Fortunately, Acadia University was offering a three-summer diploma program in Kodaly Music Education. Through this program my teaching methodologies improved., but in retrospect I realize that I still hadn’t received training in assessing or evaluating student progress. While I learned a great deal through this diploma program, skills I would be lost without, but no new skills for assessment and evaluation.

Being an itinerant teacher with the CBVRSB could mean that one might teach in three to five schools depending on a school’s enrolment. One year, I was teaching in

four schools and I knew the next year it would be five because enrolment was dropping in one of my schools. I would like to point out that my circuit at this time had two schools that were over 50kms away from my base school. This meant travelling over 100 kilometres twice a week. It was at this time that I asked Eric if I could please take on the band program at my base school. In the previous five years that I had been there, the school had seen five different band teachers and there were no longer any students enrolled in the program. I promised that I would study over the summer to prepare for the new assignment and knew that I would have support from my instrumental music friends if needed. Eric agreed and as a result the instrumental music methods program at my school began to grow. In 2000, the CBVRSB made instrumental music one of their priorities for sabbatical leave. I was fortunate enough to receive a full-year sabbatical to study instrumental methods at the University of Prince Edward Island. Luckily for me this institution also offered a Master of Education program. Over the course of 2000-2001 I completed my instrumental training and my course work for my Masters degree.

The freedom offered to the students within the Master degree program allowed me to follow my interest in authentic assessment. I chose to make this topic the focus of my research and many of the projects I completed within my course work. This thesis is the culmination of the work started in 1996 with the pilot group, followed through during my sabbatical year, and summed up with the interviews of my participants and the writing of this thesis. Work in this field of education will never be complete for me. Now that I have been awakened to the positive impacts of authentic assessment and evaluation I

continue to assess my methods of teaching and thereby look for ways to improve my students' learning.

RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

During my study year I debated how I would conduct and report my research. I knew that it would be a qualitative study and in conversation with faculty I was introduced to narrative research. When I explained that I wanted to report the experiences of the teachers in the CBVRSB it was suggested that narrative would be the best format for my thesis. Authentic assessments and evaluations involve more than just traditional written and performance testing. Authentic assessments involve process as well as product assessment. They involve the expectations and opinions of students as well as teachers. The practice of authentic assessment involve many qualitative processes. To research the subject in any other way would be a disservice to the topic.

Surveys could have been disseminated to teachers to document current practices but the information gathered might not have been as descriptive or meaningful as the information gathered through in-depth interviews with teachers who believe in the practice of authentic assessment. Eisner (1999) states that performance assessment affords us an opportunity to develop ways of revealing the distinctive features of individual students, to secure information about learning that can help improve the quality of both curriculum and teaching. Using authentic assessments is not just a means to a final mark, it is a medium

for meaningful teaching. I did not feel that a quantitative study using random sampling would have produced the rich information that this purposeful sample achieved.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest that “Thinking about inquiry in narrative terms allows us to conceptualize the inquiry experience as a storied one on several levels” (p.71). Using narrative as my method of research reporting served to legitimize and place at the fore my personal experiences, reflections, and insights (Patton, 1990). Patton also suggests “The power of qualitative data lies within its ability to tell a story” (Lyle, 2005 p.31).

In my opinion, one of the many abilities that humans possess which separates us from the rest of the animal kingdom is the ability to reflect. Lyle (2005) recently described the intent of reflection in research as creating “...a context where teachers can examine, improve and refine professional teaching practice while doing research that is meaningful to participants” (p.14). Reflection changes our understanding. Once we have experienced or learned something new our reflection and self- examination of these events means that we can never go back to the person we were beforehand. Our new understandings and feelings about the experiences have changed us in some way. In paraphrasing Ellsworth (1997), Lyle describes this reflection as “The third person in every conversation...”(p.19). This voice is always influencing what is understood and as a result what we find meaningful.

A qualitative inquiry cultivates the most useful of all human capacities “The capacity to learn from others” (Patton, 1990, p.7). It is my hope that others will learn from my experiences and those of my colleagues. This will be an autoethnographical study

reported through narrative. The journey you are about to follow was my journey. I have already travelled the path. Bochner and Ellis (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000,p.739) describe autoethnography as “An autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural.” This thesis will describe events and situations that have taken place several years ago. These are the recollections of four people and our thoughts and feelings about what we experienced. This is not a recording of action research that was taking place as we were meeting, but of work we had already completed.

Participating with me were three teachers who were involved in a pilot group on authentic assessments with the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board. These teachers include Carol Ann MacDougall, Cathy MacNeil and Mary Jane Ross. When we began our work with the pilot group Carol Ann was teaching elementary classroom music at three schools. Cathy was teaching elementary classroom music in a two-school complex and Mary Jane was teaching at three elementary schools and co-directing a regional honour choir. At the time, I was teaching elementary classroom music in four schools and beginner band in one of the four. Two components of our teaching assignments were to direct choirs in our schools and to teach recorder methods as a pre-band instrument.

I became a member of the pilot group because I felt my assessment and evaluation techniques were inadequate. My co-researchers volunteered for the pilot group for other reasons. A component of this research will examine their motivations for participating in the pilot group. Their continued participation indicated that they supported the work conducted by this group, and that they were using the strategies developed in the

pilot project. Their commitment to change their assessment and evaluation methods indicates to me that their interest in this subject is important. The research findings, as expressed in story, understanding, and reflection reveals an intense engagement with this topic.

Through this personal narrative I take on dual roles of academic and personal self to tell my autobiographical story about this important aspect of my teaching experience (Bochner and Ellis, p.740). I am telling of the journey I began ten years ago and my recollections of the roads I travelled and where they led.

When I began the process of reflecting upon this journey I was reminded of the research I conducted when I was buying my first car. I shopped around and I took many models for test drives before I made my final selection.

I have many fond memories associated with cars and I thin this is why I was drawn to the metaphor of comparing the report card that we designed to the purchase of a new vehicle. When I was a young girl much of my family time was spent in a car. My father was an owner-operator of a lumber mill that was 30 miles away from Sydney. My mother was one of the few women in our neighbourhood who drove and she was the only one with her own car. She had to have a car because our father worked too far out of town to be around when the kids needed drives to sporting events and other after-school activities. My mother piled as many of our friends as possible into the car so that no child would be left behind.

We also travelled on family vacations by car. My earliest childhood memory is of my parents and six children travelling from Sydney to Borden, ON to visit one of my

sisters and her family. What a trip! I was three and my younger sister was 15 months old. That was really the last full family vacation we took. As my brothers and sisters got older and moved away, family vacations became weekend getaways for fewer of us each year until my father's passing.

Living on an island makes travelling by car both a joy and a necessary evil. I hope when you come to read about the report-card-car you will understand the roads it has travelled on this journey.

One of the goals of this research is to explore and describe, through narrative, the changes in our assessment and evaluation techniques. My hope is that other educators will reflect on their assessment and evaluation practices, and question whether or not they are doing what is best for their students. This, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest, is the contribution of narrative inquiry. The studies become important when:

They become literary texts to be read by others not so much for the knowledge they contain but for the vicarious testing of life possibilities by readers of the research that they permit. This use of narrative inquiry extends the educative linking of life, literature and teaching . (p. 42)

According to Clandinin & Connolly (2000), narrative inquiry is a valid form of educational research. Similarly, Eisner (1998) states that

I want readers to know that this author is a human being and not some disembodied abstraction who is depersonalized through linguistic conventions that hide his signature. This approach is more honest. Hence, I make no apology for the personal tone that I hope comes through on these pages. Although my words were prepared on a computer, they were created by a person. I want that to show. (p.4)

Following Clandinin, Connolly and Eisner, I want my voice to be heard as well, and I want others to come to understand how I, and my colleagues, have been changed by this experience.

Time Line

Reporting our experiences began in the spring of 2001 with our initial interviews. Each of my colleagues gave consent to participate in the study and to use her name freely in the reporting of the research. Each interview was promptly transcribed and coded. From this data, questions for the second interview began to take shape. The study was suspended for a few years for various reasons. Life can sometimes interfere with work. When I first set the time line for my study I did not take into account my busy professional and personal life. I was teaching full-time, serving on the executive of the local branch of the teachers' union, singing in a very active community choir and maintaining family relationships. Over the course of 5 years illness came into play as well and I was away from teaching for a while as was the case with one of my participants. It was with renewed energy that I took up the quest for our stories late in the summer of 2005. The second and third interviews were conducted, transcribed and coded that fall. Logs were compared and analysed. Samples from the logs appear in the appendixes.

With the passage of time many things had changed in the lives of my co-researchers. Cathy moved into an administrative role as the Arts Education Consultant for the CBVRSB. Mary Jane moved to a new school that has been piloting a new provincial report card. Carol Ann continued to teach at her school for a number of years with some

changes in her assignments each year. I have left the position I held for 13 years to move to a classroom music position in one school. Through all of this we maintained our workload at school, after-school rehearsals, membership in various performing groups and families. Reflective journals were difficult to maintain. As a result, they are not included in the data analysis. Collections of assessment tools developed and refined by the group were maintained and samples from each of us are included in the appendices. Looking back on the process what became more important to me than respecting the original time line was the fact that the passage of time did not deter our genuine engagement with the topic or our eagerness to share our stories.

Potential Significance

In 1996, when I began my work with the pilot group with the new assessment strategies, I noticed that my students were asking more questions. They appeared to be more engaged in the process of the music lessons and the representations of their work seemed more meaningful. Were these changes occurring only in my classroom? I didn't think so. I believed that the other teachers would have noticed similar changes in themselves and their students. Could this happen elsewhere? I believe so. This is the foundation for this critical case sample. Patton (1990) defines critical cases as, "Those that can make a point quite dramatically or are, for some reason, particularly important in the scheme of things" (p. 174). Marshall and Rossman (1999) state that critical cases permit "Logical generalization and maximum application of [the] information to other cases"

(p.78). It is my opinion that the exploration of changes in music teacher perceptions and practices in one school district will have potential meaning for other disciplines and regions. By describing what we have experienced my colleagues and I will encourage others to reflect on their own assessment practices, including both their successes and failures. Not everything we tried went well. By reading our narrative other teachers will be able to learn from our mistakes and triumphs and venture forward on their own pathways to more meaningful assessment and evaluation.

Bochner and Ellis (2000) might describe my role as a “complete-member researcher” (p.740). I am reporting experiences of a group to which I am a fully accepted member and my partners are completely aware of my actions.

Our understandings and reflections were explored through in-depth interviews and are expressed in narratives of these reflections. We began the data collection with our first interviews where my partners were encouraged to keep a reflective journal on their experiences noting significant events. This process was not as successful as I had hoped because of the gaps in time throughout the study. Each member did maintain a log of assessment tools that they had developed. Our actual recollections came about through the interview process. What was recorded were samples of everyday classroom assessments and the teachers’ opinion of their success. Clandinin (1993) states that through the “Reflective process of constructing and reconstructing personal and practical knowledge, the temporal and social/cultural horizons of each participant would, we hoped be expanded and changed” (p. 8). Through this process we began our exploration of Clandinin and Connolly’s (2000) four directions of inquiry: inward, outward, backward, and forward. We

looked inward at our motivations, outward to the effects of our actions, backward at past practices and actions, and forward to what we hoped to do in the future.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) state that in-depth interviews are best used when “The primary strategy is to capture the deep meaning of experience in their own words” (p. 61). They affirm that this is a significant method of data collection when the focus is an individual’s lived experiences (p. 61). I conducted in-depth interviews lasting approximately 1 hour each with my co-researchers on their current practices and their attitudes towards the progress made in authentic assessment and evaluation to date. I also held a group meeting lasting over 2 hours where we shared our experiences and ideas, where we “talked the talk.” Marshall and Rossman explain this process as one of “mutual and sincere collaboration, a caring relationship akin to friendship that is established over time for full participation in the storytelling, retelling, and reliving of personal experiences” (p. 122). We are, in fact, friends. I have known these teachers for the past 19 years and we respect each other’s opinions. Through these processes (interviews and group meeting) readers will come to hear our voices and share in our understandings of our experiences.

Two in-depth interviews were conducted with each of my co-researchers. The first was held in June 2001 and the second in mid-October 2005. The timing of the June interview was very important because assessment and evaluation was uppermost in my co-researchers’ minds. At the end of June they would have conducted evaluations on anywhere from 300 to 600 students. This interview produced rich data to the study because of its timing. The timing of the October 2005 interview with Carol Ann was dictated by the withdrawal from the study of another teacher because of personal and professional

commitments. The second interview was based on the themes that emerged from the first, with a definite focus on the music report card designed by the pilot group. The final interview was held late in October 2005 in my home. We had a dinner meeting where we could socialize as well as share professional experiences. This interview led to meaningful information because of the discussions generated among four people with common goals and different approaches.

While conducting the data collection through interviews, I had conversations with myself. I asked the same questions of myself that I asked of my partners and recorded my own responses. I interviewed myself first before interviewing the responses of my partners would not influence my own.

With their permission logs maintained by my informants were compared and analysed. Samples from each log appear in the appendixes. The interviews and group meeting were audio taped to ensure accuracy of the verbatim transcriptions, which were made as soon as possible after each session. A copy of the transcribed interview was sent to each participant with encouragement to change any of her response for clarification purposes. All documentation and tapes will be housed in a locked file cabinet until two years after the approval of the research has been received, at which time the logs will be returned and tapes will be destroyed.

I asked my co-researchers if they would like to be identified in the research findings or remain anonymous (see Appendix A). Their decisions indicated there was no need for confidentiality. All members agreeing that having their names associated with the study was significant in that others who may be interested may call them upon for their

opinion on the topic. I also asked Eric for permission to use his name in the study. As mentioned earlier, Eric was our curriculum supervisor when we began working with the pilot group. It was his initiative that resulted in the formation of the group and its subsequent work with assessment strategies and the development of the music report card. I knew that I would not be interviewing Eric but I anticipated that his name would be mentioned. His leadership with the group would have been impossible to ignore. We both felt that keeping his identity confidential would be difficult given the location and timing of the study. He generously agreed to allow his name to stand in the final thesis. Pritchard (2002) recognized this problem when he stated that “Preserving anonymity and confidentiality are especially formidable challenges if the research subjects, or others who know them personally, will be part of the audience of the research report” (p. 5) This concern was alleviated when everyone gave permission for his or her name to be used.

Inductive analysis was conducted to determine themes, categories and patterns. Codes were generated from the data. The codes were organized through colour-coded schemes and also maintained in separate computer files. The computer coding process was conducted using Word Perfect. Analysis of the data was supported with sufficient direct quotations from interviews and journals. Weaving of the data began with the writing of interim texts. Clandinin and Connolly (2000) describe this process as “Texts situated in the spaces between field texts and final, published research texts” (p. 133). The co-researchers were consulted throughout the writing process. They were given opportunity to verify the data, writings, and findings before publication. Their review served as the primary method of data verification. The findings of this study may be limited by my

personal interest in the results. However, the methods used in the data analysis served to validate the findings so that any bias was addressed.

In the reporting of our stories my interview responses appear in the same format as those of my partners. Direct quotes from our interviews appear in italics.

PRELUDE TO THE JOURNEY

I have been in situations as a student where I have felt that I have been unfairly graded for assignments and I had no outlet for these feelings. My perception as a student was that they were anything but authentic. I have had experiences at the high school and university level that have left me frustrated, confused and extremely upset. On a few occasions when I felt I could trust my instructor to answer me honestly, I questioned my marks but I never heard a logical or satisfactory answer to my queries. What was I doing wrong? How would I improve my work for the next assignment? These questions went unanswered. It has only been in writing my story that I have come to see these experiences as learning tools for me as a teacher. These experiences had been lost to me for a while, bad memories I did not want to relive, but they have resurfaced through this writing. My blood boils as I remember these specific situations.

My first memories of frustrating experiences involve English classes with two different teachers. The first was with a short one-page essay. I followed the teacher's instructions and I felt that I had met all of the set criteria for a high grade. Now, I did receive a high grade, a 9 out of 10 but when I asked what I could have done to receive a

higher mark the teacher could not tell me. I recall him saying to me, “What more do you want? You got a 9 out of 10.” To which I replied, “I want to know how to get the 10.” He looked at me like I was some sort of pest and went on to something else. I felt that he just didn’t want to give out a 10. As a teacher, if my students meet the set criteria for the highest mark they get it!

The second instance in high school came about the next year when the class was given a reading assignment with questions to be answered for the following class. When my teacher was checking my work the next day she told me my answers were not correct. I returned to my seat and looked over the questions, referred back to the novel and could see nothing wrong with my answers. When I returned to her desk and asked what was wrong with my work she said my answers to the questions were too short. She even held out another student’s scribbler and said this is the type of answer I want. When I looked at the other student’s work I commented that her answers were simply copied from the book with a few changes to the beginning and ending of each paragraph while my answers said the same thing in my own words. My teacher stated that she did not want my type of answer because it wasn’t long enough. I was so frustrated. I could see no value in learning by regurgitation or answering questions by volume but in order to succeed in her class this is what I had to do.

The worst of all of these memories comes from my undergrad years in Music Education. I went into Music Education because of my love for music. It is still something that I want to share with others. Many people shake their heads when they find out I am a music teacher with total hearing loss in one ear. This was a frustration when one of my

required courses in university was ear-training. I was in this class for 3 years and I can recall very little teaching of ear-training skills happening. In each of the years there were students in the class with perfect pitch and the class seemed to progress at their success rate. I sought out help through tutorials for my weakness in this area but the students with whom I was working were only modelling the behaviours of our professor and this was of no help. This remains the worst educational memory for me. Today, when I teach my students ear-training I give them strategies. I do not assume they can perform tasks without first teaching strategies. I wonder if my former professor ever asked himself what he could have done to help struggling students in his class.

What I have to keep in mind after having these memories resurface is that I do not want any of my students to feel the way I felt. I asked my partners if they had experienced any similar situations as students. They could not recall any, but Mary Jane said something that made me look at my past experience from a different perspective.

Mary Jane

I think that when you wish to learn from a person that you have to submit to their authority. Otherwise a lot of learnings. . . just aren't going to take place and even if at the end of a course you say "I disagree with this person's priorities" or "Some of their perspective is never going to be mine" you still, . . . you conform to it, you have to submit to it. You know, it's part of a contract that you make. And young children of course, don't understand that and you can't expect them to completely understand that but by the time

they're in university they should understand that if you wish to learn from someone, you have to at least for a time say "Alright I'll look at it your way. I'll accept your parameters and your insight."

She has a good point. At the university level, when we seek out certain instructors we look for direction, but as adults we may have differing points of view. However, when a person is in a position of authority, I assume they have a responsibility to make their requirements clear to their students. This is one of the basic tenants of authentic assessment. Students must have control over their final performance through a clear understanding of the criteria and how they are going to be assessed. I did not have this knowledge as a young student.

This understanding does not simply mean giving a break down of categories for final marks. For example: 30% for tests, 30% for reports/presentations, 20% for participation and 20% for attendance. Each category must have clearly set criteria so students will know what they are lacking and where they need to improve. Since going through this process, I have had students who were looking to have their mark changed come to me for discussion. I certainly do not change their marks just because they want me to, but I have made adjustments to some based on a clearer understanding on my part of the student's intent. I am not perfect, and I can make errors in judgement. Yet, I work to treat my students better than I was treated as a student.

My Travelling Companions

Each of us came to the pilot group from different places and for different reasons. Authentic assessment had not been part of our educational background and we did not want that for our students. We were embarking on a journey of self-discovery as well as professional development. The following biographical sketches provide important personal context for understanding each participants' perspective and appreciating the impact of this investigation in re-claiming our own voices.

Joyce (Me)

I come from a family of 10 children where I am the second youngest. My father passed away when I was 12 leaving my mother to hold the family together on her own. That was also the year that my 18 year-old brother was diagnosed with cancer so we had a lot of changes and frightening experiences in our lives. I believe it was my mother's strength that made me the woman I am today. She guided me through the growing pains and made sure I had every opportunity to learn that we could afford. I have had wonderful support from my family and my partner Kevin MacNeil. We have been together for 10 years. We have no children but we are both blessed with large families and lots of love.

I was educated in Sydney graduating from Holy Angels High School in 1982. From there I went on to Acadia and graduated with a Bachelor of Music Education in 1986. I began working for the Cape Breton Regional School Board in 1987. In 1991 I

earned a diploma in Kodaly Music Education from Acadia. I took many different courses over the years from Learning Disabilities to Politics in Education from St. Francis Xavier University and two university levels of Gaelic from the University College of Cape Breton.

My first teaching assignment was classroom music grades primary-six in three schools. Over the years the schools have changed and so has the assignment. I took instrumental music and then visual art to reduce the number of schools I would have to service. Becoming the fine arts teacher changed my circuit from four to two and finally one school.

In 2000 I received a full-year sabbatical to study instrumental methods at the University of Prince Edward Island. While there I also completed the course requirements for Master Degree in Education: Leadership in Learning. This study is the thesis component of that degree.

In my non-teaching hours I perform with the Cape Breton Chorale, a 55 mixed-voice choir, that performs locally three or more times a year and has completed three international tours. I also serve on the executive of the Nova Scotia Music Educators' Association as Treasurer, the Professional Association Coordination Committee of the Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU) and I am the Vice President of Professional Development for the Cape Breton District Local of the NSTU.

Carol Ann

I come from a family of five children -four girls and a boy where I am in the middle. We grew up together in the shipyard area of Sydney. We were a very musical

family in which we all played various instruments -- my Dad being the person who instilled the love of music in us all - -and encouraged us to play by ear. I began playing piano at the age of four, picking out melodies, and my Dad taught me a few chords. At age eight, I began formal music lessons with Mrs. Dorothy Sutherland, a concert pianist who lived nearby. I continued to study with her throughout my school years.

During my teenage years, I played with my family at various nursing homes, volunteering for many evenings of entertainment, which I still do to this day. I played the organ at St. Anthony Daniel Church starting when I was 12, and have played for many masses, weddings and funerals over the years. I am currently the head of Music Ministry for St. Mary's Parish, East Bay.

Graduating from St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish in 1980 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Music, with a double major in Education and Piano, I returned home to Cape Breton and was hired by the County of Cape Breton School Board. In 2000, I graduated from the University College of Cape Breton with a Diploma in Guidance. I have been teaching music in the local area schools for the past 25 years. I also teach piano privately, as well as how to play Cape Breton Style Piano at the Cape Breton Gaelic College and volunteer with the Legion Singers from Branch 128 Whitney Pier.

I am married for the past 24 years to Redmond MacDougall from the Pier and together we have three musical children - Stephen, 20 , and Jennie , 19 ; who are both studying Music Education at Acadia University, and Redmond, who is 16 and in Gr. 11 at Riverview High School. All three of our children play in the Gaelic College Pipe Band in St. Ann's, Cape Breton, and we are very proud of them!

Mary Jane

I grew up in Sarnia, Ontario, the second oldest of six children. My father was a doctor and my mother was a full-time homemaker; both worked very hard and expected their children to do the same. My parents valued education highly and encouraged us all to study as much as we could at university and elsewhere.

I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in English Literature and a Bachelor of Music degree (piano performance) from Mount Allison University and a Master of Music degree (Performance and Literature) from the university of Western Ontario. I attended five summer sessions at the Banff School of Fine Arts, a wonderful opportunity for which I will always be grateful. I married a graduate of Dalhousie Law School who is presently serving on the bench of the Nova Scotia Provincial Court. He and I had three children, one of whom died at the age of five. This event remains the most profoundly traumatic of my life which otherwise has been happy.

I teach elementary music in Sydney Mines and North Sydney and conduct three school choirs including the Northside Honour Choir.

Cathy

I was educated in Sydney and graduated from Holy Angels High School. After completing a Bachelor of Arts in Music (Honours) from Saint Francis Xavier University (St. F. X.). I was employed by the Placentia-St.Mary's Roman Catholic School Board in Newfoundland where I taught Kindergarten-10 music. The next year I moved to Nova

Scotia and was employed by the Halifax County School Board teaching music Primary-9. I returned to Sydney to work as a substitute music teacher for one year with both the Sydney School Board and the Northside- Victoria School Board. I then gained permanent employment with the Sydney School Board and continued in the position of P-6 itinerant music teacher until my secondment as Arts Education Consultant for the CBVRSB, the position I currently hold. Further educational study included obtaining a Master of Education (Administration) St. F.X., a Diploma in Education (Counselling) and Diploma in Education (Curriculum) from Cape Breton University.

Our Motivations

My motivation for joining the pilot group is both personal and professional. I can recall telling members of the group about my experiences with the child whose parents and teachers wanted me to change the mark. It was a humbling experience. I remember feeling terrified wondering what these other teachers would think of me and my lack of experience. Our coordinator Eric Favaro was at that meeting and spoke in my defence saying that I was only trying to be conscientious in my evaluations and in doing so got caught in the trap of not knowing my students well enough to perform meaningful assessments and evaluations within the current time frame. His support meant a lot to me. Others indicated their frustrations at having to assess and evaluate hundreds of students in such a short time and confessed that they had made similar errors in judgement in their careers. I realized I was not alone.

Carol Ann speaks of coming to the group out of a sense of personal need as well. *Well, I suppose it was a need . . . that I felt. . . I needed concrete assessment tools. That you just couldn't pick assessments out of the air. You know, . . . when you look back*

and you see your children...a lot of the times it's good to have concrete things written down that you can say "Well, this is how your child performed in this. And this was the assessment that I gave him in this. . . particularly for parents. She was concerned about accountability. Having something on record to show parents and administrators should be important to all teachers.

Mary Jane's reasons for joining the group were to maintain the integrity of assessment and evaluation in our program. Mary Jane came to the group from the other side of the pond as we say in Sydney. She lives in North Sydney, which just a couple of years earlier, was a separate school board with a different report card. The report card she was using was very skills oriented and very specific. Teachers from the south side were using a reporting tool that gave out only two marks, one for participation and one for skill development. She wanted to be sure that whatever we did we did, not lose sight of the importance of skill development in what we were doing. She states that. . . *Assessment is perhaps the most important thing in teaching.*

Cathy's motivation for joining the group was from a professional development perspective. She saw her participation as an opportunity to apply and deepen her understandings from her recent course readings on authentic assessment. When Eric approached the Fine Arts teachers and asked if any of us would like to participate in the project she expressed a strong desire to become a member and as a result has maintained a keen interest in the topic.

Before we began this process of reflection I asked my partners about their understanding of authentic assessment. What did the term mean to them? From my

research and experience I have come to believe that authentic assessment is almost any form of assessment that is used in *combination* with other assessments to form an evaluation. An accurate assessment of a student's progress cannot be given in a snapshot. Student progress cannot be measured by just one tool because all students do not learn and perform in the same way. Many teachers recognize that some students will always perform well on written tests while others have more success with oral or presentation formats of learned work. Students should be given the opportunity to learn how to present their work in different ways and at times choose the method in which they will have the most success. On-going assessments are used throughout a process and in the final product or performance. Evaluations are then made by summarizing or averaging a variety of assessment marks that have been recorded.

Authentic assessment to Carol Ann means *a real accurate assessment that would involve not just one or two things but many different facets to factor in to give you an overall view of what a child is capable of doing. Not necessarily just one thing. Authentic assessment could not be one thing.* And I agree.

Mary Jane's definition is that *assessment is feedback which in turn empowers the kids by informing them. Ideally, it will communicate to the child what the essential learnings are and the degree of mastery which the child has attained.*

Real life situations guide Cathy's understanding of the concept. She wanted her students to be able to take what they learn in music class and apply it outside of her classroom *to get the students to also look at making connections between the skills that they were learning and their experience of music.* One project she mentioned often in our

conversations was having her students attend a community concert and give a presentation based on their observations of the performance relating to musical learnings from their classes. This, I assume, is an example of transferring complex musical knowledge to real-life situations.

When we first started working with the group some of us were already involved in personal research aimed at increasing our understanding of assessment practices. We were surfing the net and trying to get our hands on anything related to authentic assessment. In 1996 the findings were sparse. Our group was made up of fine arts teachers, and music teachers. In fact, the first year the music teachers were outnumbered by the visual arts teachers. We shared whatever information we found and relied greatly on Susan Farrell's book for reference and guidance.

Why Assess Music?

In my early years of teaching, I did not understand why I was assessing my students. Giving an evaluation was just another professional obligation I had to fulfil. I administered tests so I would have records to support my evaluations but they were not to support learning. When our group got together there was discussion about the need for assessment in the Arts and we knew there would be concerns from the teachers who were not present about the "extra" work these new methods would make for them. We believed in what we were doing and the literature supported us.

Lehman (1997) identified Guidelines for Assessment in music education as taken from Performance Standards for Music, Grades PreK-12: Strategies and Benchmarks for Assessing Progress toward the National Standards (1996), as the following:

- ♪ Assessment should be standards-based and should reflect the musical skills and knowledge that are most important for students to learn.
 - ♪ Assessment should support, enhance, and reinforce learning.
 - ♪ Assessment should be reliable.
 - ♪ Assessment should be valid.
 - ♪ Assessment should be authentic.
 - ♪ The process of assessment should be open to review by interested parties.
- (p. 58)

MacGregor, et al (1994) found that almost 90% of high school arts teachers in Canada rated assessment as desirable, highly desirable or essential. The study reported that teachers felt that, “progress needs to be documented as proof that teaching is indeed happening,” and that, “We need to assess what kids are capable of and what a reasonable sequence of learning ought to be” (p. 21). Goolsby (1999) states that while most teachers agree that frequent evaluation is essential to effective teaching new mandates and public concerns regarding accountability are additional reasons for ongoing assessments. Sabol (2004) also infers that the public’s call for accountability plays a large role in the need for arts assessment. Of primary importance to Lehman (1997) is that without assessment it is impossible to know whether or not standards have been met.

Sabol (2004) asks the following questions of Arts assessment which are echoed in this research. While Sabol is speaking primarily of visual art education transfer of his ideas can be made to music education.

- ♪ For what purposes do art teachers assess?
- ♪ What types of assessments do they use?
- ♪ What assessment training do art teachers have?
- ♪ What is the assessment's impact on student work?
- ♪ What are the teachers' attitudes and concerns about assessment in art education?
- ♪ What general effect has assessment had on art education? (p.5)

Research suggests that some teachers fear that in evaluating student growth in the Arts they will stifle the development of skills and understanding that they hope to measure. Will students continue to create if they fear being criticized? Faced with this problem, many music teachers treat their subject as a participatory event to enrich the school experience, (Willingham, 1992). Their evaluative tools may include pass/fail or successfully/ unsuccessfully completed. These are non-threatening solutions to the thorny task of assessing student progress in music especially when a teacher may be faced with assessing the progress of hundreds of students per term. Teachers often reward attendance and effort over absolute achievement and overemphasize affective or attitudinal goals(Lehman,1992). In 1997 Lehman advocated leading music teachers away from traditional grading methods of relying on non-musical factors to assessing their learning of specific skills and knowledge in music.

Winger (2005) contends that non-academic factors such as work habits, personal responsibility and attitudes are important traits to be assessed. These traits are part of the development of every student, however, Winger also cautions that assessment of growth in this area should not be included in the reporting of academic achievement. From his perspective these factors should be reported separately.

Stauffer (1999) raised concern over the practice of grading students based on their conduct in music class. She stated that this "...not only disregards musical ability as a form of cognitive and emotional intelligence that contributes significantly to each child's development, but also places little value on music as a means of cultural learning and personal expression... Good behaviour is not synonymous with musical growth " (p. 27).

MacGregor, et al (1994), revealed that criteria for evaluation is often set by individual teachers and varies from province to province, board to board, and school to school. Porter (1992), stated that within Nova Scotia there was variation from board to board regarding the use of letter or numerical grades, numbers of terms and reporting periods, the place that exams have in evaluation and expectations for students. It was difficult to discover any province-wide consistency. In fact, in 2000, the Department of Education consultant (Porter) indicated that there were few guidelines for evaluation in the elementary music curriculum. This changed with the development and implementation of the Music Primary-6 curriculum in 2002. Guidelines were developed however there is no standard method of reporting student progress in the province to date.

All of the members of the pilot group entered into the project because they believed in the value of assessment in the arts. We felt strongly that improving our assessment strategies would result in improved learning of our students. We went back to our classrooms and began our work. It was suggested that we start small, just one or two classes at first, to give ourselves time for tinkering. Self-assessment became part of our experience as we determined what went well and what did not in our own classrooms.

THE TRAPPINGS OF OUR JOURNEY

In order to make any journey pleasant and successful you have to have the right gear and the means to travel. The trappings that were necessary for this journey were the assessment tools used by teachers to form the body of work that becomes the evaluation. What were these trappings, and how did we put them together? They were the tools of assessment and evaluation and the journey of discovery travelled by the four of us, was at times rough, but still rewarding.

Training

My undergraduate degree was packed with required courses in music and Music Education. The Music Education classes were primarily pedagogy courses on how to teach particular skills. I must admit that even my classroom method courses were lacking in classroom management skills and I received most of my practical knowledge from the teacher who sponsored my practicum. I cannot recall at anytime during those four years receiving any instruction or advice on how to conduct assessments.

When I asked my partners about their training with this aspect of education their response was not surprising. During their teacher training they had not received training in assessment and evaluation either. Mary Jane mentioned a philosophy professor who led by example from whom she learned some assessment techniques but she admits to not having any specific training in assessment strategies.

In the second year of our pilot group, I asked a new member to the group about her training. She was a recent graduate of Acadia University, my alma mater. I asked if she

had received any instruction on assessment and evaluation and she replied that she did. She indicated that the new Music Education faculty member felt assessment and evaluation were an important facet of teaching and gave her students instruction on how to conduct these very important tasks. I was so relieved to hear this. I did not want to hear that teachers graduating 10 years after me were not trained in one of the most important tasks in education.

Rubrics

Research suggests that when students understand, and are involved in the development of the criteria of an assignment or project, they will perform better (Andrade, 1998; Hickey, 1999). Rubric design is extremely important in the development of alternative assessments. Hickey (1999) stated that rubrics engage students in the learning and evaluation process. When students work with and are assessed according to rubrics, grades do not take them by surprise, puzzle them, or leave them without feedback, as is often the case with apparently arbitrary letter grades.

All research participants use rubrics in our assessment practices. My recollections of the first class where I developed a rubric are memorable. I think my students thought I was crazy. What was I thinking allowing them input in how they would be assessed and what would be the important elements of music to be assessed? We were working on a short composition project and we discussed what was required in a composition—elements of beat, rhythm and melody. We decided how long the composition should be. We determined what rhythmic and melodic notes would be required. The first rubric was four

points with four meaning that all of the criteria were met and one meaning that the project was not completed and little attempt for success had been made by the student.

I had a little difficulty with this process myself. I recall doing assessments and giving numerical grades for each musical element. I gave five points for metre, five for accurate performance of written rhythm and the same for melody. I then awarded five points for how well the student applied themselves during the process. So, if a student received a 17, I averaged that to a four. Likewise, if they scored a nine, I gave them a two. I simply divided a total of 20 by 4 and presented the marks. When I reported back to the group about my experience it was pointed out to me that was not the proper use of rubrics. Assessing with rubrics meant that the students had to meet the criteria set in the rubric design. To achieve a four a student had to meet all of the criteria, not most. If they did not then they should have received a three. I learned from this, and now student work is recorded and reported using a rubric that is clearly explained to the students before hand.

Although our individual experiences were different, we all recognized that the process was one of growth. Just as we were learning to conduct new assessment strategies our students were learning to take an active role in the process.

Joyce

I think I use rubric design for self, peer and teacher assessment the most. I find this process very useful. The students take part in some of the rubrics designed and therefore know exactly what is expected in their work. There are some rubrics that I design and the students know their content before they begin their work so they are able to constantly monitor their progress in order to achieve the highest level of success.

Carol Ann

My first attempts were with rubrics. And it was for the recorders. This was because it was a simple one, to my mind, to use, because it was very straight-forward as far as the children were concerned. I could specifically ask, "Did you have a squeak? Was there air escaping from any of the holes that you were holding down?" I could be very concrete and specific about that and to my mind it was an easy one to do. And for the students it was easy to do. It was kind of basic. I really wanted to be able to assess the children rather than them play for me and me give them a mark, I really wanted them involved in the process and I thought it was successful. It took a little encouragement for the children to write. You know if you were looking for anything more than a yes or a no. It was really hard to get that out of the kids but as they got used to doing them they became better at it.

Mary Jane

I have incorporated rubrics from the assessment pilot and I have found them to be very useful. It is important to be as explicit about marking criteria as possible. The rubric is a means of having the children reflect on their own performance and that of others in terms which will be highly relevant to the final mark.

Cathy

The initial experiences with rubrics required me taking the lead in the process. I had to model at first so that the students could understand the procedure. Subsequent activities flowed very smoothly as the students' comfort level with rubrics increased.

I learned that it was important to have the musical skills firmly in place. This allowed the students to take the next step and use their knowledge to create compositions, to reflect on their work and the work of classmates, and to critically analyze music played and/or heard.

McTighe & O'Connor (2005) describe the rubric process as:

...presenting evaluative criteria and models of work that illustrate different levels of quality. Unlike selected-response or short-answer tests, authentic performance assessments are typically open-ended and do not yield a single, correct answer or solution process. Consequently, teachers ...need to evaluate products and performances on the basis of explicitly defined performance criteria.

A rubric is a widely used evaluation tool consisting of criteria, a measurement scale...and descriptions of the characteristics for each score point. Well developed rubrics communicate the important dimensions, or elements of quality, in a product or performance and guide educators in evaluating student work (p. 12).

It is always important to make the criteria known to the students before an evaluation is conducted. One problem I encountered after being at my school for a number of years was one of familiarity and of simply forgetting what you have done with one group or another from one year to the next. I recall a situation a couple of years ago where I conducted a performance assessment with a group of students for recorder. When I met with a couple of parents a few days later they were upset that their children had performed poorly and the students were disappointed as well. I was surprised by their reaction

because their children had performed well. Then I realized that I had not explained the rubric to the students before their performance. They, as well as their parents, thought they were being scored out of ten instead of a five-point rubric. I discussed my error with the parents and they were relieved to know of their child's success. In the next class with these students I explained the rubric and we all felt much better about the experience. I couldn't believe I had done that. I always explain rubrics before an assessment so students understand where their marks come from and how they can improve the next time. This experience prompted me to develop an assessment sheet for recorder performance that included their level of performance and suggestions for how they could improve.

Reflection of this episode was an authentic assessment of my teaching. I learned from the mistake in not informing my students, and improved my performance based on what I had learned from the earlier experience.

Self and Peer-Assessment

While rubrics are extremely useful for informing students of required elements for achieving success, the assessment tool that is most useful in their personal growth is self/peer-assessment. Just as the example of my personal reflection above prompted me to develop a new recording tool and to be more cognisant of the information that I share with my students, self-reflection for students helps them improve their personal growth and performance.

Self-reflection and assessment are not skills that children develop on their own. They have to be taught how to assess themselves and others. This is done by teaching them to ask appropriate questions of themselves. When first teaching this technique to my

students I ask them to imagine that they are me—What would I be looking for in their performance and what would I suggest to them to improve their performance the next time? This gives them a starting point and we work from there. We will often start with a simple peer-assessment. Children often find it easier to critique other's work before reflecting on their own. All participants noticed that children are far more critical of themselves than we would ever be of them. They take this task seriously and act responsibly in assessing themselves and others.

Nova Scotia's Music Primary-6 Curriculum Guide (2002) asserts that,

Through assessment, students are encouraged to take responsibility and ownership for their learning, and teachers are able, also, to reflect on content (what is learned and taught) and process (how it is learned and taught). Ongoing assessment, both formal and informal, by the students themselves and by teachers (in effect, a dialogue about work and the ways of working) yields revealing profiles of development and promotes learning and achievement of personal best. (p.195)

As early as 1993, research was conducted in the area of performance-based and self-assessment (Hewitt, 1993). Reflective assessment procedures can inform teachers and parents about instruction in arts education, Wright (1994). Giving students the opportunity to self-assess their work often leads to improved performance for their final grade. As mentioned earlier, Farrell (1994) states that students' success in understanding their work in relation to others and building on their strengths "Requires them to stand back from their work and consider it carefully, drawing new insights and directions for themselves as learners. The opportunity for such awareness grows out of the ability to judge and refine one's work before, during and after it has been attempted" (p. 7). This process can be fulfilled through journal writing, reflection worksheets and interviews. Farrell offers suggestions for student journal writing through prompts for their reflections. She gives

possible questions students can ask of themselves while working and provides samples of student self-assessment worksheets (pp. 81-87). These techniques are also supported in the Nova Scotia Department of Education Music Primary-6 curriculum document (pp. 232-242).

I was recently introduced to the writings of Bernice McCarthy and her books *About Teaching* (2000) and *About Learning* (2000). Her writings about student self-assessment support the need for voice, the deeply personal voice of the student. It must be heard and respected (p. 267). She recognizes that some learners are more comfortable reflecting while others prefer action and assessments must be designed to accommodate both types of learners (p.7). In discussion of the design of these assessments McCarthy questions

Do your students see relationships that connect for them? Do they deal with content in terms of essential questions, questions that go to the heart, that are contextual, questions that when pondered, discussed, and answered lead to essence? Do they search and find usefulness in the learning? Do they adapt, create, and integrate? Do they gain more power? Do they relate more meaningfully to their world?

Assessment that leads to these things requires the honouring of both the inner and outer voices.

Create assessments that invite the conversation between the inner voice of the Self and the outer voice of the experts. Teach students to trust their own subjectivity while developing their objectivity with expert help.

Honour both voices in your teaching and your students will come to trust both voices for themselves. (p. 152)

When I first started teaching it didn't occur to me to invite conversation with my students about their learning. It simply wasn't part of my experience, or training. My early teaching years were teacher-centred. Upon reflection, one of most important goals as teachers has become to teach our students to be independent of us. I want them to feel confident in their abilities and understandings and to take responsibility for their development. This means taking on the role of facilitator.

Leahy et al (2005) support the practice of self and peer-assessment explaining that when students assess others they are forced to reflect on their own understanding and as a result their performance may improve. They assume that students will engage with each other more than they will with a teacher because they speak the same language and therefore won't simply sit and accept what they might from a teacher. They feel free to talk to each other, learn from each other, and grow because of the process.

Portfolios

A discussion of assessment in the arts would not be complete without discussing portfolios. As a group, we discovered we were using portfolios in different ways, and that portfolios have come to mean different things for different teachers. Teachers have been taught to think of portfolios as visual art teachers do—a representation of the student's best work. This became difficult in our music class because of the number of students we teach and their grade level. Portfolio assessment is difficult in the early elementary years, and time-consuming at the upper elementary years, but not impossible.

Research indicates that portfolio assessment has become a popular tool for arts teachers. This tool appeared in the Visual Art classes and then appeared in the other arts disciplines (Goolsby, 1995, 1999; Hewitt, 1993; MacGregor, et al., 1994; Madeja, 2004; Niebur, 1994; Robinson, 1995; Sabol, 2004; Serafini, 2000). Goolsby advocates using portfolios more as teaching tools rather than an evaluative instrument. Teachers should not be turning to the portfolios at report time to collect data on the student. The students and teachers should be using the portfolios in the learning and teaching process by examining its contents and making choices based on work that has been done and determining what

the final product should be. He cautions that without clear criteria of what should have in the portfolio teachers may abandon objectivity and accountability. Without proper planning, portfolios may just become busy work in the music room and a storage bin for assignments.

In keeping with Goolsby's assumption about busy work, this is what happened to me. The portfolios became a place for my students to keep their song and worksheets, and a place to store materials. I simply found it took too much time to plan for their proper use. I'm working on that now, trying to improve how the students use their portfolios but given that the workload hasn't changed any so time is still a factor. The following is a conversation that was held between participants during our group interview. I asked *if* they were using portfolios in the programs and if so how were they used.

Cathy

I started to. I did. I tried a couple of different ways..and it just got...I tried keeping them in class in 4C and 4A but it got too time consuming passing them out in each class. My last effort was at the beginning of the year when I asked them to get the folder with the pockets and that this would be their music portfolio and that any handouts, any song material, any of their works, any of their reflections was to be kept in that. But it still wasn't, it still didn't go as perfect as I would have liked. . . (all chuckle) because they forget. And then I would even take the long folders and make a pocket folder and then they would have to remember to take it from class and . . . so that's where it ended up for me.

Carol Ann.

I still use portfolios. But I've never kept them in my room. I've always made it their responsibility to come to music class with your recorder, your portfolio and a pencil. And if you're not in recorder your portfolio and a pencil, always. Uh huh . . and I can meet them at the door "You don't have yours. Where is it?" "Back in the classroom." Anyway, and over the years. . . I still have days where I send kids back to the class to get them.

Mary Jane

I keep them, they have duo-tangs which function as portfolios and I have plastic lid boxes for each class. I give them pencils when they need them and I take them back when they don't. I just started that this year.

Joyce

Now, I was using portfolio. . .I don't use their binder as a portfolio I guess. It's just a holding tray . . . It's just where they put their stuff...uh huh...and the portfolio as an assessment tool?. . I tried that and I just found it so time consuming. . .uh huh. . . That I couldn't manage it with seeing them for two 30 minutes over a cycle, and to take out their portfolios and they weren't independent enough to submit things into their portfolios that they had completed, that they wanted me to listen to or have a look at or whatever. Their reflections, now I suppose, their reflections did go in their binders, they'd hand them to me first and I'd have a look at them and then they went back into their binders. . .uh huh. . .

and so that became the catch-all sort of thing. But I guess after a couple of years it was just so frustrating to try to use them as an assessment tool that I kind of gave up on it.

Cathy

And there are so many students now who have. . . if you're asking them to take a few minutes to reflect on something, so many of them have difficulty in writing..right..some have to do it orally so you have kids who, they would need half an hour just to write a sentence...uh huh, (all agree).

I think you can sense a bit of our frustration with this process. We all know the value of portfolios but at the elementary level they have come to mean “scribbler”—a place to store information for future reference, as a reflective journal and a place to store assessments and feedback. Is there room for improvement in this area of assessment? Of course there is. What we need, we conceded, is someone to show us how to make this work in a timely fashion.

Checklists

Probably one of the most utilized assessment tools in a teacher's tool kit is the checklist. What would we do without it? It lies there at the back of our plan-book waiting to be filled with useful information about students' progress. Did Joey sing in tune today? Y/N. Did Suzy keep a steady beat? Y/N. Little snapshots of skill development taken after working on the concept for a while. These checklists are also useful in keeping track of whether or not students are prepared with their required materials each day and maintaining

records of student behaviour and attendance. Irregular attendance in a music class that takes place for two 30-minute periods over a six-day cycle can radically affect a student's progress. Parents are not always aware of the impact of regular absences.

I once had a student in a grade one class who had music first thing in the morning on two different days. He was habitually late by almost 15 minutes each day. Now this was not the student's fault. His parents drove him to school. When I contacted the parents and explained that their son was in fact missing half of the year's instruction by missing half of every class they were shocked. They had no idea that being a few minutes late each day could have such an impact on their child's development. His promptness improved for a while but I suspected this would not last so, the next year I changed the schedule to make sure that any grade with the first period time slot would have a different schedule for their second class so this would not happen to any other child. I was able to keep track of this child's pattern because of my checklist. It was gratifying to have that record as support of my claims.

I have a little singing game that I play with my students at the end of class to line them up at the door. It's called "Toast." They curl up into a ball on the floor and pretend that they are in a toaster and I sing,

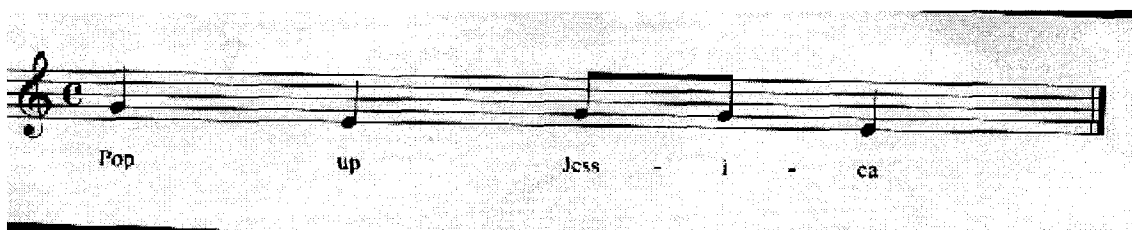


Figure 1

The child in turn sings another name.

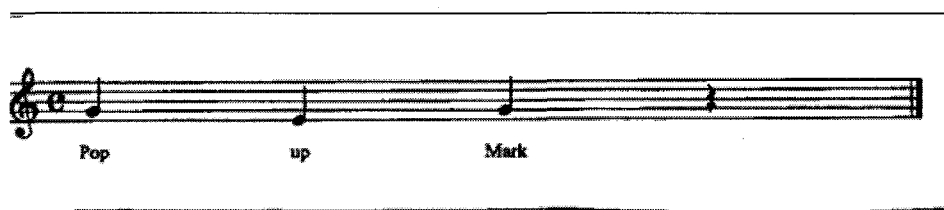


Figure 2

She then lines up at the door and so on. This allows me to hear each child in the class sing by themselves and I record their success in my checklist. I also record if a child needs help in this area and I make sure I work more closely with that student in the future to develop that skill.

Carol Ann

I find I use checklists a lot. I'll use them to record specific things, like do they sing in tune? For singing individually, I'll do little check marks for that because we'll often do things where they come up and sing a little line by themselves. And for participation I will sometimes sit at that piano and I kind of peruse the room as I'm singing the "Hello" song, . that tells me right off, that tells me right off the bat if a child is participating and I record that in my plan-book.

I usually write down in my plan book, on my lists as to skill level. Whether they have done, what they have done. You know, if we've done a sheet I usually mark how they have done if I marked it out of ten or whatever. I keep lists of that as well. So by the end of the year my plan book has maybe 15 rows of what we have done through the year whether it's, you know, checking of participation, singing or whatever depending on the grade.

Mary Jane

I use charts for recorder so, you know looking at the chart, keeping checklists. When they're singing a song, are they reading? You know, that to me is really important because we're trying to teach them to read music so we'll focus on that. And then, generally responsiveness, and it doesn't have to be verbal. It can just, you know, they can indicate their participation or pleasure in something just by their facial expressions and of course they're not distracted. So I would just use checklists for participation and maintaining records for certain skills.

Niebur (1994) suggests making assessment part of the everyday music lesson and she offers several examples of how this might be accomplished. These records could then be maintained in checklists. Brophy (1997) concludes that singing games are valid and reliable assessment tools for vocal pitch accuracy. Marshall (2004) expands on Brophy's ideas by stating that rating scales for specific skills should be developed that are relevant to the teacher's priorities and to the curriculum. By focusing on rating only one dimension of musicianship at a time assessment can be embedded in the music lesson (Chiodo, 2001; Keenan-Takagi, 1999). Clearly, there are many strategies that can be adapted for teachers with high student numbers. In my opinion, these strategies need to be identified and conveyed to teachers.

I recently had a young teacher with our school board speak about the checklists in my plan-book. She had been substituting for me for an extended period and had the opportunity to peruse my records. She commented that she learned so much about assessment and maintaining records when she was teaching in my program. She was able to examine my records and speak to me about how I conducted my assessments. When she

went on to a permanent position of her own she felt confident in her ability to prepare and maintain records for her own students. This conversation reiterated to me the need for teacher training in assessment strategies.

Teacher Assessment & Feedback

The most important form of assessment for students is the teacher's assessment. Supposedly, we are the experts on the subject being taught. We are their guides on this journey of discovery, and we are responsible for seeing that they receive the best direction possible. Students look to us for help with the simplest to most complex problems and, therefore, teachers must provide to them the information they need to succeed.

Being successful in a music class is both easy and difficult. There are skills that are more intricate than others and, therefore require more effort, but success in a general music class is not an impossible task. I explain to my students that as long as they are giving their best effort in all aspects of music they will learn. Through this effort they will develop the skills required in the program and they will come to understand the discipline required for higher- level performance.

When discussing rubric design earlier, I suggested the need for students to understand what is required of them before they perform so they will understand how I arrive at a mark for their project. This does not relieve me of the duty of giving feedback to my students. I cannot assume that because they had the rubric in advance they will fully comprehend their recorded grade for a project or performance. They still need a follow-up from me to explain their shortcomings and to give direction for future improvement. Similarly, McTighe & O'Connor (2005) state, "Skill development and refinement result

from the combined effects of direct instruction, modelling, and opportunities to practice guided by ongoing feedback . . . All kinds of learning . . . require feedback based on formative assessments”(p. 15). Clearly, teacher feed back is important to students.

Most feedback in the music class is delivered informally and through the delivery of a lesson. One of the quickest feedback activities I use in class is a self/peer assessment on a class performance. I can simply ask afterward “What can we do to improve that performance the next time?” Through this dialogue I respond to student suggestions with reinforcement or gentle correction.

When individual feedback is required it is usually done in a more private manner. For example, I often give feedback in writing. Whenever I have a major unit assignment for students I give them a copy of the project criteria and rubric in advance of their presentation. I want them to achieve the highest level of success possible. After their performance I give them a written assessment of their presentation and suggestions for how they may improve their work in the future. I usually give this to them during a class activity when the rest of the class is busy working independently and I can have them come to my desk and explain their mark to them in person. This conversation gives them the opportunity to ask any questions of me regarding the mark they received.

I also give a written assessment for recorder performance. At the end of a performance assessment I give the student a small form that indicates the level of performance they achieved, areas where they were weak and suggestions for improvement for their next assessment. I find this has works well for both me and my students. I feel better about what I have to say to the students because I am giving them suggestions for success and they, in turn, have something in their hand that they can refer to when practising for the next performance.

This type of assessment is not new to music education. Through festival performances many teachers have experienced this type of assessment through adjudication. How many of you have performed in music, speech or drama festivals to have your performance commented on by a perfect stranger who knew nothing about you or whether or not it just wasn't your day? Still, you took what they had to say and you left the performance hall to reflect on their comments at your next lesson. Your teacher likely went over the comments with you in your next lesson or class and gave you a second opinion of your performance and if you were really lucky the comments were worthy of review and contemplation and they helped you to improve your performance. As teachers, we know our students better than an adjudicator knew us and we can be more sensitive to changes in our students. We can tell if nerves are involved and give students encouragement through our comments.

In my early years of teaching it would never have occurred to me to use feedback as a teaching tool. Why would I give feedback to students? They wouldn't be able to understand where their marks came from. My students rarely even knew what kind of a mark they received for various skills. That is not to say they know everything now but they know more. My records are much more transparent because my students know what to expect. In my olden days I gave the marks out and the students took them. There was no discussion and I didn't think there needed to be. What would my students know about what made a good performance? After all, I was the expert. As experts in the field, I assume as teachers that I have a responsibility to give good feedback to students.

Mary Jane

I really hope the important assessment is teacher assessment. I continue to assess individual skill levels in matching pitches, keeping steady beat or echoing rhythms or holding a part in two-part texture by listening to individual performances on given days. I continue to assess understanding of rules of notation by individual written work. These are according to my definition, authentic ways of assessing the musical ability of the student. These assessments emanate entirely from the teacher who should have a more highly developed awareness of the accuracy of pitch or rhythm and the rules of notation than the students have. However, if the student cannot self-assess then their progress will be very slow. Furthermore, if the criteria upon which the teacher/examiner's assessment is based is not understood by the student, then she may decide that the assessment is based on whether or not the teacher "Likes" them. The sense of victimization which an unfavourable assessment can arouse is found wherever critical thinking is absent. The students must understand the criteria on which the assessment is based, and be able to apply these to their own performance and that of others. For work conducted in the classroom I put comments on their copies of the manuscripts and then if they'd done some self-assessment I would check it off or if I thought it was not honest or inaccurate in some way I would put a comment on it so they could refer to it later on.

Cathy

When I would work on an assignment in class I would just take a few moments to look over their work and then I would pass that back to them. When I assign that grade 6

project where they had to analyse a piece, at the bottom of what they wrote I would have a scoring scale of something out of five—choice of music, the written or oral, how it was expressed, even for spelling because there should be literacy across the curriculum. And so that they knew right away what each section was worth and so that was a numerical mark that they get for that. I guess that was broken down a little more that they would get a number mark for that particular project. They knew what the expectations were. But that was just ticked off at the bottom and it was passed back with their sheet and it went in their folder. They had almost immediate feedback of their presentation.

Carol Ann

I keep student feedback in their duo-tangs, in their folders that they have for me. If we did a rubric and they completed the project their assessment goes into that. But now, mind you, before it goes in there I have it listed in my plan- book. I also give them a mark that goes into their duo-tangs.

On any journey, travellers need a way to get from one point to another. Our journey was one of discovery, exploration and implementation. We were continuously trying new strategies, getting feed back from others, and going back to our classrooms for more. In the mean time, the group was also working to improve the reporting instrument for arts education for our school board. I will use the analogy of buying a new car to illustrate the process we went through on this journey to the final report card we use today.

OUR MODE OF TRANSPORTATION

My car is the vehicle that gets me from one point to another. In a similar way, think of the report card as the vehicle that gets information to the parents. The car ride taken by the pilot group to explore authentic assessment had another purpose. We were also working toward developing report cards for visual art and music at the elementary level. This work was truly innovative and the ride was exciting. As participants in the pilot group, we were directly involved in the development of a new reporting instrument. This was not a top-down implementation of an instrument with which we had no experience. We were the designers and we had the responsibility for both layout and organization.

Our first planning meeting for the report card design is memorable. Eric spoke to us as a parent, not as our supervisor. He mentioned that as a parent, the mark that his children received for music meant little to him. It did not give him any specifics about their skill development. He did not know if their participation mark was based on behaviour or other factors. He was not criticizing the music teacher he was criticizing the report card. He mentioned that as a music educator he didn't know what the marks meant so how did the average parent feel? What did they think about their children's mark and about what was being taught in a music class?

My First Car

When I started teaching in 1987 I bought my first car that took me to three different schools over a six-day cycle. In November I had to give an evaluation for approximately 700 students in those schools. I remember feeling highly stressed at the time. I was a new

teacher with a huge task for which I had no training. I felt so incompetent. When I look back on that situation I feel as though I was professionally negligent as well.

I taught my Primary-Grade 2 students for an hour a cycle and the Grades 4-6 students for one 40- minute class a cycle. I didn't have a clue who most of those children were. How was I supposed to give them a report card mark? But I did. That's what I was getting paid to do. How could I admit that I felt like the car was going off the road? I was terrified as parent-teacher interviews approached that I would have to admit to a parent that I didn't know who their child was. When I was filling in the mark sheet to pass into the classroom teachers I was racking my brain to put faces to the seemingly endless list of names before me. Still, I went ahead and did what had to be done.

For music I was required to give one mark. I had no place on the report card to make comments and I was not invited to give input to the classroom teacher regarding a student's progress in music. It was a very isolating process. The evaluation scale I worked with at the time was as follows:

- E Excellent
- VG Very Good
- G Good
- HD Having Difficulty
- IP Insufficient Progress

The mark appeared to the parents in the following format:

MUSIC.....VG

Figure 3

Reducing the student's progress to one letter-grade was difficult, intimidating and frustrating. The mark said little about student progress and in my opinion, said more about

their behaviour and attitude in music class. After all, what else did I have time to observe of their progress in the short time I had known them.

The Tune Up

As with any vehicle, tune- ups and tweaking are required. By the early 1990's our school board experimented with reporting with numbers instead of letters for progress reporting. This seemed so revolutionary at the time and it didn't last long. I believe it was because the community of parents, teachers and students were not educated on the purpose of the change or its need. The marking scale on the report card appeared like this:

1 or Excellent

2 or Very Good

3 or Good

4 or Fair

5 or Insufficient Progress

Subject	Nov	Feb	June	Yearly Average
Music	1	2	1	1

Figure 4

This vehicle wasn't any different from the first. The information was the same it was merely represented with different nomenclature. It was like buying the same model car in a different colour. Music teacher still had no direct link with parents in reporting the progress of students.

The Overhaul

After a few years every car needs an overhaul and ours was finally getting one. The previous system of marking lasted a few years before we were introduced to yet another way to report our students' progress. We went back to a more traditional reporting code and we now had two area of development to report, skill development and participation. I was pleased with this progress to two marks because I was reporting on the students' skill development. Parents would at least know there were skills being taught in the class and their child's mark was not based on behaviour. The report card of the mid-90's had the following layout:

E	Excellent Progress
VG	Very Good
G	Good Progress
T	Tries and has some success
IP	Insufficient Progress

Music	Nov	Feb	June	Final
Participation/ Skill	E/ VG	VG/ VG	E/ G	E/ VG

Figure 5

While this report card was an improvement over the previous, it was still limiting. I still had to submit my marks to classroom teachers and hope that they would transfer them to their report cards accurately. If I wanted comments made on the report card I had to ask the classroom teacher to address any concerns on my behalf. I still had no direct means of reporting my students' progress. It was like taking transfers on a bus route to get where you wanted to go instead of getting in your own car.

Three participants in this study were using this report card when we came to the pilot group as teachers of the Cape Breton District School Board. Mary Jane was using a different report card with the Northside Victoria District School Board. On the northside the teachers had a very detailed report that was individualized and skills oriented. The rubric for their report card was similar to the one with which we were working with ED for Encounters Difficulty substituting IP for Insufficient Progress. Each term, November, April and June, student progress was reported in the following manner:

1. Skills

A. Singing	ED T G VG E	Comments _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
B. Listening	ED T G VG E	
C. Reading/Writing	ED T G VG E	
D. Rhythm/Movement	ED T G VG E	
E. Playing Instruments	ED T G VG E	
F. Other	ED T G VG E	
2. Class Behaviour	ED T G VG E	
3. Participation	Reluctantly Eagerly	

Figure 6

In 1996 the two school boards amalgamated to become the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board. With board amalgamation came the joining of the two fine arts departments. In the mid to late 1990s, ours was the largest fine arts department east of Montreal. We are very fortunate to teach in a school board that holds the arts in high regard and not merely an extra subject. Our teachers are highly trained in their disciplines. Most of our teachers have degrees in music, visual art and drama. We all have at minimum a Bachelor of Education and many have post-graduate training. We teach because we love the profession, and we teach arts because it feeds our souls.

Let's Talk About Getting a New Car

In this newly combined department there were many passionate discussions about the type of report card required to assess differently. It felt as if we were trying to get 15 people to agree to buy the same make and model of car. Teachers from each of the former boards recognized the strengths and weaknesses of each of their reports and were determined to come up with a new model of reporting that would work. For the most part, teachers from the southside thought they had made huge steps forward when they reported on participation and skills, but compared to the northside report, we appeared lacking. On the other hand, the northside teachers did not want to give up their detailed reporting of skill development. All had concerns that were discussed and taken into account as the new report card was developed.

The southside teachers' biggest concern was not having input on the report card other than the letter grades that may or may not be transferred correctly by the classroom teacher. A more direct link with the parents was desired. I asked my partners about the concerns they had regarding the report card we were using just before the one that we developed, the concerns they wanted addressed in our new report card. Many of our concerns were similar.

Joyce

I found the old report card very limiting although it was an improvement over the previous one that used one mark for everything. I know classroom teachers hated it. We had to submit both of the marks to them and they had to put them on their report card.

They often made mistakes when copying the information and with so many it was bound to happen. We had no input with comments on the students' performance in our class. All anecdotal comments came from their classroom teacher.

Carol Ann

We felt that it didn't address all of our concerns. We felt that the skills....children can be skilled in one area and not another and with just participation and skills it didn't reflect their behaviour. Whereas with the one now we can at least put our comments in if we're having difficulty with them in the classroom or they have difficulty with a particular skill it gives us that option.

I wanted to see addressed, our ability to put additional comments on the report rather than just two little marks. I wanted to be able to put in that comment. Yeah, that was my big thing. I wasn't as adamant about having all of those different skill levels like they had on the northside. I remember thinking at the time, "Oh my goodness. To do one of those for each child ..." It was too much.

Cathy

Well it was just too limited. You know, it just didn't give any opportunity to give feedback on the student, on how the student was progressing on musical growth. And although having two aspects, ... skill and participation was, you know that was good, it still was limiting to a teacher. It was too general in scope. It was not as personalized. It didn't say anything about the individual student, their strengths or weaknesses.

As I considered these responses, I noted that Mary Jane was using a different report and she did not share the same concerns that Carol Ann, Cathy and I had.

Mary Jane

I liked it. I liked it because of the emphasis on and the break down of skills. I think one of the most significant things about assessment is that it emphasises what is essential, what are the essential learnings for something. I think the report I was using is also an encouragement to the teachers to make sure that they teach and assess these concepts in some way.

THE NEW MODELS

The first draft that came back to the group (Figure 7) was almost identical to the northside report card. While this made one set of teachers quite happy, others were not. This was not particularly well received by the teachers from the southside who had not completed such detailed reports in the past. They simply felt overwhelmed by the work involved with this report.

CAPE BRETON-VICTORIA REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD							
MUSIC PROGRESS REPORT							
19____19____							
E - Excellent							
VG - Very Good		NAME _____					
G - Good		GRADE _____					
T - Tries and has some success		SCHOOL _____					
ED - Encountered difficulties		TEACHER _____					
1. Skills		NOVEMBER					
A. Singing	ED	T	G	VG	E	Comments _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	
B. Listening	ED	T	G	VG	E		
C. Reading/Writing	ED	T	G	VG	E		
D. Rhythm/Movement	ED	T	G	VG	E		
E. Playing Instruments	ED	T	G	VG	E		
F. Other	ED	T	G	VG	E		
2. Class Behavior		ED	T	G	VG	E	Teacher's Signature _____
3. Participation		<i>Reluctantly</i>		<i>Eagerly</i>			
1. Skills		APRIL					
A. Singing	ED	T	G	VG	E	Comments _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	
B. Listening	ED	T	G	VG	E		
C. Reading/Writing	ED	T	G	VG	E		
D. Rhythm/Movement	ED	T	G	VG	E		
E. Playing Instruments	ED	T	G	VG	E		
F. Other	ED	T	G	VG	E		
2. Class Behavior		ED	T	G	VG	E	Teacher's Signature _____
3. Participation		<i>Reluctantly</i>		<i>Eagerly</i>			
1. Skills		JUNE					
A. Singing	ED	T	G	VG	E	Comments _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	
B. Listening	ED	T	G	VG	E		
C. Reading/Writing	ED	T	G	VG	E		
D. Rhythm/Movement	ED	T	G	VG	E		
E. Playing Instruments	ED	T	G	VG	E		
F. Other	ED	T	G	VG	E		
2. Class Behavior		ED	T	G	VG	E	Teacher's Signature _____
3. Participation		<i>Reluctantly</i>		<i>Eagerly</i>			

Figure 7

A second draft (Figure 8) was developed that eliminated the need for a formal evaluation of student work in the November reporting period and allowed for one mark for participation and skill with room for comments from the teacher as well. This took into account teachers concerns for having to do reports on so many students so early in the school year while still allowing teachers to make comments about individual students.

CAPE BRETON-VICTORIA REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD
MUSIC PROGRESS REPORT

19__ 19__

4	Has exceeded the expectations
3	Has achieved the outcomes and can apply the skills taught
2	Tries to achieve the outcomes and has some success
1	Shows little attempt at trying to achieve the outcomes

The music education program is designed to provide a balanced, broad musical experience from Primary - Grade 6. The main aims are the development of musical skills, as well as an understanding and appreciation for the many facets of music. Throughout the elementary grades, students learn about rhythm, melody, harmony, form and texture. These concepts are taught through singing, instruments, movement and listening.

NOVEMBER
This term we have covered the following skills and concepts in our music classes:

Next term we will continue working on these skills as well as the following:

Comments

MARCH		JUNE	
SKILL DEVELOPMENT		SKILL DEVELOPMENT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meets expectations for skills taught - Uses imaginative ideas in applying the skills - Reflects on personal performance and offers suggestions for improvement - Demonstrates an appreciation for cultural diversity 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meets expectations for skills taught - Uses imaginative ideas in applying the skills - Reflects on personal performance and offers suggestions for improvement - Demonstrates an appreciation for cultural diversity 	
PARTICIPATION		PARTICIPATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participates willingly - Shows respect for his/her own work and that of others - Shows responsibility with assignments and use of materials 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participates willingly - Shows respect for his/her own work and that of others - Shows responsibility with assignments and use of materials 	
COMMENTS		COMMENTS	
_____		_____	
_____		_____	
_____		_____	

Figure 8

This draft was not received well by the teachers from the Northside. They liked the emphasis on skill development they had in their reports and did not want to see that lost. It

also required filling out vast amounts of information in November on each and every student report. So, over the next few meetings our concerns were examined and accommodations were made addressing everyone's reservations and needs. We designed a rubric for reporting student progress and determined what we wanted to report to parents about their child's development in music class. It was decided that we would keep the two categories of skill development and participation with a mark for each and room for teachers' comments. Each of the categories was subdivided with three subheadings. A copy of this design out to the fine arts teachers asking for feedback. From their comments and those of the pilot group revisions were made and the final report was developed.

The group felt it was important to remove the responsibility to report a formative evaluation to parent in November. For music teachers that might mean giving a report after seeing their students for only 10-12 hours. That is the equivalent to less than two days. I remember Eric posing the question, "What classroom teacher would fill out a report card for a student that was in their class for less than two days?" The answer was, "None." For a teacher new to a school this task was extremely stressful and I remember in my first year it was a bit of a guessing game as well. In November, I was still trying to put a name to the sea of faces I saw every day.

Instead of giving an individual report in November we designed a general form that would allow us to inform parents of the work being covered in class for each grade level and the goals for our program in the coming months (Figure 9). This report allowed us to keep parents informed of our program while giving us the time to get to know their children's abilities better so a proper evaluation could be completed in the next reporting period.



	CAPE BRETON-VICTORIA REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD
CLASSROOM MUSIC	
<p>The music education program is designed to provide a balanced, broad musical experience from Primary to Grade 6. The chief aims are the development of musical skills, as well as an understanding and appreciation for the many styles of music. Throughout the elementary grades students learn about rhythm, melody, harmony, form and texture. These basic concepts are taught through singing, instruments, movement, and listening.</p>	
<p>This term we have covered the following concepts and skills in our music classes:</p>	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	
<p>Next term we will continue working on these skills as well as the following:</p>	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	
<p>Comments:</p>	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	
<p>An individual assessment of your child's progress will be made on the next report card.</p>	

Figure 9

The Test Drive

After much discussion revisions were made and the following design is the one we started using in 1998.



CAPE BRETON-VICTORIA

Regional School Board
MUSIC PROGRESS REPORT

19 98

4	Has exceeded the expectations
3	Has achieved the outcomes and can apply the skills taught
2	Tries to achieve the outcomes and has some success
1	Shows little attempt at trying to achieve the outcomes

NAME _____
 GRADE _____
 SCHOOL _____
 TEACHER _____

The music education program is designed to provide a balanced, broad musical experience from Primary - Grade 6. The main aims are the development of musical skills, as well as an understanding and appreciation for the many styles of music. Throughout the elementary grades, students learn about rhythm, melody, harmony, form and texture. These concepts are taught through singing, instruments, movement and listening.

MARCH

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	
Can demonstrate the skills taught	
Uses imagination in applying the skills	
Offers suggestions for improving personal performance	
PARTICIPATION	
Participates willingly	
Shows respect for his/her own work and that of others	
Shows responsibility with assignments and use of equipment	

JUNE

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	
Can demonstrate the skills taught	
Uses imagination in applying skills	
Offers suggestions for improving personal performance	
PARTICIPATION	
Participates willingly	
Shows respect for his/her own work and that of others	
Shows responsibility with assignments and use of equipment	

COMMENTS

COMMENTS

Figure 10

These reports were labour intensive. Before even getting to the evaluation process, teachers had to fill in personal information for each student. The main concern that many had was time management. Given teacher workload, how would they get this task completed? Teachers served many students and thus were concerned about the time required to fill out each report card by hand, especially for the first report when the students' names, grade and school had to be filled in. It was discussed how best to manage this problem and it was suggested that students in grades four to six could fill in their personal information themselves. Several teachers followed this suggestion and it made the process a bit easier but it was still time consuming. Subsequently, each teacher came up with strategies for managing large number of students. These suggestions include:

Joyce

I had the students in grades four to six fill them out. I was lucky to teach them art as well so I had them fill out both report cards during an art class where they had tables to work at. In music class it would have been a little harder to do because there are no tables. I like doing this because then I answer questions students have about their grades. This saves me some time. I still fill out the younger grades myself. I stay after school or I take a couple of sets home and do them there. It's a tedious task and I wish there was a way for us to fill out the reports on computer.

Carol Ann

I take them home. I take them home to fill them in because I just find here that I don't have enough time in the run of the day. I might do a class set at the end of the day, if

I'm ambitious, but for the most part I do them home. And then they're done neatly and presentable for the parents. If I do them here I find quite often I look at them and I think that was rushed.

Cathy

What I used to do was take a few minutes of a class of each grade 4,5 and 6 class, P-3 I did myself, 4,5, and 6, and those that felt comfortable printing, we would take a few minutes, they'd print gradethe ones that didn't feel comfortable...we'd get someone else and say "Hey, there's no problem with this." I also made it a learning opportunity for them because when I passed it out I'd go over it with them. And I would tell them, okay, "This is what is meant by 'Can demonstrate the skills taught.' This is what I expect for 'Participates willingly,'" you know. So, I didn't just... "Hey you're going to fill this out. Let's take this time." And I would explain "Not very many people get a 5...has exceeded. You've gotta be right. If you're doing 4 you're doing absolutely, positively wonderful!" So that, that was a learning opportunity, they'd fill it in and that was it. "


Mary Jane

My strategies for management are pretty simple just stay up all night (laughs) that's my strategy. I'm a last minute worker. I have no secrets there,---nothing worth sharing with others. I do remember the first time using the new one, initial it was, "Oh wow, this is a lot" and yet...I would not do them in school. I would do them at home and I would take a grade level a night or whatever and sit down and the kitchen table and just get them done.

Let's Buy It

The above mentioned report cards were being developed by both music and visual art teachers. Skill development was an area of concern. The visual art teachers felt strongly about including assessment on students using imagination and offering suggestions for their personal improvement. The music teachers felt these skills are important, but we were concerned about assessing these skills in the early years. Are children between the ages of 5 and 8 capable of expressing themselves creatively or being effective self-assessors, we asked. The music teachers felt that while these skills should be fostered they should not be assessed at the Primary-Grade 2 level and an accommodation for that was made on the report card the following year. Another accommodation was made by adding a fifth degree to the marking scale. The music teachers wanted to recognize students who excel in our programs and those students who are on Individualized Program Plans (IPP's). Modifications were made to the report card to reflect these concerns and the result is the report card that was in use until a rubric change in 2006 (Figure 11).

20__ - 20__



CAPE BRETON-VICTORIA REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD
MUSIC PROGRESS REPORT GRADE P - 6

Marking Key (February) and June Report)

5	Has exceeded the expectations
4	Has achieved the outcomes or IPP goals and can apply the skills taught.
3	Tries to achieve the outcomes or IPP goals and has some success.
2	Tries to achieve the outcomes or IPP goals.
1	Shows little attempt at trying to achieve the outcomes or IPP goals.

NAME _____

GRADE _____

SCHOOL _____

MUSIC TEACHER _____

This report gives an indication of how the student is progressing in music class. The marks given are based on the key at the top which describes the degree of success for the student in achieving the outcomes - those things which the student is expected to know and be able to do for the reporting period. It is possible that some outcomes will not be assessed until the June reporting period.

FEBRUARY

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	
Can demonstrate the skills taught	
Uses imagination in applying the skills (Not applicable for grades Primary - 2)	
Offers suggestions for improving personal performance (Not applicable for grades Primary - 2)	
PARTICIPATION	
Participates willingly	
Shows respect for his/her own work and that of others	
Shows responsibility with assignments and use of equipment	

COMMENTS

JUNE

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	
Can demonstrate the skills taught	
Uses imagination in applying skills (Not applicable for grades P - 2)	
Offers suggestions for improving personal performance (Not applicable for grades P - 2)	
PARTICIPATION	
Participates willingly	
Shows respect for his/her own work and that of others	
Shows responsibility with assignments and use of equipment	

COMMENTS

Figure 11

Where's the Gas?

So, now that we bought this new car how did we fuel it? What was the gas that filled the tank? For some teachers arriving at a summative evaluation may be a quantitative process. They could assign specific value to assignments, tests and tasks and simply average the assessments according to a formula that they have designed. This mark would then be recorded and the job is done.

This is not how our job is done. Assessments are often very subjective. Many of the ongoing assessments are based on our observations. This is especially true at the Primary-2 level. With students who have not yet developed the skills to represent their musical ability and knowledge in independent ways. Teachers observe individual student growth and performance of skills in the music classroom. They are required to make judgements and assess accordingly.

Even with young students, I mark them according to rubrics that I have for my own reference. With the grade two students I explain a rubric and tell them what I am looking for in an assessment but I don't always tell them they're being assessed. I find the younger students get nervous if they think they're being tested so I usually embed their assessment into the music lesson and I record their achievements in my records.

With the grade 4-6 students I set all of my assessments to the same scale as the report card. In the past, all of my rubrics were set to a five- point scale and the student's achievement was recorded in my plan book. I also assessed their class participation on the same scale. When report card season rolls around I go to my records and average the assessments to arrive at the mark that would be the gas in the tank of the car (Figure 12).

Example:

Grade 4	S10	S14	S18	S21	S25	O1	O4	O8	O11
	Rhy	Par	Sing	Mat	Rhy	Lis	Par	Rec	Proj
Mark	4	4	3	4	4	3	2x	4	5
John	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
Lisa	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4

Figure 12

With the information recorded above, I can look at rhythm (Rhy), singing (Sing), listening (Lis), recorder (Rec) and project work (Proj) and arrive at an evaluation for skill development. Likewise, I look at their class participation (Par) and whether or not they have their required materials (Mat) to determine their participation evaluations. For example, I can also see that on October 4 Mark was disruptive in class, this may indicate to me that he is not showing respect for the rest of the class. It may also just mean that he had a bad day that I can ignore, or, I may choose to wait to see if a pattern develops before contacting his parents.

In each class I try to perform some sort of assessment. This may simply be participation or it may include more specific skills like rhythmic or melodic understanding. Again, these assessments are usually embedded in the lesson so the students don't even know they're being assessed though I have ongoing records of their development. From these records, I can track their development and report progress to their parents.

The second interview I conducted with Carol Ann, Cathy and Mary Jane dealt almost exclusively with report cards. We were so involved in its design and

implementation that I wanted to know how they managing the reporting process. I have described strategies that I use and I wanted to know specifically what they did to manage their records and assess different skills.

Carol Ann

For participation I use observation as my means for assessment. I start every class with a song and I sit at that piano and I kind of peruse the room as I'm sing the "Hello" song, that tells me right off the bat if a student is participating and I record in my checklists.

I write down in my plan book, on my lists as to skill level. Whether they have done, what they have done. You know, if we've done a sheet I usually mark how they have done if I marked it out of ten or whatever. I keep lists of that as well. So by the end of the year my plan book has maybe 15 rows of what we have done through the year whether it's, you know, checking of participation, singing or whatever depending on the grade.

Cathy

For the little ones it was very subjective and just day-to-day observations of their participation in the classroom, their participation in the games, of answering, of volunteering, doing whatever. Then I would assign a grade for that. For the older ones I would use, at the end of a project we would have a little self-assessment tool where they would assess what they thought of their work and I would assign a grade to the project.

When your looking at their development in beat and rhythm and their vocal ability, in tune singing and everything, that would be done in progression, on a day-to-day, class-to-class progression. You know, over a long period of time, how they're coming along. I would make note of their progress.

And, like I said, for the older ones--project work. Every term I try to have a little project and they would... Again, I would try to make it all encompassing to assess a number of things. Along with a self-reflection activity, there would be something that would tap into the theory part, or the historical part, or being able to critique something. I would use all of these things to arrive at their report card marks.

Mary Jane

I record marks for many skills. I seem to use the try and test process ...the singing three times a year with the little kids and twice a year for the older kids and by testing that ... I give a series of notes I expect them to sing accurately. And that is really quite a block of my thing -- they either get five or they get four and I mean, if they get it close enough I'll give them a good mark but it's pretty subjective. And then there's the recorder test. I try to hear them three times a year by themselves, individually and I try to do improvisations at least twice.

That is very time consuming. And their own composition projects I have them do compositions a couple of times year. I use these along with my own observations to compile their report card marks.

IPP's

Most music teachers have students with special needs in their classes.

Accommodation for students on modified programs and IPPs (Individual Program Plan) is indicated on the report card. Inclusion has been part of music classes for many years, long before full integration of special needs students in the mainstream class. How then do we assess these students and how do we report their achievements? The Music Primary-6 curriculum guide states:

In inclusive classrooms, students with special needs have opportunities to demonstrate their learning in their own way and at their own pace, using media that accommodate their needs. They may not move through the process the same way As their peers; indeed the criteria and methods of achieving success may be significantly different from those of their classmates.

Appropriate assessment must be influenced by a clear understanding of the student's abilities and learning potential. When students have an individualized program plan (IPP), teachers must be informed of learning goals that have been outlined in that plan. (p .197)

Asking about the challenges of assessing students with special needs elicited a variety of important responses, particularly from two teacher informants with backgrounds in guidance and counselling.

Carol Ann is a member of the IP Planning team at her school brought her first hand knowledge of the goals set for each IPP student in the school. She reported that measurable goals are set in music for all of these students and she is clearly able to report whether or not the student has been successful in meeting these goals.

Carol Ann

In the IPP meetings we will often set a measurement of success for our music program like,... "Jeffrey will participant three out of five times when we do a movement

activity” and we try to encourage him to get up. And then at the next IPP meeting we may say “Okay, did he achieve this goal?” You know, can we expand on it, is it still in progress, but you have to have something you can measure. You know to say, he will participate three out of five times or...they will be able to...whatever. When reporting time come around I do not fill out a report card for those students. I write a paragraph for my special needs kids and inform the parents in that form of how their child is doing.

Cathy follows this practice as well. She finds sending a little note home is better than filling out a report card for skills that many special needs students will not master. My practice has been to fill out sections of the report card that apply to the individual student and to indicate at the top of the report card that the student was on a modified or IPP. If the student is not capable of performing specific skills indicated on the report card I simply mark NA (not applicable) for those categories and indicate above the status of the student. Mary Jane indicated that she now has freedom with the new provincial report card to give the student a mark and write whatever comments she feels are appropriate to give a clear representation of the student’s progress. In 2006 the grading scale changed and is now in line with the provincial report card. This scale does not include comments for special needs students. Teachers will need to be guided in how to report the progress of these students in a meaningful way following the process described in the curriculum while becoming comfortable with their own practices with this very important task.

The Luxury Model

The Department of Education gave Mary Jane a new car to take for a test drive (see Appendix B). This came in the form of piloting a provincial report card for the past four

years. Her school was one of four in the province piloting this new model. This is a report is filled out on-line eliminating a lot of the tedious work of filling out personal information about each student. This new report has that data in the school's administration system and Mary Jane types in her information class by class and submits her reports into the computer system. Her reports are combined with all other teachers' reports and a final copy is printed and sent home to parents. Mary Jane's is the only elementary school in the CBVRSB piloting this new report. It has gone through growing pains as well. The school's technology did not always support the number of teachers using the system at one time. Mary Jane commented that she had difficulty at first when working from home because of safety features and firewalls that were installed in her home computer. Many teachers now prefer this method of reporting to the old paper copies that were filled out manually, now that the system problems have been addressed.

When this new provincial report card was first introduced I felt threatened and ignored by the province. Threatened, in that *they* were telling me what and how to do things yet again. One factor in the success of our music report was that it was our design. It was not a top-down edict that was forced upon us. It was ours. The new provincial report was not. I felt ignored by the province in that we were not consulted in the design of the music section of the report. We had designed and implemented a practical reporting tool and our contributions to our profession and school board were not recognized by the department. As a music teacher in Cape Breton I felt powerless and unable to address the changes decreed by the Department of Education in Halifax.

I carried some of these residual feelings with me as I met with Mary Jane and we spoke about her use of the new report. Until I met with Mary Jane I had no idea how the reports were implemented. She is the only music teacher with our board who has even seen

the reports. I was shocked to hear that this report reduced the music mark to one letter grade. I felt like I had just been blown back to 1987. I couldn't believe that all the work we had done had been erased. Mary Jane was quick to reassure me that all was not lost. Even though she has to give just one letter grade *and* she has to give marks in November she has room to make her own anecdotal comments about each child and about her program (Figure 13). She can inform parents that in November not all skills have been assessed and the others will be covered in the upcoming reports. She can also give them specifics about what is happening with her program. She assured me that her comments give her the freedom to address any concerns she may have with a student and to inform parents of information that will be valuable to them.

Mary Jane

You have to give them one mark and for the rest the report gives you a chance to communicate what you are doing which is good. You can give specific information about things you actually studied with the children and taught. I can put in quite a few words in the space provided. I have room for about eight lines of 10 to 12 font.

The new report card requires that we give a lot of anecdotal feedback. We give a letter grade but we also have a fairly large space for comments. I always give as much information about what the curriculum was as I can, the main curricular fields that we have been studying and then I say "Consistently demonstrates..." And then they correspond to my A B C. But I try and I find the parents really do like this, appreciate this, I try to tell them what it was we studied. Like if we did Peter and the Wolf for example, if we did time values as a particular theory unit, or if we were doing music of Beethoven or if

we were doing music around the world or, whatever, singing in parts. I try to give that information on the report card and then as I said I just give sort of a general comment from the rubric regarding the student's progress.

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Comments/ Strengths/Needs</u>
Music	B	
<input type="checkbox"/>	IPP see attached	

Figure 13

The music report appears on the same page as core-French, health education, physical education, science and social studies. All of these subjects appear in the same format with common headings.

It is believed that with the piloting of this provincial report card for the past four years it will soon be implemented in all schools province wide. When this will happen is anyone's guess but our school board has taken steps to prepare all teachers for this eventuality. The rubric on elementary report cards has been changed to be in-line with the provincial report card. As a result so has the rubric for the fine arts report cards. We are still using our individual reports but instead of our numbered, five-point rubric we have changed to a lettered, four-point scale. Before this change was made Cathy, in her role as consultant, sent out an email asking for our input in the wording of the rubric. Art teachers felt strongly about including recognition of work done as a group and changes were made to accommodate their concerns. The following is our rubric as of the 2005-2006 school year.

A	<p>The student consistently demonstrates achievement of the expected learning outcomes addressed during the current reporting period.</p> <p>The student's work/contribution sometimes exceeds the program expectations.</p>
B	<p>The student demonstrates achievement of most of the expected learning outcomes addressed during the current reporting period.</p> <p>The student's work/contribution meets program expectations.</p>
C	<p>The student demonstrates achievement of some of the expected learning outcomes addressed during the current reporting period.</p> <p>The student's work/contribution displays some program expectations.</p>
D	<p>The student rarely demonstrates achievement of the expected outcomes addressed during the current reporting period.</p> <p>The student's work/contribution does not meet program expectations.</p>

Figure 14

Of concern to me with this new rubric is the lettering system. I fear that students and parents will ignore the description of the rubric and look at the letters as a representation of results based on the old scales of A being 90-100 and B 80-90 and so on. If a child were to receive a D their parents may look at that and think "That's no so bad. They're pretty close to passing." In fact, a D is not so good. A D does not meet the program expectations. In this regard, they are correct it's not hopeless and this is where the anecdotal comments reinforce the teacher's evaluation. Parents will then be aware of changes that are required for their child to meet the program expectations and achieve a higher level of success. Concerns regarding the lettered rubric were shared by all. Mary Jane was able to report parent response from her experience.

Carol Ann

The four point scale would not be as good as our five because parents will be looking for that A and A would be exemplary and I do not give that unless they are very exemplary. So, the majority of my students, who are very good students, who do very well in my room, who give me everything that I ask, would be considered a B. And parents are not going to like that. They want their children to have all As. Bottom line, because like you say they're going to associate that A with a mark not with the rubric. I'd like to see the numbers, if we could go back to the numbers...even 1 2 3 4 instead of A B C D.

Cathy

Well the A B C D. We tried to stay clear of that and keep numbers but for continuity in the board it was requested we go with that so we did. I don't think that will change anytime soon. The board is just trying to prepare teachers for the eventual use of the provincial report card. It's my understanding that this rubric is the same as the provincial one.

Mary Jane

When we went to the numbers it was something unfamiliar to the parents and so four is Excellent and five is should be in the next grade—no problem. Fine, that's what it means. But when you use an A...and the child...the other teachers are the same way, lots of As... it's just a very old fashioned A. Your good student gets an A, your average student who tries gets a B and so on. As far as I can tell everybody's a universal response, this

return to these letters has been positive but traditional. Parents seemed to be a little more involved in this because it means more to them. You know again, because everybody thinks about an A the same way. I could have given a child a 3+ or a 4 and they would have thought, ... "Okay, good," but now, if I give a B as compared to an A sometimes I do have parents say, "They're getting As in other things. Why aren't they getting an A in this?" or ...yeah.. A just seems to me, seems to mean more to the parents.

When I wrote the first draft of this thesis it was February 2006. I had report cards due for 550 students at the end of the month. I took time from one of my music classes with grades four to six and had them fill out their personal information. I then took time from the class and explained the rubric. This is a practice that Cathy also followed when she was in a teaching position. I told my students that I wanted all of them to get As or Bs and that they were all capable of achieving these levels of success. I explained what was meant by each of the rubric levels and what they would have to do to improve their mark if they thought they might be achieving a lower level mark. This generated a lot of discussion in class with some children asking, "What do you have to be like to get an F?" It's difficult for them to grasp to concept that the lettered rubrics do not have traditional values. I suppose this will change in time, as did the understanding of students with the first changes to rubrics from traditional numerical grades. A positive change that occurred after these discussions was improved levels of participation in subsequent classes from some students who had not been performing well earlier. This reinforced the concept that if students understand how they are marked they will work to meet the outcomes set by their teachers.

I was surprised recently in my new school to be asked to submit my evaluation for only one of my 22 classes in the same manner as Mary Jane. One of my Grade 6 teachers is piloting yet another report card. I was asked to submit one letter grade for each child

using the revised A B C D rubric. When I mentioned to the classroom teacher that I should be able to make comments regarding my program and each student he replied, “Yes, you should but the system won’t allow it yet.” The compromise that the school has come up with is that I gave the classroom teacher one letter grade to put on his report but I also submitted my music report card with my six marks and comments. I didn’t mind doing both but I was afraid that parents would look at the mark on his report and not even look at the complete report that was also there.

Through the development of our music report card and Mary Jane’s piloting of the provincial elementary report card, we have come to appreciate the value of ongoing assessment to support the evaluations that appear on the reports sent home to the parents. Maintaining proper records of ongoing student progress helps us with our task of compiling a formative evaluation and also serves to support our findings if a parent needs confirmation of our findings. We are now better prepared when the time for report cards roles around and we have the experience and documentation to support our decisions. We no longer feel as though we are pulling marks from the air. It probably sounds as though we didn’t keep records before being introduced to authentic assessment and that is not the case. We all had records in our plan books but they were rather arbitrary with almost no student input. I can recall trying to conduct tests before the report cards were due so I would have something in my records but most of my marks were based on my observations of what students did in my classes and I assigned a grade to my observations as were those of my partners. We all admit that before we became involved with the pilot group almost all of our marks were based on our observations.

I would have been hard-pressed however to defend most of the marks I had recorded in my plan book because I had no specific criteria for any of those marks. Now,

that has changed. I know why I have the marks in my records that are there. I know what a student did or did not do to achieve a mark, and I can explain those observations to anyone who asks, especially the student.

Parent Response

Teachers now had a direct line of communication with parents. Teachers no longer had to pass messages on through classroom teachers to be included on their report cards. We had that ability ourselves. One thing that I noticed about parent response to this report card was increased interest from the parents in their child's progress. When we were using the old report card that only gave one mark for progress and skill development I saw very few parents at Parent-Teacher interviews. Upon using the new report card I found that I had a steady stream of parents during interview sessions. They wanted to know what skills were being taught and were occasionally seeking clarification about anecdotal comments that were made. Sometimes they were there because I had requested an interview to discuss concerns I had regarding their child or to discuss future musical opportunities that I thought would be rewarding for their child. With the new report parents knew that they should be speaking with me about their child's music progress and not the classroom teacher.

This new system of reporting allowed us to make comments about our program, what we had completed and what we would work on in the future. We could give as much detail as we like or as general as "Well done!" The choice was ours and the feeling was so satisfying. Having parents come to meet with me was gratifying as well. Finally I was getting to know them and help them with their child's development. The lines of

communication were opening up. Apparently the traffic at my door was heavier than at the others but there was interest from the parents. Carol Ann mentioned that she does not see many parents at all, while Cathy and Mary Jane indicated that they mostly see parents who question why their child did not get the highest mark. We all see parents with those questions but at least now we have records of our assessments to support the evaluations.

I remember the first time I had to fill out our music report cards. I had approximately 400 students at the time and in the previous year I had to whittle my evaluations down to two letter grades and pass them on to the classroom teacher. Although filling out the individual reports was time consuming it seemed faster to me than the old system of condensing everything into two letters. The subdivision of categories allowed me to streamline my process of evaluation and say what I want to say. As I mentioned earlier, when I conduct assessments with my students I grade them using the same rubric scale that appears on the report card. I maintain record of the assessments in my plan book and average those marks on the report card. Specific project or skill marks are averaged for skill development and the checklists and class marks are averaged for the participation category. Based on the records that I now maintain I can comment to parents about areas where improvement is needed and where strengths exist. I truly find this more efficient than passing the buck on to the classroom teacher.

Student Response: A Step Toward Ownership and Empowerment

One of the best things that has come from this experience is the empowerment of my students. Designing the new report card was an important task for our group but it wasn't its main goal. Our primary purpose was to explore authentic assessment strategies.

In the process of the work we were doing with the pilot group we all noticed our students becoming more engaged in class. We had all been teaching in a very traditional manner, much the way we had been taught ourselves. We were the experts and we imparted our information to the children. We expected that by participating in class they would absorb the information and become better musicians by following our example. Much of the music learned in our classes was taught by rote with little exploration by students of what it takes to make music. It does seem a bit ironic that this was the method of teaching this subject for so long. It seems to me that most musicians are doers. We don't sit still and wait for the music to come to us; we make it happen. Why did we not realize earlier that our students would learn best by exploring, asking, and doing for themselves.

That is not to say that rote learning for some skills in a music class is out of place. Indeed, there is no better way to teach a song to young children than by rote. They get to hear and try to emulate a good example of in-tune singing. This is the obvious way to teach this skill. But what of the other skills in a music class? What about composition, improvisation and appreciation? Are these skills best taught by rote? In my opinion, not at all. Students must be given the opportunity to make their own music and learn from their mistakes and the experiences of others. This is where the significant changes were observed in student behaviours in our classes, in giving ourselves permission to let go and giving the students permission to step outside the box.

Students should be able to tell their parents how they are doing in any class. If a parent asks "What did you learn in music class today?" I hope my students can respond. Chappuis (2005) suggests that assessment should help students answer three basic questions: Where am I going? Where am I now? and, How do I close the gap? Students need to know what is expected of them. They need to know where they stand in regards to

their progress. Their assessments need to tell them what they need to do to reach a successful outcome.

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING: ON THE WAY/ AT THE GATE

For the past number of years my colleagues and I have been conducting assessments *for* learning instead of assessments *of* learning. We have been directing our students along the way so they will arrive at the learnings on their own. Leahy et al (2005) support the notion that everything a child does in a classroom can be assessed and analysed to determine how best to meet the needs of the student. They believe that “In a classroom that uses assessment to support learning the divide between instruction and assessment blurs”(p. 21). The assessment becomes part of the learning.

McCarthy (2000) refers to two types of assessment “On the Way and At the Gate” (p. 153 & 281). On the Way assessments are performed during the learning process, that give students the opportunity to explore. At the Gate assessments are those performed at the end of a learning cycle to determine whether or not the student has mastered the skills being taught.

Throughout the learning process many On the Way assessments should be performed. How is the student progressing? Were they involved in class activities today or were they missing out in someway? Were they supported in their learning with positive feedback and were their inquiries met by teachers motivated to help them grow? The feedback to student, On the Way should include a lot of positive reinforcement and encouragement so the student will get to the gate.

While working with the pilot group I was teaching Visual Art in grades four to six. We had a group meeting after an art class where a student asked me about doing a project for homework because they had missed a class and didn't want to lose the mark for the project. I told the student that the entire project was worked on in class and therefore she would not be responsible for the project because she was not present for the instruction. She was a new student to my school and I thought assessments were conducted differently in her last school. My feelings were supported by the art teachers in the group when I described this situation to them. They were a little surprised by the student's request and determined that her last teacher must have been teaching to product not process. In other words, her last teacher was assessing At the Gate and not On the Way.

Allowing student involvement in the learning process gives them a sense of ownership of their learning. The days of the teacher disseminating information to the students and them absorbing the knowledge like magical sponges should be over. I know they are for anyone who took part in this pilot group. We've noticed that our students are more engaged in process. They are asking more questions and they are transferring skills already mastered to new work. This is the most rewarding aspect of my involvement with the pilot group. I didn't realize that when I signed up to learn how to conduct better assessments my students would receive the biggest reward. In our eyes they are truly empowered by the processes we use.

Joyce

I love the feedback from the kids. I just love how they ask question. I can remember in my first years of teaching saying at a meeting, "I want my children to take risks. How to

I get them to ask questions?" You know, and another teacher replying "I think they'd be scared to death if I asked them to take a risk." And now I look back and think that's all I wanted from the beginning and now they're doing it. They're taking those chances. I think for me that's been the most rewarding thing is that the kids are asking questions. I've often said to them "There's nothing wrong with a well thought-out question. If you don't know something I'd rather hear you admit that you don't know it and ask the question than go on letting me believe that you know what you're doing because then we all end up in trouble. I go on to work that you still can't understand and you're still lagging behind." So, I love that about it. That the kids are so much more involved in asking questions and taking those chances.

Cathy

One of the earlier projects that I did was to take out the long sheets of dot-matrix paper. I had that and I would take out the big strips and with a review starting in September, with the 2s we'd break up into four or five groups and they had to compose eight measures using the set rhythms, they were on the board because it was a review and everybody had to have a turn doing a measure and you could add solfege to it down the road but then they had to practice it using the rhythm instruments. And I remember during this whole process they were all engaged. They were actively doing this. They had their markers. They had their papers. They were discussing it. They were saying "No, we didn't use one...and that won't..." They were all in their little spots and I was standing back feeling,... "I'm not doing anything. I'm not in front of the class...like I'm not..." It was very foreign because they were doing the work. And then we would have a rubric and as each

group would perform the others would say “Well, I’d give that a three because..” and to hear them speak musically... “Well, what is it?” “They weren’t on the beat or they needed more practice in coming in, or they weren’t playing together...” They were making observations. And that first experience with that project was...really, really an eye opener for me.

Carol Ann

I think they are better at coming to class with the materials they need because they know we are likely to use them. And I think it’s made them more consciously aware of what we do in music and the importance of it. You know that we are really doing some learning here and these are new skills that you’re learning and you will use them in the future.

I think they’re getting better at using words, the key words. You know when we talk about melody and pitch and dynamics. They know what those things are because we talk about them, we put them down when we talk about them in our assessments and that helps them retain the knowledge so they can use it the next time it’s needed.

Mary Jane

Well, at first they just took what I gave them to do and we progressed from there. So, the more you do it of course the more a routine it becomes but they find it interesting. It makes them feel important. It gives them ownership of the learning. It makes them more

independent learners; makes them take responsibility for their own learning with certain things. It makes them feel in control of a lot and they always want to know how they did. They need objective feedback. They can't just do this in a vacuum. Feedback is very, very reinforcing. The more you assess, the more they assess, any kind of assessment, the more that happens the better. Everything they do, they should get feedback. This helps them develop and retain the skills they need.

These changes in our students were bound to happen when we changed our approaches to assessment. Our new experiences benefited our students. We were assessing them On the Way and they were benefiting by taking the On the Way assessments to help them At the Gate.

McCarthy states that elementary schools have far too many At the Gate assessments and not enough On the Way (2000, p. 283). We have to maintain a balance of the two. At the Gate assessments like performances and presentation of project work is important. Students have to make their own journey so they can go through the gate and onto independent learning without us.

WHERE WILL OUR JOURNEY TAKE US NEXT?

Self- assessment is not just for students. It is for us as well. Take the time to ask yourself what you have been doing. Do you need to change your approach to assessment and evaluation? Do not wait to discover the answers to these questions.

We have been examining our practices to determine how best to perform in our roles as teachers and musicians. Through this process we have come to reflect on what is needed to improve the state of assessment and evaluation in Music Education. We were

fortunate to be involved in the pilot group. Some of our needs were met through this process but this is not an aspect of education that can be left to develop in a vacuum. What recommendations would we make to other teachers and what is needed in professional development in this field?

Through the process of this study I have come to appreciate the value of sharing and talking about our experiences. I have learned so much from my partners and hopefully they have learned from my story as well. Our music department has a wonderful tradition of sharing. We used to have regular sharing sessions for Christmas concert ideas and other classroom materials. One of the recommendations that has come from all four of us is that teachers share on a regular basis what they have learned and are continuing to learn about assessing for learning. New teachers do not have the advantage of our experience with these processes. Within our school board there have been several new hirings since this process began, but little professional development on assessment and evaluation has taken place. This is likely a problem in other school districts as well and our research suggests that change is necessary.

One aspect of assessment and evaluation that has come to be very important to us is that of planning for assessment. In my role as a teacher I must ask myself why am I teaching a particular song? What is it I hope my students will learn? How will I assess their progress? Thinking about assessment must come at the beginning of the planning process. I can't wait until I am halfway through a unit to come up with ways to assess my students. I have to know how I am going to do that before I begin. It must be built into my teaching. This is something I have come to understand and believe. If I have not been assessing student growth along the way there will be less evidence of progress at the end of process.

Recommendations

While we know there is still work to be done in this field of assessment and evaluation we recognize our roles as mentors to beginning teachers. We hope that they would come to us if they needed help with pedagogical matters, so we to make the following suggestions for new teachers and for their professional development.

1. Establish sharing sessions with other teachers
2. Start small—one class, one tool
3. Use your curriculum guides and teacher resources
4. Get involved in workshops on tried and true tools that have been developed
5. Ask for training sessions to deal with the mechanics of the new provincial report card
6. Establishing peer coaching with an experienced teachers—Talk the Talk
7. Plan for assessment—build it into your curricular unit

I asked earlier, *What effect, if any, has implementing authentic assessments and evaluations had on the way you teach? How has it affected your students' learning?* I asked these questions of my partners and their responses are as follows.

Carol Ann

I think I'm more conscious...to make sure..that I do a variety of assessment strategies. To not just use my checklists—to have little projects. Whether they're done here in the classroom and then marked or if it's something that they do home and bring into me. I think I'm more aware to make sure that I have a good variety of assessment tools just so that I can justify what I am doing with the children.

Well making you reflect on what we're doing and how we validate it...and all the different tools that we use....to effectively get our end result of our mark. It's kind of nice to know that you're not just pulling marks out of the air.

Mary Jane

I have not really noticed any big dramatic change in my teaching. As teachers we evolve, we react to our environment. Our failures and inadequacies hurt us and our students so we try to correct these. Assessment is a vital tool. Students and parents pay close attention to assessments; therefore, assessment is a very important means of communicating essentials about music curriculum. The rubric is a very useful assessment strategy and I am glad to incorporate it into my teaching. It is a simple, easily comprehensible, user-friendly way of communicating essentials. In a world where people are quick to challenge the authority of the teacher simple criteria such as those articulated in rubrics are easy reference points. Self-assessment has always been part of responsible learning and is not a simple thing to teach but it is so very important. Students have no faith and I think that we can teach children to have faith in us as authorities in our field through authentic assessment---Very open, very clear, very transparent assessment based on very clear criteria and as I said, when you get them to model the same thing then that's helpful. I really think it's important right now

Cathy

Before I left my classroom position I noticed a big change in my teaching, very, very much so. I could say it was one of being involved in that assessment work group, was probably one of the most important activities that made an impact on my teaching. You know, not inservicing, not conferences, not new ideas...but that whole experience. It reframed my thought process. And then also being involved in the curriculum document too and going outcomes based...And talking about that but it really... I really changed how I approached what I was doing in the classroom. And looked at a few projects in a year...not going every single minute had to be project oriented ... and trying to get the kids to, ... the students to be able to approach their work a little bit differently and get the big picture and reflect on their learning, to critique, to be more critical in their work and what they were hearing.

I guess one of the changes I've noticed in my students would be listening for other things in music and applying what we know and willingness to talk about performance talk about and reflect on after concerts. We try to do that and the ability to increase that skill to not just do it and forget about it but to talk about it and how could we make it better and to improve. The learning isn't over after the concert. They keep talking about what they have learned in future lessons, which is really exciting.

Joyce

My teaching has become more enjoyable because I don't feel stressed to get skills completed by a self-imposed deadline. I have taken more of a facilitator's role instead of someone to be imitated. I like that I have concrete information from which I can make judgements on a students progress and not just my personal opinion.

My lack of knowledge and experience used to make forming evaluations very frustrating. Now I feel confident in my evaluations and I know that I can tell parents and students why their report card has the marks and comments that it does. I also know that students are not surprised by their marks because they have been part of the assessment process all along.

The journey we began back in 1996 is never-ending. We will not reach a point where we will say "We know it all and there is nothing left to learn." That's not the type of teachers we are. Every year we have a new group of students coming in and our former students continue to grow and change. This makes our task one of ongoing development and change as well. I have always looked for opportunities to improve my teaching. I actively seek out PD opportunities for myself, and in my union life I promote and organize events for other teachers. From reading our biographies, it is clear that my partners are also interested in improving their teaching skills as well.

While we were working with the pilot group Cathy became involved in the curriculum development committee with the Department of Education and moved into the position of Arts Education Consultant with the CBVRSB. Her efforts and experiences with our group contributed to the final Music Primary-6 curriculum. Mary Jane and Carol Ann were both involved in piloting the new curriculum before its implementation province-wide

in 2002. All three concur that their involvement with the assessment pilot group in Cape Breton and subsequently their involvement with the provincial committees was invaluable to them as educators. My initial involvement with our group prompted me to research this topic extensively. During follow-up meetings many of us would come armed with articles we had downloaded for the group to share. It seemed only natural to follow through with this process as focus of my thesis research. I wanted others to know what we had done in Cape Breton and I wanted readers to learn from our experiences. It is hoped that our recommendations will be examined by decision makers when they are making decisions about PD opportunities for their teachers.

“Life and narrative are inextricably connected. Life both anticipates telling and draws meaning from it. Narrative is both about living and part of it”(Bochner & Ellis, 2000, 745-746). I believe it goes without saying that any sound research should prompt more of the same. More narrative studies of teachers’ experiences need to be reported. People remember stories so it stands to reason that teachers will remember the stories of other teachers. This narrative can become the basis for continued transforming action in this complex world of assessing student learning in music and the integrated arts.

Eisner (1998) states that for text to be believable it must have three features: 1-coherence; 2-consensus, and; 3-instrument utility (p.53). I believe we have met these criteria in this study. What we have shared is coherent. It makes sense to us as teachers and I hope to you the reader. I wanted you to come to understand our experiences and imagine yourself in our shoes as we took this journey. We spoke in the everyday language of teachers and shared our stories in the most straightforward manner possible.

In reading this thesis it is clear that we have reached consensus on many points. Although our approaches to similar situations may have differed, our fundamental beliefs

about assessment and evaluation are the same. We firmly believe in its importance as a reporting, and more importantly, a teaching tool. I know that none of us would return to the teaching practices we employed before becoming involved with the assessment pilot group. I shudder to think of anyone teaching without authentic assessment strategies.

Bochner and Ellis (2000) question, “What are the consequences my story produces? What kind of person does it shape me into? What new possibilities does it introduce for my living life?” (p.746) I propose that the consequence of my story, my journey, has made me reflect upon the kind of teacher I am and has helped me to improve the quality of my teaching. It has helped me be more attentive to my students needs and therefore better able to help them with their development. In my opinion, I am a stronger teacher because of this process of reflection and reporting. It has been, for me, a constant reminder of my role as an educational leader for my students and I hope, for other teachers as well.

Was this study useful? Did you learn anything from our experiences? I hope so. Its usefulness to you the reader, to program planners, to curriculum supervisors and to other teachers is what meets Eisner’s last element of instrument utility. If this study is used as reference in the future by policy makers or classroom teachers then I have accomplished my goal. When I set out to write this thesis I wanted to share our stories and I wanted others to learn vicariously through us. I wanted to fulfill “The crucial issues of what narratives do, what consequences they have, to what uses they can be put” (Bochner & Ellis, 2000, p. 746) That is to say, I wanted readers to be able to place themselves in my shoes and take this journey with me. I wanted you to share my struggles and understand my joy at becoming the teacher I am today because of this on-going journey.

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APPENDIX A

**Authentic Assessment and Evaluation In Music
Education: A Narrative Inquiry**

Please accept this letter as an invitation to participate in a research project on Authentic Assessment and Evaluation In Music Education. Your efforts in this area of Music Education are known to me and your participation would be warmly welcomed. This research study focuses on the personal and professional experiences of you, the music teacher. Your experiences, along with my own and two others, will serve to inform other teachers of our perceptions on the use of authentic assessment and evaluation in music education.

Should you choose to participate, you will be interviewed privately, on two occasions, and once with the other two teachers and myself. The interviews will last from one to three hours. You will be asked to maintain a reflective journal throughout the research period (approximately one month) and submit that to me one week after the group interview. The interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed and kept with the journals in a secure location, in my home. I will be the only person with direct access to your information.

Your participation in this project is strictly voluntary. Should you decide to participate you may choose to withdraw at some point. You may do so without any hard feelings on my part. I understand that your time is valuable and I appreciate the commitment I am asking of you.

I will do my best to protect your identity as a member of my research team however, given the closeness of our professional community this cannot be guaranteed. I can assure you of anonymity in the written report if that is your wish. You may want to consider having your name published in the report as a potential expert in the field of assessment and evaluation. This will be your choice.

The information you will share, through interviews and journal writing, will be woven into a narrative of your experience. This narrative will be part of my thesis requirement for Master of Education from the University of Prince Edward Island. The narratives of the other teachers, and my own, will be included in the thesis as well. You will have an opportunity to verify the accuracy of your narrative before it is published.

Research on the topic of authentic assessment in music education, is sorely lacking. Your participation in this project will serve a need to the professional community of educators. The practices of assessment in the music room have the potential to be transferred to other disciplines. Your contribution to the research community would be greatly appreciated.

F. Joyce Lively

Authentic Assessment and Evaluation in Music

Education: A Narrative Inquiry

Consent Form

Code_____

I _____ agree to participate in the research project **Authentic Assessment and Evaluation in Music Education: A Narrative Inquiry**. I have been given ample time to consider my participation. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to change my mind at any time.

It has been explained to me that the information gathered in this study will be reported in a thesis by Joyce Lively. This thesis is required as part of her Master of Education from the University of Prince Edward Island.

I know that I will be interviewed privately on two, separate occasions. The interviews will be last approximately one to two hours each. I will also participate in a group interview that will last one–three hours. I will maintain a reflective journal for the research period and turn that over to Joyce Lively one week after the group interview.

I know that my interviews will be audio-taped and that all records of my information and participation will be kept in a secure place in Joyce Lively's home.

She will be the only person with direct access to this information. I have been told that every effort will be made to protect my identity as a participant in this project however, there is a possibility that my participation in this project may be determined by others. I have also been assured that anonymity will be guaranteed in the written report if that is my request.

I have been told that I am free to discontinue my participation at any time without prejudice. I can change my mind about my decisions at any time. I will receive a copy of this consent form for future reference. If I have any questions I can call Joyce at 371-4430(c).

Name_____ Date_____

Address_____

Phone_____ Email_____

I request anonymity in the written report. Yes [] No []

Signature_____

Authentic Assessment and Evaluation:

A Narrative Inquiry

I, Dr. Eric Favaro, give consent for my name to be published in the research document Authentic Assessment and Evaluation: A narrative Inquiry by F. Joyce Lively. I understand that my name has been mentioned in interviews with the research participants and I agree that it would not be reasonable to expect anonymity in this study. My name is already well known in the field of Music Education and my past service as Coordinator of Fine Arts with the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board is common knowledge. I therefore agree to allow my name to be published as part of the stories told within this research document for the University of Prince Edward Island.

Dr. Eric Favaro _____

e-mail _____

Phone _____

Date _____

APPENDIX B

**Jubilee Elementary
Grades 4-6 Report Card
February 2006**



Student: _____
Provincial Student ID #: _____
Homeroom Teacher: _____
Principal: _____

Grade: _____
School Address: _____
Telephone: _____
School Board: CBVRSB

The Learner Profile

Social Development/Work Habits	✓ consistently demonstrates	✓ usually demonstrates	✓ demonstrates with encouragement or prompts	✓ rarely demonstrates/needs attention	✓ not applicable
The student...					
interacts positively with others					
accepts responsibility for his/her own actions					
resolves conflicts appropriately					
works independently					
uses time effectively					
follows rules and routines					
follows instructions/directions					
completes class work					
completes homework					
demonstrates organizational skills					
takes pride in quality of work					
takes care of own materials and belongings					
respects school property and the property of others					
Comments:					

☐ Social Development Individual Program Plan (IPP) attached

☐ Life Skills IPP attached

Attendance Record

Month	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Absent	2.5	0.5	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Possible	16.0	19.0	20.0	13.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Teacher's Signature: _____ Principal's Signature: _____

Provincial Report Card

February Response Form

(Please complete relevant sections, sign, and return.)

Student:

Grade:

School:

Teacher:

School Board:

Principal:

This is the parent/student response form. Please complete, sign, and return this form to the school with your child.

- Students, we encourage you to comment on what you have done well and what you plan to work on next.
- Parents, we encourage you to comment on your child's achievement, to suggest ways we can assist your child in his/her learning, and to ask questions regarding your child's educational program. If your child is in early elementary, he/she may wish to express his/her response by drawing.

Student's Comments

Student's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent's Comments/Questions

Parent's Signature: _____

Date: _____



Student:		Provincial Student ID #:	Grades 4-6 February Report Card
Subject	Letter Grade	Strengths/Needs/Suggestions	
Core French			
<input type="checkbox"/> IPP (see attached)			
Health Education			
<input type="checkbox"/> IPP (see attached)			
Music			
<input type="checkbox"/> IPP (see attached)			
Physical Education			
<input type="checkbox"/> IPP (see attached)			
Science			
<input type="checkbox"/> IPP (see attached)			
Social Studies			
<input type="checkbox"/> IPP (see attached)			
Visual Arts			
<input type="checkbox"/> IPP (see attached)			

APPENDIX C

Listening Rubric - World Music

Check where applicable.

I hear singers without instruments. _____

I hear singers and instruments. _____

I hear instruments and not singers. _____

I hear percussion instruments (instruments that are struck or shaken). _____

I hear instruments whose sound is produced by blowing. _____

I hear stringed instruments whose sound is produced by drawing a bow across the strings ((for an example, a violin or fiddle). _____

I hear stringed instruments whose sound is produced by strumming the instruments with the fingers or a pick (for example, a guitar). _____

I hear regular rhythm patterns such as those in dance music. _____

I hear irregular rhythm patterns as if the performer is making up the music as it goes along. _____

This is what I heard that is unique:

Cooperative Group Work Self-Assessment

Name: _____

Group Members: _____

Code: 4 Always

3 Most of the time

2 Sometimes

1 Seldom - I need to improve

Cooperative Behaviours: give your behaviour a rating based on the code

1. I made the best use of my time during the rehearsal. _____

2. I contributed ideas to improve our performance. _____

3. I encouraged others to participate and overcome their mistakes. _____

4. I listened to others' ideas. _____

I helped to solve problems or disagreements by:

Next time, I will try to improve by:

MUSIC PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

AIM: To apply your musical knowledge when analyzing a selection of your choice.

1. Choose a selection of music ~2 minutes.....classical, folk, opera, jazz, blues, celtic etc.
 **less points will be given to current "pop", "rap" etc. as I want to 'stretch' your listening.
2. Listen many times and analyze under the following topics- use the questions as a guide- you may add whatever you think is important to the understanding of the music.
 - A) MELODY - wide or narrow range
 high /low
 what instrument/voice has the melody? Does it change?
 - B) TEMPO - fast/slow/medium Does it change?
 - C) TONE COLOR - name all the instruments/voices heard (if an orchestra, just name the families)
 - D) RHYTHM/DURATION - long/short sounds? dotted rhythms? many/few rests? syncopation? repeated rhythm patterns?
 - E) FORM - AB/ABA/Rondo- ABACADA/ Canon/ Fugue/ Theme and Variations/ etc.
 - F) DYNAMICS - p/ pp/ f/ ff/ mf/ mp , many / few
 - G) TEXTURE - Thick or thin Does it change within the piece?
 - H) STYLE - Classical, Folk, Jazz, Opera etc
3. Sign up for a date to present to the class - sheet in music room.
4. On day of presentation:
 - a) have CD or cassette or record ready to play
 - b) pass in written report
 - c) if you have a partner, make sure BOTH of you share speaking/presentation
 - d) limit presentation to 8 minutes

NOTE: a visual representation of the music (listening map or dance) may be presented rather than an oral presentation
HAVE FUN DOING THIS!

I am available for assistance/questions anytime.

PRESENTATIONS WILL BEGIN

MUSIC PROJECT-WRITTEN REPORT

NAME(S): _____ TITLE of MUSIC: _____
 COMPOSER: _____
 DATE PRESENTED: _____

The following were found in this musical selection: (please complete neatly with full sentences-check spelling!)

1. MELODY: _____

2. TEMPO: _____

3. TONE COLOR _____

4. RHYTHM/DURATION _____

5. FORM: _____

6. DYNAMICS: _____

7. TEXTURE: _____

8. STYLE _____

9. Other interesting features in this music that I (we) liked or perhaps disliked. _____

MARK:	Musical Choice	Class presentation	Written Report	Total
	/5	/10	/25	/50

MUSIC PROJECT-WRITTEN REPORT

NAME(S): _____

TITLE of MUSIC: Für EliseCOMPOSER: BeethovenDATE PRESENTED: February 16th

The following were found in this musical selection: (please complete in neatly with full sentences-check spelling!)

1. MELODY: This piece has a narrow range, a high pitch and the piano has the melody, it does not change.2. TEMPO: cl found that the tempo of this piece is slow, medium to also fast. The piece does change.3. TONE COLOR: The only instrument in this piece is the piano. There are no voices in this piece.4. RHYTHM/DURATION: There are short notes, four notes and repeated rhythm patterns.5. FORM: The form goes ABC, ABC.6. DYNAMICS: The dynamics were: f and sf and sfz .7. TEXTURE: The texture is thin. The texture does not change.8. STYLE: Classical

Other interesting features in this music that I (we) liked or perhaps

liked, cl likes how the music is very soft and beautiful cl also likes how this piece is being played on the piano. This is a very good piece of music.MARK: Musical Choice
5/5Class presentation
20/20Written Report
25/25Total
50/50

Very good!

Self-Assessment

1. What was the best thing about today's performance?

2. What was the worst thing about today's performance?

3. How can we improve?

4. Overall, rate your performance.

1. The group did not follow the score at all.

2. We played the right notes some of the time but we made a lot of mistakes.

3. Our notes were all correct but our rhythms were not always held long enough.

4. It was perfect!

Reflections on a Musical Performance

	YES	NO	COULD IMPROVE
Did I walk on/off stage in an appropriate manner? _____			
Did I watch the conductor ? _____			
While singing, did I try to communicate the song's meaning? _____			
Did I take a singer's breath before phrases? _____			
Did my group perform their best? _____			
I am proud of my performance. _____			

What was the best part of your performance?

What do you wish you could have changed in your performance?

How did the audience respond after you finished your piece?

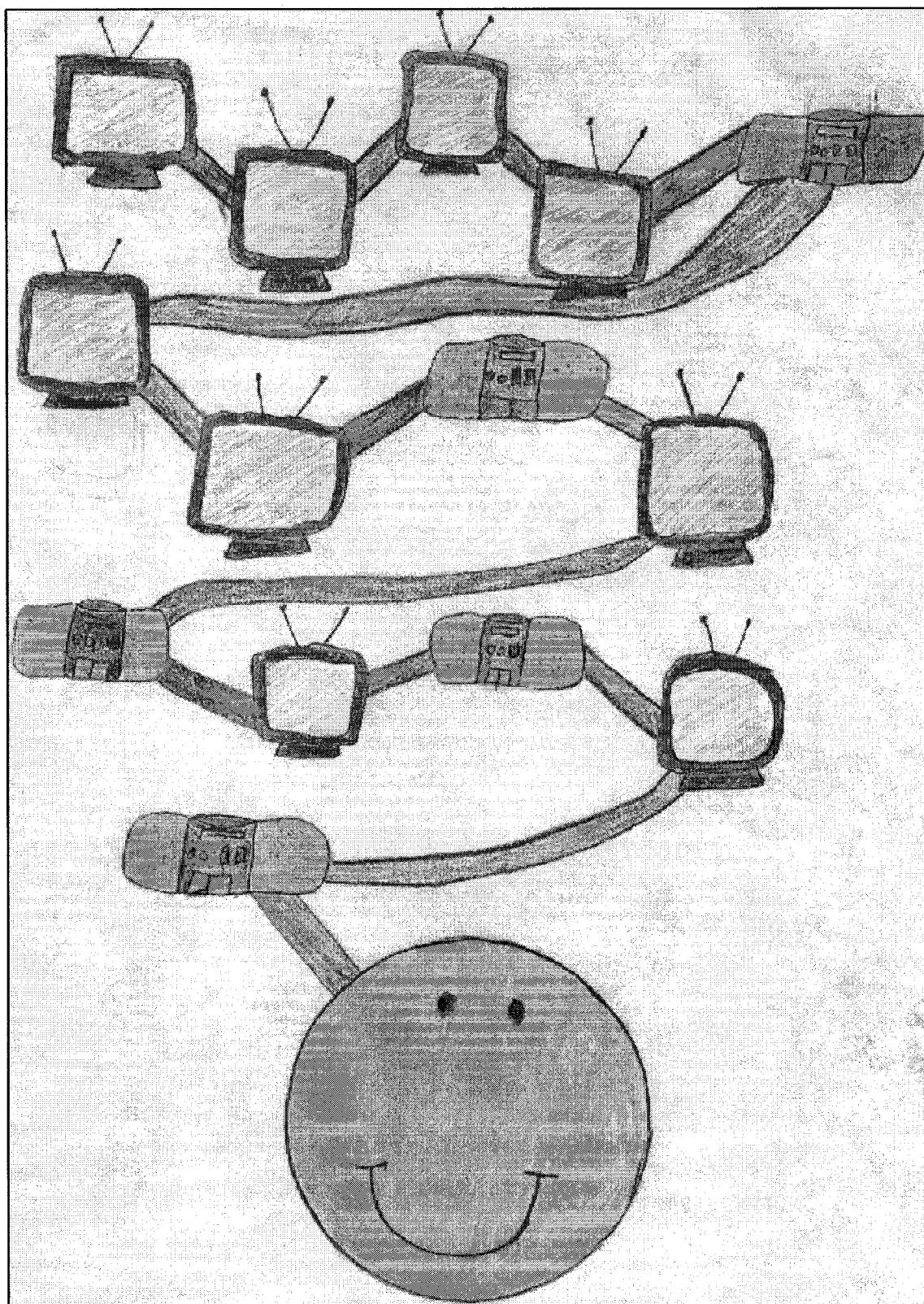
How could you tell that your performance was successful?

Rehearsal Rubric

Instructions: Keep track of your own efforts by putting **A–Always** or **NA–Not always** by each of the four goals.

I tried my best to:

	1 st practice	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	
Keep good posture when singing, both sitting and standing										
Listen to the piano and other singers and sing in tune										
Keep my focus on reading notes and words accurately										
Refrain from talking										



My Favourite Performer

Over the past number of years we have had many discussions about what makes a good performance. We have made observations about vocal production, expression during a performance and the meaning of the text being sung. You will now do an analysis of a performance of one of your favourite performers. You will be like a judge on Canadian Idol.

In your presentation of the performer you will include the following items:

- ✿ A photo or hand-drawn picture of your performer or group
- ✿ A sample of the performance you will be discussing. This may be a CD, Cassette or Video
 - ✿ The sample must be appropriate for elementary listening/viewing(no foul language or imagery) Imagine that you are presenting this information to someone like the Queen or member of the church—what would you play for them?
 - ✿ You will discuss proper vocal production
- ✿ You will discuss whether or not the performance was expressive
 - ✿ You will discuss the meaning of the text

- ✿ In your presentation of the information you will not read from your written information. You will present information to the class that you know and understand. Your poster or slide show will merely be visual background for your presentation.
- ✿ You will do this project on your own and it will be due the week of **May 9**.
- ✿ The presentation will last 3 to 5 minutes including a short musical selection by your performer (You will not play the entire song).

Rubric

- 5 The project exceeds the expectations for successful completion of assigned tasks.
- 4 The project was presented on time and has met the expectations for successful completion of assigned tasks.
- 3 The project was presented on time and has met most of the expectations for successful completion of assigned tasks.
- 2 The project was not presented on time and/or it did not meet the expectations for successful completion of the assigned tasks but a good effort was made.
- 1 No effort was made to complete the assigned tasks.

Composer Review

How did you feel about working in a group? Was it a positive or negative experience?

How many people were in your group? Who contributed the most? Who contributed the least?

What was the biggest challenge you encountered when composing your work?

What did you do to overcome this challenge?

What inspired you to write your piece of music?

What made Liszt famous?

Was he happy with his fame?

Would you be happy in his position?

What were Liszt's challenges in creating new music?

How did he overcome his challenges?

SQUARE DANCE UNIT

NAME: _____

In Cape Breton, there are _____ different square sets. They are the _____, the _____ set, and the _____ set. The set that we learned in class is the _____ set. In it, there are _____ figures. The first figure is danced to a _____, and the 2nd and 3rd are danced to a _____ *Type of music*. In our class we learned _____ figure(s).

Analysis & Self-Assessment

	Yes	No	Somewhat
1. I did my best in trying to learn the various steps in the square dance class.			
2. I can demonstrate the following terms:			
-square your sets			
-address your partner			
-grand chain			
-promenade			
-forward and back			
-swing your partner/corner			
-home position			

3. Identify one part of your square set that needs improvement:

4. How satisfied are you with how your square danced?

5. Would you like to attend a square dance in your community someday?
