



Best Practices Guide

Assessment and Adapting Instruction





Assessment and Adapting Instruction



The purpose of this guide is to twofold: to discuss various types of assessment available to teachers, and to assist teachers in adapting instruction based on assessment evidence. Use these best practices to determine students' prior knowledge and to make adjustments based on that determination. The result is an immediate enhancement to the student learning experience.

This guide is organized into two sections: **Types of Assessment** and **Instruction**.

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Section 1 • Types of Assessment

1.1. Formative Assessments

What are formative assessments?

Also called criterion-referenced assessments, formative assessments track children's development. They are driven byare intended to inform instruction. They may be informal or formal in nature and range in their level of complexity.

How do you conduct formative assessments?

Conducting informal assessments is a three-step process:

1. Identify the performance objective (lesson objective).
2. Instruct the class according to the objective.
3. Measure children's performance of the objective.

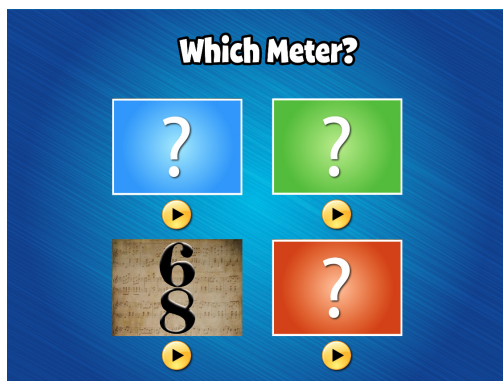
Are there different types of formative assessments?

Yes! Some informal assessments which you may already use are bell ringers and exit tickets.

Bell ringers are warm-up activities that children complete as they begin class. They may focus the children's attention on a new skill that will be taught in the upcoming class or review a skill previously covered. When used to review a skill previously covered, it can help teachers determine students' prior knowledge.

Exit tickets informally measure children's understanding of the information that was presented in class. They are quick activities through which children can provide feedback about an aspect of the class, explain something that they learned, or explain how they can apply the information or skill they learned.

Many QuaverMusic activities may be used as bell ringers and exit tickets.



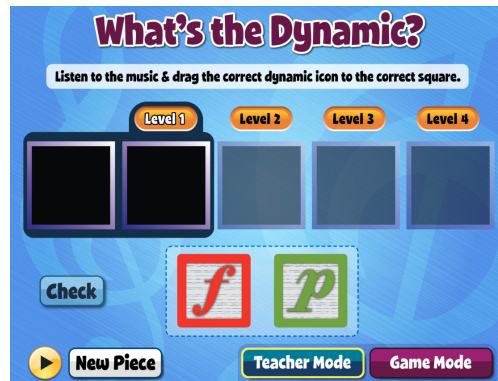
Students find the meter from music presented aurally.



Students keep a steady beat on different parts of their body.

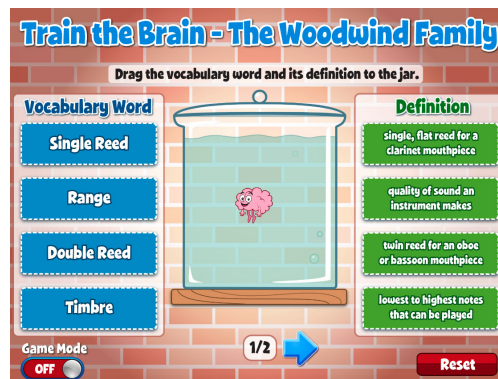
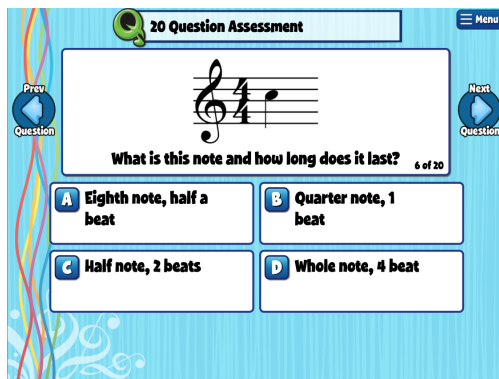
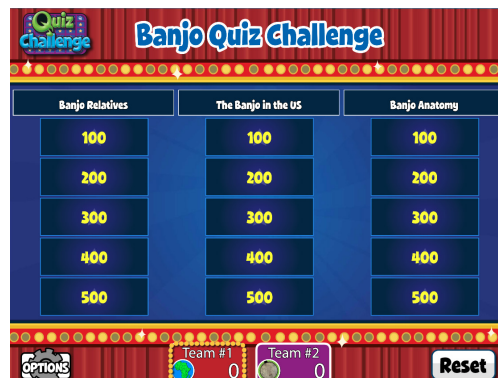
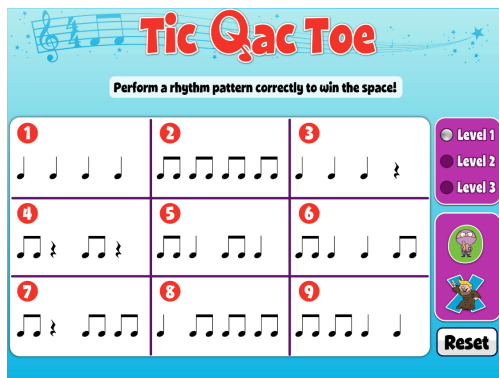


Students identify relative pitch.



Students identify *forte* and *piano*.

Formal formative assessments are usually forms of quizzes. Quizzes may be in traditional pencil and paper format, or they can be embedded within games or digital activities. QuaverMusic contains a variety of fun, engaging quizzes that children will be eager to take!



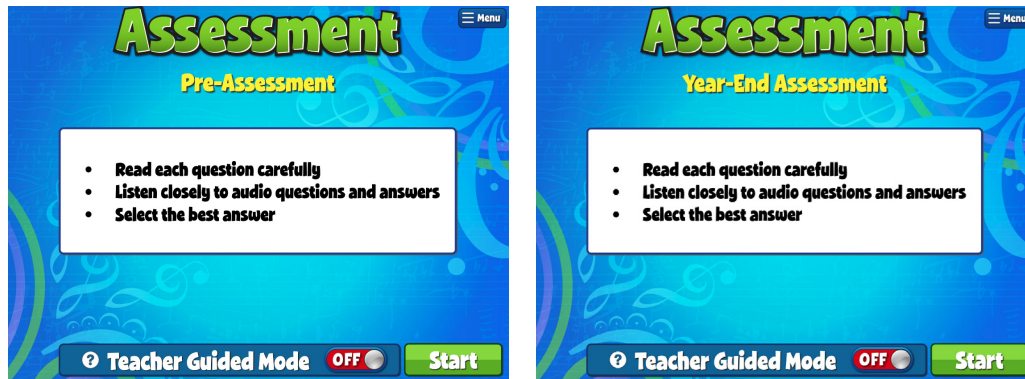
1.2. Summative Assessments

What are summative assessments?

Summative assessments measure children's proficiency and achievement at the end of a specific period of time, such as the end of a semester or school year. Standardized tests are summative assessments. Summative

assessments are usually norm-referenced, comparing the scores of children in a particular class or school to standardized average scores.

QuaverMusic offers pre- and post-tests for every grade level K-5.



1.3. Reflective Assessments

What are reflective assessments?

Reflective assessments allow children to reflect upon their learning and allow teachers to reflect upon their teaching. When used at the beginning of class, reflective assessments provide a snapshot of the children's prior knowledge. When used at the end of class, you can determine what information they retained from the lesson. Children can be fearful of evaluations; however, reflective assessments reduce anxieties by allowing to be part of the assessment process. When used regularly, reflection becomes a part of the learning process.

What are examples of reflective assessments?

There are many ways in which children can reflect on their learning.

- "I Learned" statements that include how and why the learning is meaningful
- Pair-share for children to share their thoughts about learning and discuss their learning experiences with a classmate
- Sentence stems to encourage critical thinking
- Rubrics for performance and participation





1.4. Data Collection

How Can I Collect Data in the Music Classroom?

Bell ringers and exit tickets are quick assessment tools that you can use on a regular basis; they provide a snapshot of children's understanding of the day's lesson.

Rubrics can provide a more detailed assessment. Because all lessons have specific learning goals for children, the data collected the goals, objectives, and standards taught to them. Rubrics allow you to evaluate how proficiently the children perform the skills that were taught. You can also evaluate how the children apply the skills you have presented to create music of their own. Rubrics not only show progress—they also give children a guide for moving toward mastery. This form of assessment is most effective when both teachers and students complete a rubric and discuss them together.

QuaverMusic has a Rubric Creation tool to customize rubrics to your specifications.


The screenshot shows the 'Rubric Editor' interface. At the top, there's a title bar with 'Rubric Editor' on the left, 'Performance Rubric' in the center, and 'Menu' and 'Help' icons on the right. Below the title bar is a table with four columns: 'EXEMPLARY (4 points)', 'PROFICIENT (3 points)', 'PROGRESSING (2 points)', and 'NEEDS DEVELOPMENT (1 point)'. The rows are 'MUSICAL ACCURACY', 'TEAMWORK', 'FOCUS AND ENGAGEMENT', and 'MUSICIANSHIP'. Each cell contains a description of the performance level. For example, under 'MUSICAL ACCURACY', the 'EXEMPLARY' description is 'Performed all vocal, instrumental, and dance elements accurately.' At the bottom of the interface, there are buttons for 'Load Template', 'Cancel', and 'Save', along with a small 'Add/Edit Notes' icon.

	EXEMPLARY (4 points)	PROFICIENT (3 points)	PROGRESSING (2 points)	NEEDS DEVELOPMENT (1 point)
MUSICAL ACCURACY	Performed all vocal, instrumental, and dance elements accurately.	Performed most vocal, instrumental, and dance elements accurately.	Performed some vocal, instrumental, and dance elements accurately.	Performed very few vocal, instrumental, and dance elements accurately.
TEAMWORK	Consistently supported other performers.	Mostly supported other performers	Sometimes supported other performers.	Little attempt to support other performers.
FOCUS AND ENGAGEMENT	Appropriate attention and behavior.	Mostly appropriate attention and behavior.	Some appropriate attention and behavior.	Off-task and inattentive behavior.
MUSICIANSHIP	Consistently expressive performance and connection with the audience.	Mostly expressive performance and connection with the audience.	Moments of expressive performance and connection with the audience.	Little evidence of expressive performance and connection with the audience.

Standards-based rubrics for Performance

Rubrics allow you to track the progression of children's learning from introduction of a skill through mastery. The rubric template provides an intuitive space to define emerging, progressing, proficient, and advanced performance behaviors.

You may create both teacher and student versions of the rubrics so everyone can reflect upon progress performance.

 Menu

Performance Rubric

Select a white box to learn more or highlight specific boxes.

	EXEMPLARY (4 points)	PROFICIENT (3 points)	PROGRESSING (2 points)	NEEDS DEVELOPMENT (1 points)
MUSICAL ACCURACY	Performed all vocal, instrumental, and dance elements accurately.	Performed most vocal, instrumental, and dance elements accurately.	Performed some vocal, instrumental, and dance elements accurately.	Performed very few vocal, instrumental, and dance elements accurately.
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Highlighter
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Clear

Standards-based rubrics for Creativity

Creativity rubrics can assess children's progression using the same elements: emerging, progressing, proficient, and advanced creative behaviors. In addition to marking progress, creativity rubrics also promote the creative process.

Language in creativity rubrics should be encouraging and positive.

Summative assessments

Informal, formative assessments are critical to informing instruction, but formal, standardized assessment is also valuable. Be mindful that your school district may require specific standardized testing to assess your students.



Question Assessment

Menu

What is this note and how long does it last? 6 of 20

Next Question

A Eighth note, half a beat

B Quarter note, 1 beat

C Half note, 2 beats

D Whole note, 4 beat

Decorative musical notes at the bottom left.

Section 2 • Instruction

2.1. What are Evidence-Based Techniques?

Excellent instruction is the heart of every thorough and meaningful lesson. These lessons, characterized by breadth and depth of information, expand and deepen children's learning. There are several techniques designed to elevate instruction and connect with children on many different levels, resulting in lasting, demonstrable acquisition of knowledge.

Each of the following teaching techniques allows you to observe your children's learning in action. They may be used individually or in combination, allowing you to make instructional adaptations in the moment.

2.2. Differentiation in Grouping

What is Differentiation in Grouping?

Educators have debated the merits of ability grouping for decades. Heterogeneous grouping places children together by differences in characteristics while homogeneous grouping places children together by similarities. Historically, intellectual ability has been the primary characteristic used for grouping. Proponents of heterogeneous grouping believe that mixing children by ability level will help those who are struggling. Proponents of homogeneous grouping argue that mixing children with similarities reduces stress for struggling children and removes achievement limits for gifted children. Research indicates both types of groupings have benefits. Children with learning challenges show greater achievement and motivation when placed in heterogeneous groups. Children with average abilities perform better in homogeneous groups. Intellectually advanced children have strong learning outcomes in both types of groupings. (Saleh et al., 2005, 105-119).

How Can You Use Groupings in the Classroom?

You can use groupings effectively without using ability as the focus. Try using a broader lens to define homogeneity in your classrooms. Let your (and your children's) creativity shine; consider grouping by favorite foods, hair color, favorite music, number of siblings, or learning style preferences. Children will enjoy learning more about their classmates and have an immediate connection with their group.

At times, ability grouping is appropriate. It gives teachers the opportunity to target needs. When grouped with other children with similar abilities, performance anxiety may lessen and motivation may increase.

2.3. Student-Led Learning

Also called a "flipped classroom," student-led learning offers children greater autonomy over their learning experiences and understanding of concepts (Abbott, 2019, Guzzetta, 2020, 267-282). The flipped classroom requires quite a bit of teacher preparation on the front end to ensure that children understand what their goals are, what resources they can access to help them achieve the goals, and how to communicate within their learning groups. With a solid structure in place, you can migrate from being the "one with the knowledge" to the "one who facilitates children's learning." Children and teachers become learning partners. Besides enjoying control over their learning, children develop and apply a variety of learning strategies, learn to effectively communicate what and how they are learning, and begin to understand how they learn and appreciate learning differences among their peers. They will be proud to share what they have learned. Student-led learning is empowering!



2.4. Project-Based Learning

Children love projects! With encouragement and motivation, children can become immersed in their learning experiences. Project-based learning may be teacher- or child-driven. The Reggio Emilia approach is a well-known child-driven, project-based pedagogy developed in Italy by Loris Malaguzzi in the 1970s that focuses on self-directed, experiential learning in which the teacher serves as a collaborator. It is a beneficial resource when embarking on project-based learning in the classroom. As with student-led learning, the framing of the project requires thoughtful preparation by the teacher, who then observes the learning process via interactions with and between children and the methods employed by them to reach their learning goals.

Children may suggest what they would like to study, but teachers may introduce project topics as well. Either way, share the project planning with the children through questioning.

Example: We are going to explore folk songs. What would you like to learn about them?

Child engagement in the planning process jump-starts children's desire to learn.

2.5. Reflective Teaching

The process of reflecting on practice was introduced to education in 1987; such practices had been utilized in the business world for decades. Reflective teaching refers to a systematic process of analyzing teaching in order to improve instruction and its subsequent outcomes. Reflective teaching practices may include journaling about given lessons after instruction, noting strengths and weaknesses, child and teacher behaviors, and reflecting in order to improve the learning experience (Eisele, 1989, Pollard & Collins, 2005). Reflective teaching requires carving out time to think about lessons. Teachers generally recognize lessons that do not succeed, but the reasons for failure are not always immediately apparent. Likewise, teachers do not always identify behaviors that led to successful lessons. Self-reflection and analysis lead to improved instructional techniques and child outcomes.

2.6. How Do I Implement Evidence-Based Techniques in the Classroom?

Scenario 1: Marching to a steady beat

Gather your children in a circle, each facing counterclockwise.

Ask the class to listen and then march to the steady beat. Play the first song in your playlist and observe the children as they march to the steady beat. Notice the proficiency levels of the children as they respond to the music (formative assessment).

Ask the class to "freeze" and play the next song in the playlist. This song should be in the same time signature but markedly slower or faster. Once again observe the children, noticing which children are still struggling and those who are marching to the beat with ease.

Instructional Options:

– Differentiation in Grouping

Ask children to "freeze" and then pair children who march to the beat with ease with children who are struggling with the activity. The children may face each other and mirror one another's marching, or each hold one end of a rhythm stick and march together around the circle. Observe and again make addition-

al adjustments. For example, if some children continue to have difficulty finding the steady beat, back up and pat the legs to the steady beat, and then re-evaluate.

- **Student-Led Instruction**

Divide the class into groups of 4-6 children and select a child in each group to create a steady beat lesson for the group. Make yourself available to consult with the child teachers. Allow time for the groups to practice their lessons (**Note:** Timers are a helpful tool for keeping the children on task). Ask for groups to volunteer to show their steady beat activities. Observe the children and elicit comments about how the activities helped them feel the steady beat.

- **Project-Based Learning**

Divide the class into small groups for a project. Inform the children that they are going to pretend to teach a 4-year-old child about steady beat. Let them know how much time they will have to complete the project and that they will present their lesson at the end of the designated time. Depending upon the length of the class, the project may require more than one class period for preparation. Remind them that every group member must be involved and is accountable for achieving the project goal. Observe the children during the presentations. The lessons may then be repeated with the entire class. Provide positive feedback to the groups.

- **Reflective Teaching**

Whenever possible, record your children while they are learning. Watching a recording of the class offers a different perspective about what happened during a lesson than what you may have observed while teaching. Look for tasks that the children performed well and those that they did not perform well, and look for clues to the discrepancy in your instructional language, the grouping of the children, and any other possible factors.

Chart your teaching behaviors, noting strengths and weaknesses. Take time to reflect on how to improve weak areas and how to capitalize on your strengths.

Scenario 2: Higher or Lower?

At the keyboard, play a single high or low note (using a distinct contrast between high and low). Children respond by clapping high (above their heads) when you play a high note and clapping low (near the knees) when you play a low note. They have demonstrated a solid understanding of high and low and are ready to move on.

Ask the children to listen to two notes; present the pair of notes three times, allowing adequate silent time between presentations for the children to audiate the pitches. The children's job is to show you if the second note is higher or lower than the first note. Ask them to point at the ceiling if the second note is higher and point at the floor if the second note is lower. You notice that many of the children have difficulty with the task.



Instructional Options:

- **Differentiation in Grouping**

Experiment with groupings as the children explore pitch comparisons. Consider grouping by the children's voice quality so there is a range of low to high voices in each group. Other options include grouping by height (taller children can represent higher notes).

- **Student-Led Instruction**

Divide the children into groups of 4-6 children. They will rotate the responsibility of being the leader. Ask the children to collaborate and design a game that will show higher and lower. Leaders may use a pitched classroom instrument to play the comparison tones.

- **Project-Based Learning**

Higher and lower projects can focus on instruments or the voice. Divide the children into small groups or ask them to choose their own groups of 4-6. Children may assemble a group of pitched instruments and compare two instruments. Similarly, they can place the instruments in order from lowest to highest. Each child can be assigned an instrument and vocally represent its sound. They can create higher/lower games for the class. Tap into the children's enthusiasm for some very creative projects!

- **Reflective Teaching**

Following your initial lesson on higher/lower, review the recording you made of the class or simply allow your mind to re-experience the lesson from a child's point of view. Because higher/lower can be a tricky concept to grasp, even for those who easily identify high and low, how did you prepare for expected problems? Were your interventions successful? If not, how could you modify the instruction? Did any of the children ask questions or make comments that provided an "ah-ha" moment for other children? Make sure you document teaching moments you want to recreate!

Scenario 3: Using Dynamics

Ask the class how they can tell when someone is excited. They will inevitably tell you about facial expressions and body language. At least one child will tell you that when they are excited they get LOUDER! Ask what their voices do when they are talking privately to another person about something important. Inform or remind them that, just like their voices show emotion, music can show emotion, too!

Explain the mechanics of dynamics, specifically that some instruments and the human voice can musically express emotion, but some instruments cannot. Tell them that they can communicate emotion in their songs by getting louder and softer. Ask the children to sing a familiar song without any feeling and then ask for their feedback. Ask how they think they would feel if someone sang Happy Birthday to them without any emotion. Demonstrate and explain your hand gestures that represent crescendos and decrescendos. Ask them to sing the song again, watching your gestures. Discuss the two versions. Tell them today they get to play with sound and emotion.

Instructional Options:

- **Differentiation in Grouping**

Place children in groups or allow students to form their own groups. Allow them play with different songs of their choosing to make them sound different through their use of dynamics. Ask groups to share their favorites with the class.

- **Student-Led Instruction**

Ask the children to make one song more exciting and one song more serious through dynamics. Allow time for the children to think about their songs and practice their hand gestures. Invite the children to share their altered songs with the class.

- **Project-Based Learning**

A number of topics lend themselves to dynamics projects. The children can listen to baroque examples of terraced dynamics and compare them to selections with gradient dynamics. Children can explore dynamic levels and the notation used to represent them. Many children will have questions about the use of dynamics that they would like to explore. Allow the students to work independently or team up with others who would like to pursue the same questions.

Allow ample time for the children to dig into their research and then invite them to share what they learned.

- **Reflective Teaching**

Because it is so different from their own musical experiences, children will be amazed that music was once only loud or only soft. Think about that realization. Did your lesson effectively capture that discovery? Did the lesson inspire their desire to manipulate sound with dynamics? Did you observe any future music teachers in the class? Document the lesson's high and low points so you can customize future lessons.

Summary

Assessing student progress in your classroom is one of the most powerful instructional guides teachers have available. Assessment may be formative, which informs instruction, summative, which documents achievement when compared to norms, or reflective, which allows teachers and children to think about their learning.

When you teach, you observe and listen. Those observations drive your instruction and the course of your children's learning progress. They enable you to track their progress as they learn new skills, monitor their retention, and know when they have achieved proficiency. Sometimes lessons do not go as planned, but when you utilize your classroom observations (formative assessments), you can quickly adapt instruction and keep the learning going.

The QuaverMusic curriculum embeds both formative and summative assessments within its lessons. Look for pre- and post-tests, quizzes, quiz challenges, bell ringers, exit tickets, and reflections through fun, engaging activities. QuaverMusic also encourages the use of differentiation in grouping, student-led instruction, and project-based learning to keep student interest and motivation high. With all of these resources at your fingertips, you're now ready to create your own marvelous world of music!



Seriously Fun Education