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Measuring Social-Emotional Learning in Music Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to recommend possible approaches for incorporating social-emotional learning into music education assessment practices. A resounding argument for music in the schools is that music promotes benefits such as social-emotional development, self-esteem, community and belonging, creative thinking, mental health and wellbeing, and expression of the human experience. However, those phenomena are not typically included as assessment criteria in evaluating student growth and progress. Instead, music education assessment has focused largely on standards-based attributes at the detriment of qualities that make musical participation enjoyable. In this paper, we consider how to assess music while measuring students' social-emotional learning (SEL).

Keywords: assessment, music education, social-emotional learning

Introduction

Music education advocates in the United States have worked tirelessly to ensure music has a curricular foothold. One way to distinguish music as a stand-alone subject has been to encourage educators to participate in standards-based reform and assessment, a practice similarly adopted by other core subjects (Fisher 2008). As standards-based

assessment became a central focus in other academic disciplines, music education embraced similar practices to affirm its place as a credible and integral part of the school curriculum. Adoption of national standards among disciplines such as music, mathematics, language arts, science, and history signified a fundamental transformation in the educational landscape (Benedict 2006). National music standards and corresponding assessments propelled music education from a peripheral enrichment activity to an essential core subject.

However, it is difficult to align the ideal of assessment with its practical execution, especially in performance-based ensembles—the primary mode of musical engagement for American secondary-level students. For many music educators, "assessment has brought both enlightenment and pressure" (Butke 2014, 23). Debates surrounding assessment are often accompanied by such strong emotions that it can be difficult to reach effective solutions (Colwell 2012). Some practitioners question the feasibility of assessment while maintaining student engagement. Creative and experiential tasks designed for music classes may require teachers to assess differently than in other subjects (Barlow 2018). Music education assessment can provide benefits such as offering feedback to enhance student learning and motivation (Hattie and Timperley 2007), supporting effective teaching (Adarkwah 2021), and providing validation for educational programs (Colwell and Beall 1985). However, there continue to be many roadblocks to successful and ubiquitous implementation of assessment in music education.

First, there is no commonly accepted view of assessment in music. For example, Nádia Moura et al. (2024) highlighted the diversity and inconsistency in music performance assessment systems across different studies and contexts. They suggested that assessment systems vary widely in terms of instruments, rating scales, and evaluation criteria, that cultural and stylistic differences complicate the development of universally accepted assessment models, and that the subjectivity inherent in music performance makes consistent evaluation challenging—even among expert adjudicators. Phillip Payne et al. (2019) referred to music education assessment as "emerging" or "evolving" in part due to the complex diversity of individual school districts within the United States (36). While

Ashley Danielle Gilbert (2016) argued that music educators "might benefit from assessing their students based on standards better suited to the arts" (14), she warned against assessment practices that "sacrific[e] the integrity of music instruction itself" (13), prioritizing "authentic music-making activities" (17) over documenting standardized student success. Lauren Kapalka Richerme (2016) wrote that "music education does not always necessitate formal measurements and assessments" (276) and that music educators should "empower themselves to critique and reimagine existing measurement apparatuses and their measurement and assessment practices" (274).

The definition of music itself is debatable, even among professional musicians. Music educators often do not agree on what should be assessed as well as how to derive a grade or score from that assessment. Because of music's subjective nature, it is often difficult to quantify, leaving the interpretation of success to be flexible (Asmus 1999). Efforts to assess objectively may not best meet the needs of all students (Meyer, Rose, and Gordon 2014) and can seem devoid of the humanity that is often acknowledged as a foundational benefit to musical participation. Music education assessment tends to be grounded in standards, often based on Western classical norms, which can perpetuate a sense of hegemony (Mellizo 2020), alienating many students.

High-stakes performance assessment in music education refers to evaluative practices in which student musical performances are assessed in ways that carry significant, and often punitive, consequences for students, teachers, or programs (Nierman 2019). Used to make critical decisions about educational outcomes, these assessments may be publicly reported or scrutinized and can influence grades, advancement, certification, or funding. When high-stakes performance assessments such as summative concerts, recitals, recordings, and live performance exams are at the center of curricular decisions, it can lead to concerns with health and wellness that take the joy out of music-making—for both students and teachers. Conversely, Danni Gilbert (2021) argued, "when students are not fearful of making mistakes in preparation for a formal performance, this could lead to a more relaxed environment" in music education settings (79). Stressors common to musicians include performance anxiety, time management concerns, stress, and burnout

(Wristen 2013). Symptoms of stress may produce negative physical and psychological effects (Gilbert 2021) which can negatively impact musical engagement. Prolonged feelings of stress lead to distress, frustration, unhappiness, reduced achievement, and burnout (McLain 2005). Distress leads to anxiety, stress, and exhaustion, negatively impacting wellbeing (Hedden 2005). Teachers suffering from prolonged distress face burnout, resulting in attrition from the profession and an ever-growing shortage of qualified music educators. Music students who experience burnout are at risk of quitting the program or musical interests altogether. Nierman (2019) emphasized that while music is a foundational subject deserving of rigor, assessment does not necessarily need to be accomplished through high-pressure situations.

Although the United States' 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) identified music as a core subject, music is frequently labeled as a "special" or "elective" class that often uses different grading systems than other core subjects. If teachers evaluate according to the achievement of content-related benchmarks, or standards-based grading, there can be concern from students and their parents who expect an "automatic A" in fine arts classes, regardless of achievement. While this systematic approach to grading where everyone gets an A might be appealing to some, others have concerns over such grade inflation (Denis 2018). Communication regarding evaluation that is not connected to discipline-specific musical objectives and standards can seem arbitrary and counter to assessment's goals (Lehman 1998). Consequently, "the grading practices of practicing music teachers are varied and range from recommended best practices to compliance-based assessments" (St. Pierre and Wuttke 2015, 31).

Collecting measurement data is important in schools for communication and accountability, but should be accomplished in a way that "does not snuff the joy out" of education (Soutter 2020, 29). It may be possible to maintain some assessment practices that serve us well while also making changes that are equitable, inclusive, and personally meaningful to best meet the needs of students (Mellizo 2020). When students experience greater enjoyment and wellbeing at school, they also experience a greater likelihood of academic success (Renshaw, Long, and Cook 2015).

The purpose of this paper is to recommend possible approaches for incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) into music education assessment practices. SEL is defined as "the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" (CASEL 2024, 1). A resounding argument for music in the schools is that music promotes benefits such as social-emotional development, self-esteem, community and belonging, creative thinking, mental health and wellbeing, and expression of the human experience (Arts Education Partnership 2019; Jiang 2024; Váradi 2022). In this paper, we argue that standards-based assessments should not be the primary criteria for evaluating progress in music settings. We have been attempting to force music to conform to qualities at the expense of music's intrinsic characteristics. It is time to rethink music assessment and balance our attention with measuring students' social-emotional learning (SEL).

Standards-Based Assessment in American Music Education

History of the Standards Movement

In 1983, after decades of reform conversations, the United States National Commission on Excellence in Education called for revision of the country's educational system. Their report, *A Nation at Risk*, outlined specific benchmarks that all students should meet. The hope was to strengthen education by promoting equity and closing the achievement gap, particularly among lower-income and minority students, to better meet the national need for a more competitive workforce. By 1994, the "Goals 2000: Educate America Act" designated goals for standards-based educational reform. In response, the Music Educators National Conference (now the National Association for Music Education), developed national music standards in 1994, revised in 2014. Intended for realization in American music classrooms, the standards communicated targets for what every student should know and be able to do musically, though these may have reinforced already deeply ingrained societal and cultural assumptions (Mellizo 2020). The movement towards specific

goals and outcomes in music education converged with a heightened concentration on authentic, standards-based assessment (St. Pierre and Wuttke 2015), with accompanying model cornerstone assessments as measures of student achievement. In music education, standards-based assessment refers to evaluating students' learning and performance according to predetermined academic standards that indicate expected knowledge and skills for specific grade or proficiency benchmarks (Burrack, Parkes, and Brophy 2019). United States national music standards are voluntary for teachers to adopt and students are not held accountable to them. When not mandatory, the standards can be perceived as optional guidelines or recommendations to follow (Fisher 2008).

While some argue that adopting nationwide standardized testing in music is essential to maintaining a place in the core curriculum (Fisher 2008), implementing mandatory state-based standards has been met with mixed results. A one-size-fits-all model for education fails to consider the various and individualized needs of students and their abilities, interests, resources, funds, and support structures, making educational environments even less equitable. Music classes vary in size, serving students of many different languages, cultures, and levels of cognitive development (Denis 2018). In many locations, it is difficult to achieve standardization and equity even among various schools within a single district. Therefore, adhering to standards-based outcomes may be detrimental to students' wellbeing and educational growth, necessitating a need for change.

Challenges to Standards-Based Assessment

Even years after the national music standards were developed and revised, music offerings in United States schools have experienced scant changes. More than half of practicing music educators lack awareness of standards-based grading, while some who assert they use standards-based grading do so inaccurately (St. Pierre and Wuttke 2015). Music educators who are familiar with standards-based grading and apply it correctly may comply out of obligation (St. Pierre and Wuttke 2015).

Although some acknowledge that the standards have led to improvements in goal setting (Shuler 2012), the assessment of such goals continues to be challenging. Teachers

can find it difficult to apply standards consistently across music curricula due to extreme limitations of time, a shortage of qualified music educators, concerns with relevancy of school music, and dwindling music student populations beyond elementary school. Heavy emphases on high-stakes performances or competitions (Conway 2008), along with inequitable assumptions for assessment criteria that favor traditional, Eurocentric musical practices (Mellizo 2020), raise concerns. Asmus (1999) argued that it is critical for music educators to document assessment data to illustrate learning and effectiveness of instruction. However, Conway (2008) found that some districts "get so detailed in documenting work in [the standards] that performance ensembles suffer and students drop out of the music program" (35). Teachers can become so overwhelmed in objective measurement and reporting that it leads to a focus on topics, repertoire, and activities that no longer interest students or inspire a love of music.

Despite efforts championed in the United States to connect assessment to content-related objectives, many American music educators assess non-musical or ambiguous behaviors such as attendance, participation, attitude, or preparedness. In fact, some music educators report that such non-musical criteria comprise more than 60% of students' grades (Russell and Austin 2010). With larger class sizes compared to other subjects, it can be time-consuming to provide documented, individualized feedback. Teachers may have incomplete or missing data necessary to achieve a holistic understanding of students and classroom environments.

Standards-based assessment can lead to participation barriers for many students, particularly those with disabilities, economically burdened students, students of color, and English language learners (Massachusetts 2018). Although the goal is to strengthen education for everyone, standardization in curricula means targeting majority benchmarks which can actually increase disparities for students already at a disadvantage and is problematic from a social justice lens (Mellizo 2020). Curricular resources tied to standards can predominantly and inappropriately reflect Eurocentric musical traditions while excluding practices from other cultures and traditions (Mellizo 2020). Mellizo (2020) stated:

> Assessment tools and rubrics used to measure student growth/achievement in music classrooms often impose subjective indicators of quality (e.g., intonation, tone quality, blend, vocal timbre) regardless of norms in the cultural setting from which the music is drawn. This curricular tendency is hegemonic because it assumes (often incorrectly) that criteria for musical achievement/proficiency remain the same across all music traditions. As an example, the vocal performance rubric included in the 5th Grade Model Cornerstone Assessment (MCA) for Performing includes an assessment category for Vowel and Consonant Pronunciation. According to the rubric, a student who meets the standard "sings with tall vowels." Yet, singing with "tall vowels" is not an indicator of quality in many vocal music genres (e.g., various African traditions, Hindustani vocal music, and some popular music). When we apply this rubric to all vocal music (without making adjustments based on norms in the cultural setting), we send a clear message that one way of singing is always preferred over others. (58)

Additionally, standards-based assessment can create a gatekeeping barrier in secondary ensemble settings where benchmarked proficiency levels are required for participation. For example, many American high school instrumental programs do not offer a beginning band or orchestra option; therefore, unless students have already participated in instrumental music in middle school, they are often discouraged from advanced secondary participation due to lack of proficiency. Students interested in musical participation, but not already identified as "gifted" or "talented," can be deprived of these musical opportunities.

We argue that the most significant problem with standards-based assessment in American music education lies not with teacher awareness, ability, time, or resources, but that this assessment model is not the most appropriate fit for music as a discipline. Music educators have worked to secure equal footing with other academic areas, but may have inadvertently stripped away the very characteristics that make music worthy of being its own stand-alone subject. The "discrepancy between research-based best practices and actual classroom practices" (St. Pierre and Wuttke 2015, 36) regarding music assessment should not be seen as a failure, but rather as a symptom of a problem that has been misdiagnosed. In order to conduct a more varied and holistic appraisal of each student, music educators, administrators, and policymakers must alter their current assessment approaches.

Music Education to Support Social-Emotional Learning: An Alternative Approach

Music educators have long advocated for school music for non-musical (yet essential) human benefits, such as self-expression, collaboration and belonging, and improved mood. Even those who do not claim to be musicians or music educators can clearly articulate how music brings people together, serves as a channel for core human experiences, and is just simply enjoyable. Since education's purpose is for students to develop skills that will help them belong and contribute positively to society (Renshaw, Long, and Cook 2015), and musical experiences provide essential human benefits, then we argue that those qualities can support music as a curricular core.

Assessing how music engages the affective domain is incompatible in an educational environment that prizes objectivity with observable, measurable outcomes. The very essence of music is subjective, with "those aesthetic and expressive qualities that draw us to it" (Butke 2014, 23). Non-academic outcomes—such as joy, wellbeing, social-emotional development, and sense of belonging—need to be addressed differently than via standards-based assessment practices, and are essential considerations when ensuring that students obtain support to meet their needs (Soutter 2020). When educators prioritize wellbeing, they not only improve students' course satisfaction, but also promote academic achievement (Renshaw, Long, and Cook 2015).

Music education assessment communicates value to stakeholders, and can be used as an advocacy tool for keeping music in schools (Denis 2018). Music educators could collect and document students' growth in social-emotional learning (SEL), reporting to stakeholders that students are both learning music and becoming better adapted in life skills. Soutter (2020) wrote, "In an era of test-based accountability, the mere decision to measure things like engagement, curiosity, and joy sends a strong signal to teachers and parents that these things matter—it may even help convince skeptics that it is worthwhile to invest in" (26).

Music educators might use assessment data that is not solely related to improving musical proficiency to advocate for the beneficial impact of music on students' mental health and wellbeing. When teachers can assess students' social and emotional learning

(SEL) in conjunction with educational development, students exhibit observable benefits in classroom environments (Soutter 2020). Teachers may use SEL assessment data in the classroom to promote educational equity, improve academic performance, reduce anxiety and stress, and contribute "to safe, healthy, and just communities" (CASEL 2024, 1). Five competence areas demonstrated by children and adults with strong social and emotional success include: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL 2024). Optimistic thinking, goal-directed behavior, and personal responsibility are additional constructs used to measure social and emotional competence (Aperture Education 2024).

Some argue that SEL is an outcome of learned experiences or intelligence (Gardner 1983), or that social and emotional skills are like any skills that can be taught, learned, and assessed (Aperture Education 2024). Conversely, others believe that SEL is a fixed personality trait (Bar-On 1997). Regardless of the source of SEL characteristics, there is growing evidence that providing space for assessing SEL in educational settings is beneficial for all students (Durlak, Mahoney, and Boyle 2022). Assessing SEL ensures opportunities are equitably afforded to everyone. Soutter (2020) described the assessment of SEL as a social justice issue that helps marginalized students feel they belong at school and that teachers care about their success.

Children's ability to develop and expand social skills during their school-aged years may greatly determine their potential for success as adults. Social competency skills include cooperating with peers, helping others, and effectively problem-solving (Potera 2015). Potera (2015) found that students who received focused instruction in social competency skills were more likely to graduate from college and hold a steady job as an adult compared to students who did not receive such instruction. In fact, fewer social competency skills correlate with greater incidences of alcohol dependence, needing public assistance, and being arrested as adults.

Rather than using intervention at school for students considered most at-risk, music settings focused on assessing holistic musical and personal development would be conducive for all students to learn and grow social competency skills. Prioritizing student

interest, caring, and wellbeing positively impacts student coping strategies, autonomy, school engagement, attendance, self-efficacy, persistence, and ultimately, performance (Jones 2009). Therefore, assessing social and emotional skills, particularly early in one's education, are as equally necessary as assessing cognitive skills for enduring success (Potera 2015).

Measuring Social-Emotional Learning in Music Education Settings

To best serve students' needs while continuing to occupy a place within the overall curriculum, music educators must make changes to assessment practices. Here, we propose alternatives to standards-based assessment that promote social-emotional wellbeing in music education settings.

Music educators can align assessment practices to encompass objective musical achievement, while also preserving subjective qualities that are intrinsic characteristics of music itself, by balancing assessment practices to include social-emotional outcomes. When schools equitably consider students' academic needs and social-emotional learning, they can improve student results. Although it may be challenging to empirically measure students' social-emotional development (Renshaw, Long, and Cook 2015), it is possible to authentically and effectively accomplish without "wrenching the soul out of what SEL is meant to be" (Soutter 2020, 26).

The vast number of SEL models available for consideration can feel overwhelming. Additionally, it can be difficult to determine which model will best serve different students, and teachers need sufficient guidance for effective implementation and assessment of SEL goals (Soutter 2020). Prior to making major decisions based on SEL measurement, it is important to determine whether results reflect individual responses or a broader community climate. However, music educators should be encouraged to attempt new approaches to best serve students' needs while also improving workplace environments for themselves. Music educators, administrators, and policymakers may consider reorienting their reporting practices to focus less on potentially problematic standards-based

assessments and shift to monitoring music's impact on students' social, emotional, and behavioral health and wellbeing.

Some approaches to SEL assessment include surveys, quantitative assessments, teacher-reported assessments, parent-reported assessments, student-reported assessments, direct assessments, and screeners (Sutton 2021). Attempts to measure student wellbeing rely sometimes disproportionately on performance-based assessments, such as direct observations, or informant-rated assessments, such as teacher ratings. However, including subjective assessments, like student self-reports, provides a more complete insight into students' perceptions (Renshaw, Long, and Cook 2015). Table 1 below illustrates a few SEL measurement tools for consideration. Music educators may employ multiple measures to capture a more holistic understanding of students' perceptions to communicate with stakeholders.

SEL Measurement Tool	Purpose	Target Audience	Respondents	Location
Brief Music in Mood Regulation (B-MMR)	Predicts participation and engagement by measuring music in mood regulation	Ages 10–20	Students; self-reporting tool	https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Ft17588-000
Healthy-Unhealthy Music Scale (HUMS)	Assesses musical engagement as indicator of student wellness	Ages 13–20	Students; self-reporting tool	https://osf.io/p6arn
The Student Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire (SSWQ)	Predicts school prosociality and academic perseverance	Grades 6–8	Students; self-reporting tool	https://www.tyrenshaw.org/sswq/
The Social-Emotional Learning Scale (SELS)	Informs needs assessment, program planning, and evaluation	Ages 9–11	Students; self-reporting tool	https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-1-4419-1428-6_409#citeas
Feelings Scales	Helps young children identify emotions for self-regulation and positive coping	Grades K–1, 2–3, and 4–5	Students; self-reporting tool	https://wholeheartedschoolcounseling.com/product/feelings-scales-free-sel-activity-to-help-kids-identify-emotions/
Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale-Teacher Form (BERS-2)	Measures personal emotional and behavioral strengths and competencies	Ages 5–18	Teacher-reporting tool	https://www.corc.uk.net/outcome-experience-measures/behavioural-and-emotional-rating-scale-bers-2/

Table 1: SEL Measurement Tools for Music Education

The Brief Music in Mood Regulation Scale, or B-MMR, is a 21-item self-reporting tool for assessing adolescents' strategies for using music to regulate mood—reportedly one of the most significant purposes of musical participation (Saarikallio 2012). Seven of the mood regulation strategies measured by the B-MMR include the use of music for: entertainment (i.e., fostering an atmosphere to maintain positive mood), revival (i.e., personal renewal and relaxation from stress), strong sensation (i.e., enhancing intense emotional experiences), diversion (i.e., forgetting unwanted thoughts or feelings), discharge (i.e., expressing or releasing negative emotions), mental work (i.e., studying or meditating), and solace (i.e., seeking comfort when unhappy). Additionally, results predict students' participation and engagement in music settings and correlate with students' emotional regulation through cognitive reappraisal and emotional suppression (Saarikallio 2012). Music educators could use results from this assessment in selecting repertoire and activities that promote student engagement, participation, and satisfaction in musical experiences. Further, music educators could design lessons that help students choose, create, perform, and analyze music relative to its effect on moods. Finally, results could advocate for music's positive impact on wellbeing.

The Healthy-Unhealthy Music Scale (HUMS) is a 13-item self-report instrument that examines the impact of musical engagement on adolescent students' health and wellbeing. Results particularly aid in determining students' susceptibility for depressive symptoms. The tool is divided between healthy and unhealthy subscales. Items within the healthy subscale correlate with happiness, wellbeing, and school satisfaction. Conversely, unhealthy subscale items correlate with depression, stress, and rumination (Saarikallio, Gold, and McFerran 2015). Music educators might use this scale to select repertoire and plan activities that promote healthy musical engagement. Moreover, music educators could use results to learn about students' perceptions and attitudes towards music both inside and outside of school. Fostering healthy musical engagement in school music settings can connect with student interests, cultivate equity, inspire a love of music, and nurture students' course satisfaction.

Middle school students may benefit from the Student Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire, or SSWQ. The 16-item self-reporting instrument assesses students' subjective wellbeing at school, measuring school connectedness, academic efficacy, joy of learning, and educational purpose (Renshaw, Long, and Cook 2015). It is a stand-alone measure of students' subjective wellbeing and a complementary measure to informant-rated wellbeing (i.e., teacher reports of behavior), performance-based wellbeing (i.e., test scores), and subjective problem measures (i.e., self-reports of symptoms). The SSWQ strongly predicts school prosociality and academic perseverance. Prosociality is students' prosocial behavior towards others within the school environment while academic perseverance is students' perseverance during academic tasks (Renshaw 2014). Music educators could use results from this instrument to foster participation, engagement, interpersonal behaviors, attendance, and retention.

The Social-Emotional Learning Scale, or SELS, is a student-reported SEL assessment for older elementary-aged students. Using a five-point rating scale, the 20-item questionnaire measures how task articulation, peer relationships, and self-regulation impact overall SEL (Evergreen and Coryn 2012). The SELS is considered a mixed model because it examines constructs of intelligence and personality. Results are used to make recommendations for program planning and evaluation. Music educators could use this tool for long-range curricular planning, recruitment, and retention.

Younger elementary students could use Feelings Scales, available for free from sources such as WholeHearted School Counseling, to self-report and identify their emotions. Children often lack experience in understanding and communicating feelings. Using pictures on the scales as visual aids to identify emotions is a positive coping skill leading to self-regulation. Music teachers may find these tools helpful at the beginning of class to check-in before the lesson begins, or between activities to learn whether students need a break or supportive guidance. Understanding students' emotions can assist music educators in determining students' satisfaction and interest with course content. These assessments can be accomplished quickly and are accommodating for students with varying literacy or language abilities.

Teacher-reported SEL assessments can predict critical long-term outcomes because teachers, especially music educators, interact with students in highly social contexts with opportunities to work together over several years (Potera 2015). The Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale-Teacher Form, or BERS-2, is a 52-item tool teachers can use to assess the personal emotional and behavioral strengths of students ages 5–18 (Buckley and Epstein 2004). Subscales measured within the BERS-2 include interpersonal strength, family involvement, intrapersonal strength, school functioning, and affective strength. While many behavior rating scales are deficit-based, focusing on problems, music educators can use the BERS-2 to capture positive behaviors and what students do well. This aids teachers in discovering the strengths of even the most challenging students and finding ways to nurture them (Buckley and Epstein 2004).

Additional Considerations for Using SEL Assessments

When considering student-reported SEL assessments, it is important to ensure students understand the language and terminology of the items and directions for responding. Teachers may need to assist students in reading or translating the scale. Results provide a helpful basis for music educators to consider areas students perceive as requiring attention. However, results are not always reliable, particularly for younger students. Potential drawbacks to teacher-reported SEL assessments are that results can include bias and may be time-consuming to administer for all students. Therefore, teachers should exercise caution when considering the use of results towards high-stakes decisions.[1]

The measures described in the table above do not comprise an exhaustive list and there are pros and cons to each method. It is important to thoughtfully consider which measurement tools to use and how to best interpret results. SEL surveys that utilize a qualitative approach capture the feelings, attitudes, and involvement of students. They can,

[1] We decided not to include parent-reported assessments in the current discussion. While a partnership between home and school would be ideal for music educators to learn more about the whole student experience, the extent and level of parental involvement outside of school are beyond the scope of what teachers can control.

however, be difficult to interpret, communicate to others, and track changes reliably over time. Quantitative designs that are deemed reliable and valid yield numerical scores and results that are potentially easier to interpret, communicate, and track. However, teachers should not use SEL data to rank students, compare schools, or reduce human experiences to statistics (Soutter 2020). Instead, music educators should use results to design teaching and learning experiences that promote student wellbeing, improve motivation, increase participation and engagement, and lead to authentic, equitable musical experiences. We recommend that educators, administrators, and policymakers begin exploring the imperative role that SEL has in music education.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to recommend possible approaches for incorporating social-emotional learning into music education assessment practices. Not everything about current assessment practices needs repair. Music educators have worked diligently toward accountability and rigor. However, it may be time to reconsider the goals of music education to which we are so rigorously holding our students accountable. As Mellizo (2020) stated, "it is important to consider the ways in which small changes can make a big difference" (59). Therefore, rather than suggesting a complete overhaul of music education, we propose a reimagining of the desired outcome and assessment practices to reflect a balance of both musical proficiency and social-emotional learning outcomes.

The recommendations we provide in this article do not suggest adding to teacher workload or expectations, but rather making substitutions based on an intentional shift in targeted results. Such a substitution may be found through implementing assessment of students' social-emotional learning rather than solely tracking objective musical achievement. When students are singularly evaluated on technical aspects of music, they often sacrifice the artistic and joyful elements of performance in pursuit of good grades. This seems to increase as students advance through school musical experiences, funneled

towards performance-based secondary ensembles. Music educators can sustain the learning of all students by focusing attention on social-emotional learning (SEL).

Our goal remains to teach music in music classrooms, *and* to also promote positive SEL benefits inherent in music education—such as social-emotional development, self-esteem, community and belonging, creative thinking, mental health and wellbeing, and expression of the human experience—by including them as assessment criteria in reporting to stakeholders and evaluating teaching effectiveness. We believe SEL qualities are already fundamentally present in music settings, but can be neglected in pursuit of meeting standardized benchmarks. Bringing SEL more to the forefront of music educators' attention may help improve wellbeing, mental health, and joy for music teaching and learning.

We described optional tools for assessing SEL in music education settings for students at a variety of levels and ages. The outcomes of such assessments could inform teaching practices and communicate the positive benefits of musical participation to stakeholders. To truly measure students' social-emotional learning, we must be willing to reexamine the holistic perspective of music education.

Ethics Protocol

Nothing to declare.

Conflict of Interest

Nothing to declare.

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Nothing to declare.

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