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Learning Assessment and Grading Practices in the High School Choral Music Performance Classroom

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate and describe learning assessment and grading practices in the high school choral music performance classroom. Survey data were obtained from three groups: (a) 615 members of the 1995 Georgia Senior High All-State Choruses (return rate, 100%), (b) 150 high school choral music teachers (return rate, 80%), and 150 high school principals (return rate, 78%).

All three groups viewed grades as an important dimension of the choral performance classroom. Teachers and principals indicated that grades should reflect specific learning objectives, and all three groups agreed that grades can affect individual motivation. However, actual learning assessment and grading practices reported in the surveys did not reflect respondents' ratings of the suitability of a variety of assessment formats/categories. Among all groups there was strong support for the suitability of extramusical factors such as attitude, attendance, and participation as assessment categories.

An important conclusion drawn from the findings of this study is that the manner in which high school choral grades are determined and the thoughtfulness with which individual learning is assessed and objectively measured can affect the value and status accorded high school choral music.

As music educators seek to secure a place for music education in mainstream educational policy, they are finding the development of meaningful learning assessments and thoughtful grading practices to be critical. To determine the degree to which a student's behavior has met a stated standard and what that standard should be are two fundamental issues in recent efforts to reform education.

The most recent American academic reform movement is unlike any other in our nation's history. In the last two administrations, the secretaries of education and the presidents from both major political parties have worked to develop educational standards at the national level (Lehman, 1993; National Commission, 1983). The effort to design national standards grew out of the National Governors Conference in 1989, which established educational goals at the national level. These goals, the core of the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, became a legislative bill that was signed into law on March 31, 1994, by President Clinton. The document indicated that by the year 2000, American students are to com-

plete grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency in English, mathematics, history, geography, foreign language, science, civics and government, and the arts. This formal declaration cited all of these disciplines as “basic” to an American education (American Council for the Arts, 1994; Committee on Labor and Human Resources, 1993; U.S. Department of Education, 1995).

Another dimension of the bill called for the development of national standards in each learning discipline. Because the Constitution of the United States places the responsibility for education on the states, the U.S. Department of Education cannot impose educational standards; local control is the rule. Consequently, the national education standards are not mandatory; they are, however, intended to be adopted voluntarily by states and the various school systems (Boston, 1994). These standards manifest educational goals composed through the combined efforts of a wide range of stakeholders and are a starting point for the coordinated, coherent efforts by stakeholders to reform and improve education at the classroom level (Kapinus, Morgan, Philip, Quam, & Selden, 1994). Simply stated, these standards are what children should know and be able to demonstrate at specific points in their education (Boston, 1994).

The developers of the National Standards for Arts Education insist that an education in the arts be a comprehensive, sequenced enterprise in learning (MENC, 1971; Wolverton, 1992). Students should be versed in knowledge, techniques, disciplinary skills, and particularly the upper-level cognitive skills that define the arts. In January 1994 the completion of America’s first national voluntary K–12 arts education standards was announced by the National Committee on Standards in the Arts (Boston, 1994).

It is one challenge to write national standards and it is quite another challenge to develop the educational components necessary to ensure their success. If national standards in music are to affect learning outcomes positively, teachers must be trained and encouraged to manage a number of interrelated components effectively; (a) the implementation of research-based development of effective teacher skills; (b) the design and implementation of appropriate learning objectives; (c) the development of student motivational strategies; (d) the implementation of meaningful reporting systems; e. g., grades, and (e) the design and implementation of quality assessment strategies.

For some educators, learning assessment presents the greatest challenge. Assessment, a term now being used to appraise student achievement and teacher effectiveness, should be designed to resemble real learning tasks, to support instruction, to have local context, to be locally scored, to be sensitive to students’ short-term changes, and to provide meaningful feedback (Shepard, 1989). From his review of educational research, Crooks (1988) concluded that classroom assessment was one of the most important forces influencing education. He suggested six ways in which classroom assessment influences education: (a) students’ responses to assessment affects teacher pedagogy; (b) assessment guides students’ judgement of what is important to learn; (c) it affects students’ motivation and self-perceptions of competence; (d) it structures personal study time; (e) it consolidates learning; and (6) it affects the development of lifetime learning strategies.

Learning assessment, Lehman (1992) has asserted, determines how successfully a stu-

dent performs a task that represents desired skills and knowledge. To assess learning appropriately, it is necessary for a teacher to pinpoint exactly what is to be learned. A necessary first step in determining what is to be learned is the thoughtful construction of goals and learning objectives (Bryant, 1986; Moore, 1970; Whybrew, 1962). By clearly defining the tasks the student is expected to demonstrate, the teacher can determine the appropriate assessment. Learning objectives may call for traditional assessment formats (such as traditional pencil-and-paper tests) or the objectives may require assessment formats referred to as alternative, authentic, or direct.

Although these types of assessments can be more complex, time-consuming, and expensive than traditional, non-authentic assessment techniques, educational accountability requires educators to develop appropriate methods of assessment that demonstrate levels of learning achievement in reaching learning objectives (Heller, 1990; Radocy, 1989).

Developing quality assessment formats and the skills to use them may be the vehicle for the arts to escape the fringes of the educational community and to join the educational mainstream. This transformation into educational accountability is perceived by some to be professionally preferable and by others to be professionally obligatory. In his study on criteria-based assessment of high school choral music performance in the classroom, McIntire (1987) concluded that if music is to be considered a valued and vital segment of education, it must accept the same responsibilities in assessment as the other disciplines. The need for appropriate learning assessment in the arts has become so critical that the American Council of the Arts convened the symposium entitled *Arts Education Assessment Action Agenda: Student Performance and Learning Outcomes* in September 1992 to address this issue (American Council for the Arts, 1994).

The question of appropriate assessment in the music performance classroom is complex because performing organizations have been and will continue to be the basic vehicle for the high school music experience (Boyle, 1992; Saunders & Worthington, 1990; Whitlock, 1981). Whereas traditional learning assessment for the core academic subjects has centered on cognitive (pencil-and-paper) objectives, appropriate assessment in the choral performance classroom has traditionally focused on extramusical skills and performance task objectives. Whereas core subjects have given priority to individual achievement, the music performance classes have focused on group achievement. Because of concerns for educational accountability, many music educators have become increasingly uncomfortable relying on attendance and attitudes as the sole basis for learning assessment in performance-based classes (Boyle, 1989; Darling-Hammond, 1993; Hoffer, 1988; Lehman, 1992). Without allowing group performance standards to suffer, music performance teachers need to work to develop, promote, and assess music literacy for the individual (Boyle, 1992; Culbert, 1974; Hedberg, 1975; Kimpton, 1989).

Recognizing a need for a variety of assessment instruments, educators have outlined three primary formats to assess learning: (a) pencil-and-paper tests, (b) performance task tests, and (c) portfolios/journals. The traditional pencil-and-paper, teacher-made achievement tests include true/false, matching, multiple choice, short answer, and essay (Popham, 1993a). Performance based assessment, a simulation of valid real-world conditions, is some-

times referred to as alternative, direct, or authentic assessment (Darling-Hammond, 1993). Examples of performance-based assessment include situational tests, in-basket tests, work-sample tests, games-format tests, project/contest/rehearsed-performance tests, and diagnostic problem-solving tests (Fitzpatrick & Morrison, 1971). Performance tests can be scored by counting the number of items performed correctly or through numerical, continuous, graphic, or additive rating scales which require rater judgments (Popham, 1993b). The third assessment format, the portfolio, provides for assessment over time instead of at a specific moment in time. A music portfolio is filled with a student's class journal, papers, essays, compositions, programs, tests, interviews, recordings, practice sessions, videotapes, and other assorted possibilities originating from inside or outside a specific course. Using a portfolio, a teacher can effectively monitor a learner's integration of class work into the musical dimension of the learner's life experiences (Ameigh, 1993; Richardson, 1995).

The infusion of extramusical skills is an additional dimension of a student's experience within the music performance classroom. Beyond the cognitive music domain, the music performance teacher guides the student's awareness of human values as they relate to music (Sharer, 1994). The need for schools to teach and to assess objectively such societal values as integrity, self-esteem, responsibility, and tolerance is greater than at any other time in our history (LeCroy, 1996, Hylton, 1981). Research indicates that extramusical skills and behaviors—e.g., participation, attitude, and attendance—can be taught (Madsen & Alley, 1979) and that they have traditionally played an important role in how music performance teachers assess learning and ultimately how teachers determine grades (Drake, 1984; McCoy, 1988, 1991).

Determining grades is an educational reality. Most teachers combine objective and subjective assessment data into a final (summative) grade that reflects student success in reaching class goals and objectives. These grades provide informative feedback to large segments of our society: students, teachers, principals, parents, school boards, politicians, and other stakeholders. Many educators are concerned that traditional high school choral performance grading practices may provide ineffective accountability information.

Educators interested in the implementation of the National Standards in Music Education are currently debating how educational accountability will affect the students and teachers of present music programs (Colwell, 1995). One of the questions being debated is the kind of impact new assessment formats will have on the structure of the traditional high school music performance classroom curriculum. More specific questions include how new learning assessment formats will affect student motivation, academic parity, teacher training, comprehensive musicianship, and grading practices.

A review of studies of grading practices in the high school choral performance classroom by Drake (1986) and McCoy (1988, 1991) concluded that grades assigned in choral music performance classrooms have been heavily weighted in the direction of nonacademic, extramusical factors such as attendance, participation, and attitude. The general literature on choral performance music education indicates that the practice of assessing achievement solely on the basis of extramusical skills is in conflict with the philosophies of leading music educators (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1994; Benner, 1972; Boston, 1994;

Boyle & Radocy, 1987; Colwell, 1970; Gordon, 1980; Hoffer, 1966, 1988; Labuta, 1974; Lehman, 1992, 1993; Madsen & Yarbrough, 1985; MENC, 1971, 1994, 1996; Radocy, 1988;). This disparity, McCoy (1991) has suggested, may also exist between choral performance teachers and high school principals.

The purpose of this study was to identify and investigate the responses of students, teachers, and principals regarding the suitability of a variety of learning assessment formats/categories, as well as responses to current practices associated with learning assessment and grading procedures in the high school choral performance classroom.

This study sought to investigate the following research questions:

1. What are student responses to tests, grades, and report (grading) systems as they relate to academic achievement, and achievement motivation?
2. What portion of the students' six-weeks (summative) choir grade is composed of assessment based on pencil-and-paper tests, attendance, participation and attitude, or performance task tests?
3. What are the responses of students, teachers, and principals to the suitability of the following formats and categories for assessing student musical achievement: performance task tests (sightreading tests and on-the-music tests), pencil-and-paper tests, portfolios, class attendance, attitude, and participation?
4. What are teacher and principal responses to six-week (summative) choral grades as they relate to learning objectives and achievement motivation?
5. What are the responses of teachers and principals to public perceptions of the value and status associated with choral classroom assessment procedures as they relate to the value and status accorded core academics?

Methods

The population of the survey study included three groups: (a) members of the 1995 Georgia Senior High All-State Choruses, the teachers of the All-State students, and (c) the principals of Georgia high schools from which the All-State students were chosen.

The *student survey instrument* consisted of 20 questions organized on a six category Likert scale. Respondents were asked their perceptions of core academic tests and of choral music tests. They were asked their perceptions of various types of reporting systems and grading systems and the impact of those systems on academic motivation. Respondents were also asked to describe the composition of their present choir grades and to respond to the suitability of various assessment formats that could be used to assess learning in the choral music classroom. The survey was conducted in May 1995, at the Georgia All-State Chorus event in Savannah. Of the 615 student surveys distributed, 100% were returned ($n = 615$).

The *teacher survey instrument* consisted of nine questions, two of which required multiple responses. The *principal survey instrument* was designed to include ten questions, two of which required multiple responses. Both surveys investigated the respondents' perceptions of choral music grades' reflection of learning objectives, the value and status ac-

corded choral grades vs. core academic grades, the reason for the inclusion of choral music in the high school curriculum, and the suitability of various assessment formats for assessing learning in the choral music classroom. Two procedures were used to distribute and collect the teacher surveys. The first procedure was to distribute the teacher surveys at the 1995-96 Georgia All-State Chorus Regional Auditions which were held November 11, 1995. Of the 150 targeted teachers, 81 surveys were completed and returned at the regional auditions. The remaining 69 teachers received their survey by mail. The final return rate was 80% ($n = 120$). To effect the distribution and the return rate of the 150 principal surveys, two mailings were conducted. The first mailing yielded a survey return rate of 40%; 60 surveys were returned. The remaining school principals received a second mailing. The final return rate was 78% ($n = 117$). Thus the final N for the study was 852.

To assure accurate data and to provide for stronger results, the six Likert scale categories were collapsed into three categories: (a) "strongly agree" and "agree" became "in-agreement," (b) "somewhat agree" and "somewhat disagree" became "moderate," and (c) "disagree" and "strongly disagree" became "in-disagreement."

Results and Discussion

Tables 1-6 reflect the responses of 615 students, however, not all of the respondents answered every question. Some questions were passed by accident or by choice (omissions), and some responses were entered in unauthorized areas of the answer sheet (strays). Descriptive percentages are based on the n for each question.

The grading systems most preferred by 87% of the student respondents were A-B-C-D-F and number percentages (see Table 1). The logic behind these responses may be in the written comment of one respondent: "The more precise, the better." Eighty-six percent of the respondents indicated that the type of course that creates the most achievement motivation is one that gives full academic credit (see Table 2).

Tables 3, 4, 5, and 6 provide information on the perception of an item's influence on the composition of the respondents' six-week choir grade. Eight percent of the respondents indicated that about half to mostly all (a meaningful amount) of the six-week grade in choir

Table 1

Which Grading System Furnishes the Greatest Motivation? ($N = 613$)

<i>A-B-C-D-F</i>	<i>Pass/fail</i>	<i>Excellent-satisfactory-unsatisfactory</i>	<i>Percentages</i>	<i>Other</i>
250	42	29	280	12

Note. Strays = 0, omissions = 2.

was weighted by paper-and-pencil tests (see Table 3). Forty-six percent of the respondents suggested that attendance made up about half to mostly all of their six-week grade in choir (see Table 4). Eighty-four percent of the respondents answered that almost half to mostly

Table 2

Which Type of Credit Furnishes the Greatest Motivation to Excel Academically? (N = 604)

<i>Full academic credit</i>	<i>Partial academic credit</i>	<i>No academic credit</i>
523	58	23

Note. Strays = 4, omissions = 7

Table 3

What Portion of Students' Six-Weeks Choral Grade Is Composed of Individual Academic Pencil-and-Paper Tests? (N = 609)

<i>Mostly none</i>	<i>Some</i>	<i>About half</i>	<i>A lot</i>	<i>Mostly all</i>
402	156	29	12	9

Note. Strays = 1, omissions = 5

Table 4

What Portion of Students' Six-Weeks Choral Grade Is Composed of Attendance Grades? (N = 607)

<i>Mostly none</i>	<i>Some</i>	<i>About half</i>	<i>A lot</i>	<i>Mostly all</i>
113	207	88	129	70

Note. Strays = 2, omissions = 6

all of their grade was based on individual participation and attitude (see Table 5), and 35% perceived that on-the-music tests and individual sightsinging grades comprised about half to mostly all of their six-weeks grades (see Table 6). The rank order of the perceived assessment categories that influenced the respondents' six-week choir grade were as follows: individual participation and attitude (84%), attendance (46%), on-the-music and individual sightsinging (35%), and paper-and-pencil tests (8%).

Table 5

What Portion of the Students' Six-Weeks Choral Grade Is Composed of Individual Participation and Attitude Grades? (N = 607)

<i>Mostly none</i>	<i>Some</i>	<i>About half</i>	<i>A lot</i>	<i>Mostly all</i>
19	76	81	178	253

Note. Strays = 2, omissions = 6

Table 6

What Portion of the Students' Six-Weeks Choral Grade Is Composed of Performance Tests such as On-the-Music Singing Tests or Individual Sightreading Tests? (N = 606)

<i>Mostly none</i>	<i>Some</i>	<i>About half</i>	<i>A lot</i>	<i>Mostly all</i>
162	232	80	84	48

Note. Strays = 2, omissions = 7

Figure 1 compares the strength of agreement between teachers and principals regarding the relationship of grades and learning objectives; strong agreement indicates that grades should reflect specific learning objectives. Figure 2 graphically illustrates how the principals' and teachers' responses are positively skewed, supporting the notion that the public associates educational value and educational status with the way learning assessment is conducted. When a choral performance teacher demonstrates a value for learning assessments, the public is more likely to share that value.

Figure 1

Percentage of Agreement: Six-Weeks Grades Should Reflect the Achievement of Specific Learning Objectives

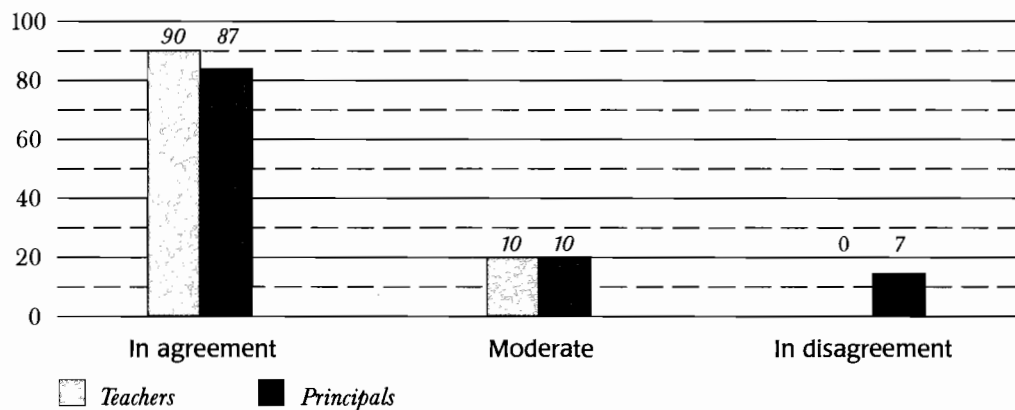
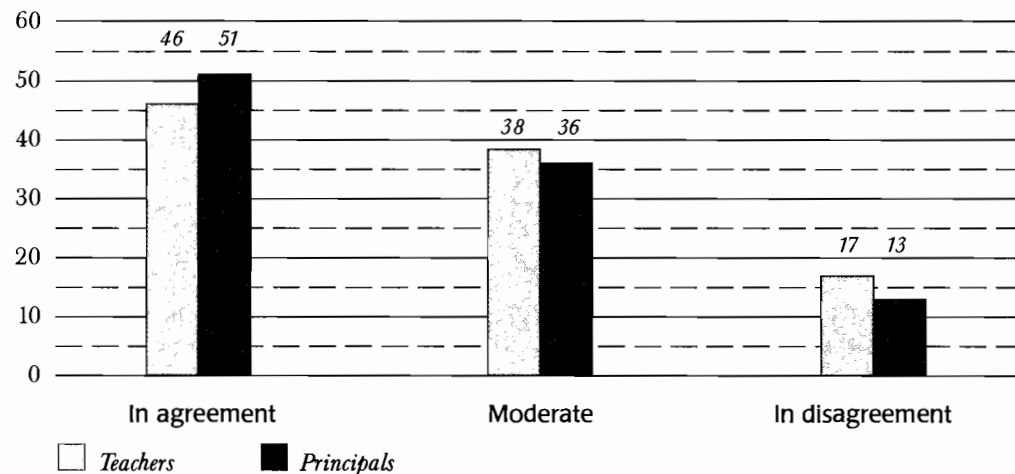


Figure 2

Percentage of Agreement: Choral Classrom Assessment Procedures Affect Public Perceptions of the Educational Value and Status of Choral Music



Regarding the need for learning assessment beyond the specific demands of performance, Figure 3 demonstrates that principals and teachers view the choral performance classroom as a place where learning is not limited to the performance product. Figure 4 demonstrates the strong trend toward agreement among all three survey groups on the perception of grades as extrinsic motivators.

The final seven figures focus on the suitability of the various assessment formats/categories to assess a student's learning progress in the choral performance classroom. Figures 5 and 6 illustrate a comparison of the groups' responses to the suitability of performance tests. The results illustrated in Figure 5 reflect the teachers' and principals' responses to the suitability of performance task test generally, and the students' responses to the suitability of sightreading tests specifically. It is interesting to note that the trend of all groups is toward agreement. In Figure 6, teachers and principals are responding to the suitability of performance task tests, whereas students are responding to the suitability of on-the-music tests. Similar to the responses in Figure 5, the all-groups trend is positively skewed. It is interesting to note that students are in favor of on-the-music tests (51%) slightly more than sightreading tests (49%). When compared to the teachers' responses, it is interesting to note the percentage of principals' responses in the moderate and in-disagreement categories.

Pencil-and-paper tests are the focus of the next comparison among the three groups (see Figure 7). The responses of principals and teachers share a similar positive trend, but student responses tend to resemble a bell-shaped curve. It is possible that students are responding to their personal experience. In the student survey (see Table 3), students indicated that only 51 of the 609 respondents (8%) had any meaningful weight attached to pencil-and-paper tests in their high school choral performance class.

The next suitability category was class attendance, an extramusical skill (see Figure 8). Descriptive statistics indicate that students perceive the suitability of class attendance differently from teachers and principals. Whereas the teachers and principals responded in a similar positive trend, student responses were more evenly dispersed across the continuum, suggesting a strong difference of opinion among students.

Figure 9 compares teacher and principal suitability of attitude responses, to student attitude and participation responses. It is interesting to note that although all groups are skewed in a positive direction, the principals and students provided nearly identical results.

Figure 10 illustrates a comparison of teachers and principals regarding the suitability of participation, an extramusical skill, for the assessment of learning in the choral performance classroom. A comparison of the results of the principal/teacher attitude responses (see Figure 9) with the teacher/principal participation responses indicates a higher level of agreement for participation. One interpretation suggests that the strength of the participation responses may be based on the notion that learning requires active mental, physical, and emotional involvement. Participation, perceived consciously or unconsciously, may provide students a way to demonstrate and teachers a way to objectively measure extramusical skill achievement in the affective domain.

Figure 3

Percentage of Agreement: Learning Assessment Is Unnecessary; What Counts Is How It Sounds

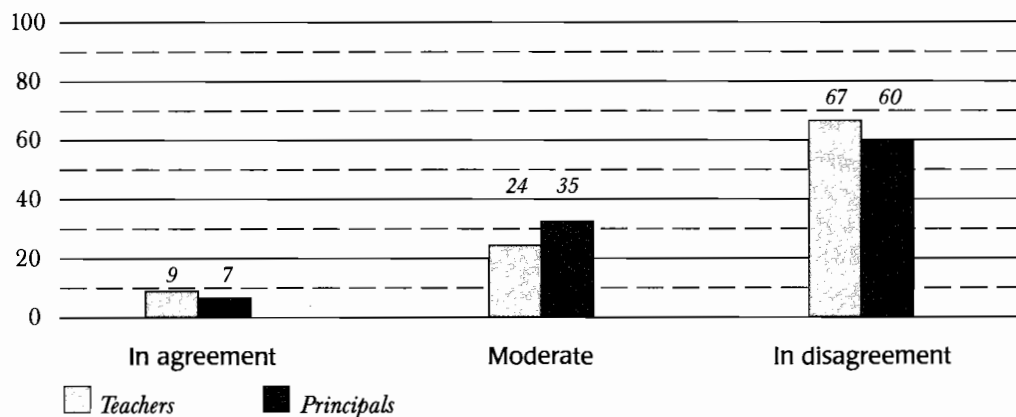


Figure 4

Percentage of Agreement: Perception of Grades as Motivators

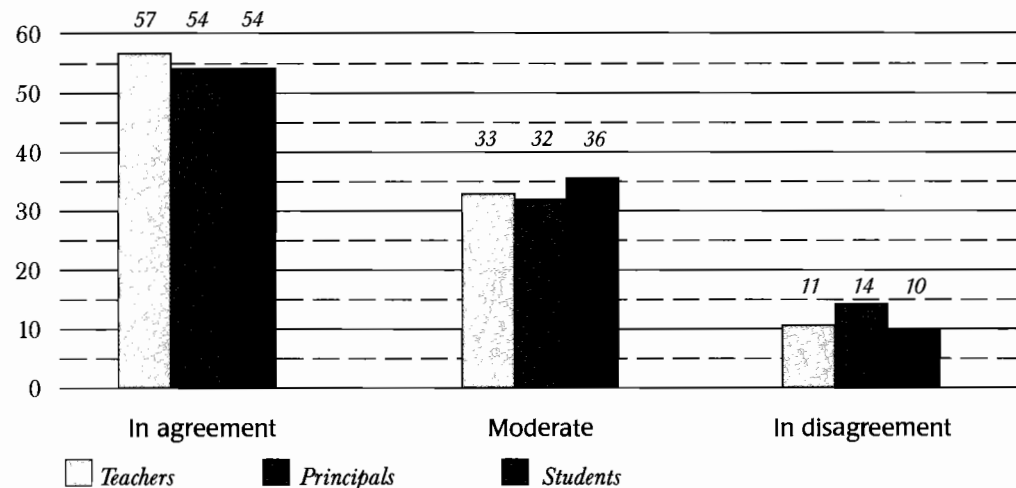


Figure 5

Percentage of Agreement on Suitability as Grading Criterion: Performance Task Tests (Teachers and Principals) and Sightreading Tests (Students)

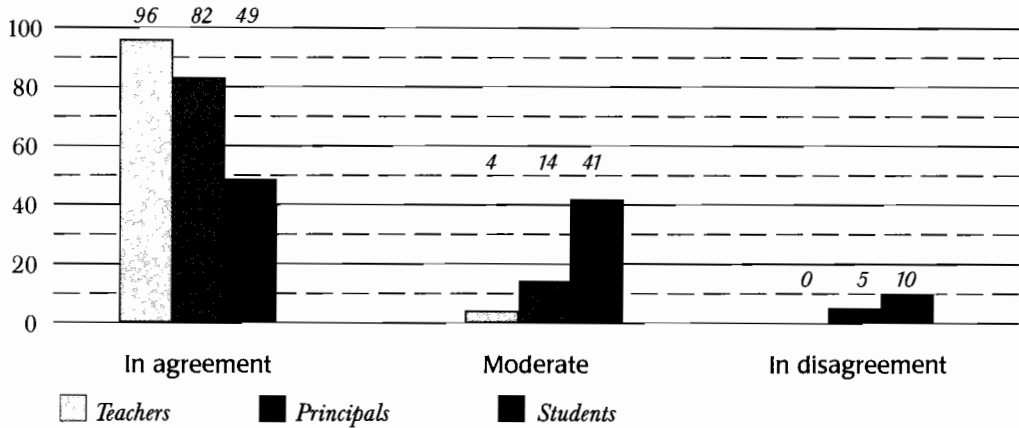


Figure 6

Percentage of Agreement on Suitability: Performance Task Tests (Teachers and Principals) and On-the-Music Tests (Students)

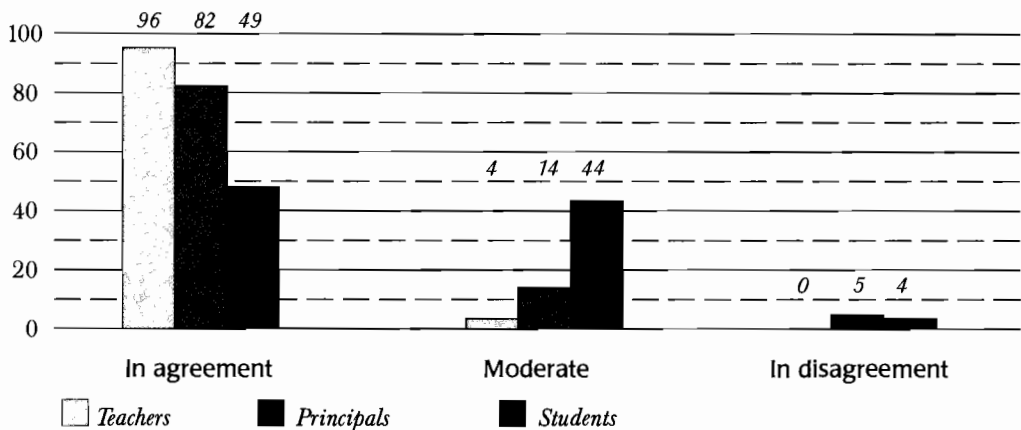


Figure 7

Percentage of Agreement on Suitability: Paper-and Pencil Tests

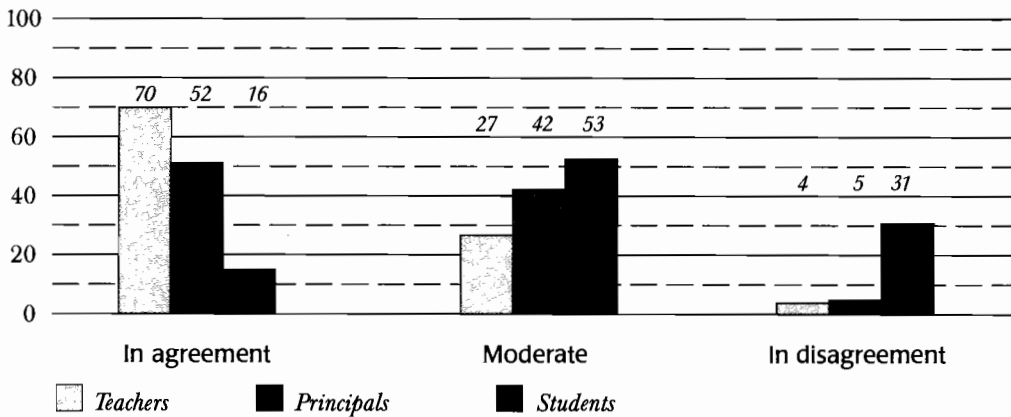


Figure 8

Percentage of Agreement on Suitability: Class Attendance

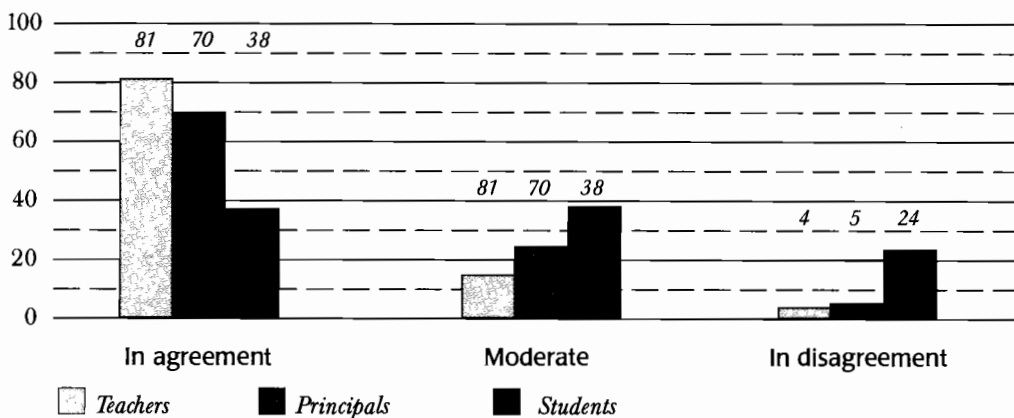


Figure 9

Percentage of Agreement on Suitability: Attitude (Teachers and Principals) and Attitude and Participation (Students)

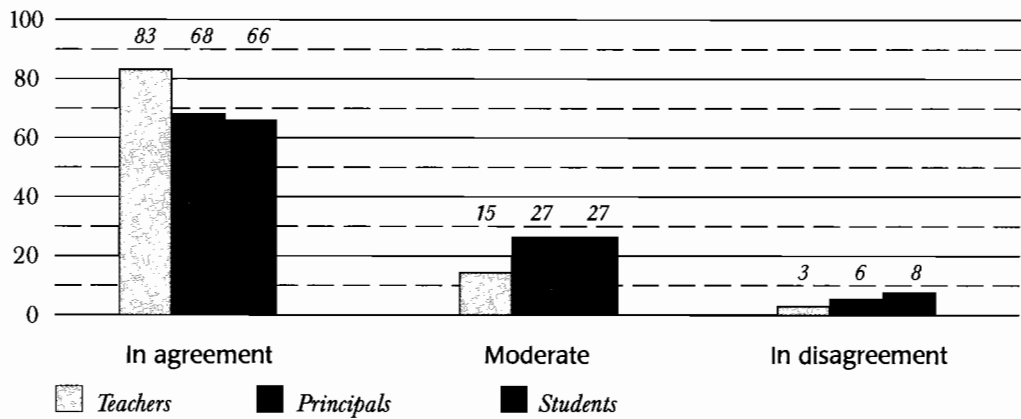
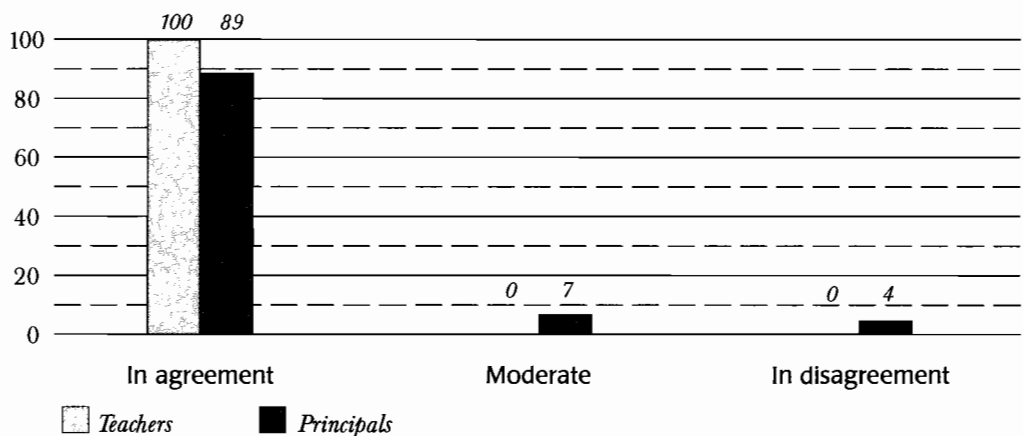


Figure 10

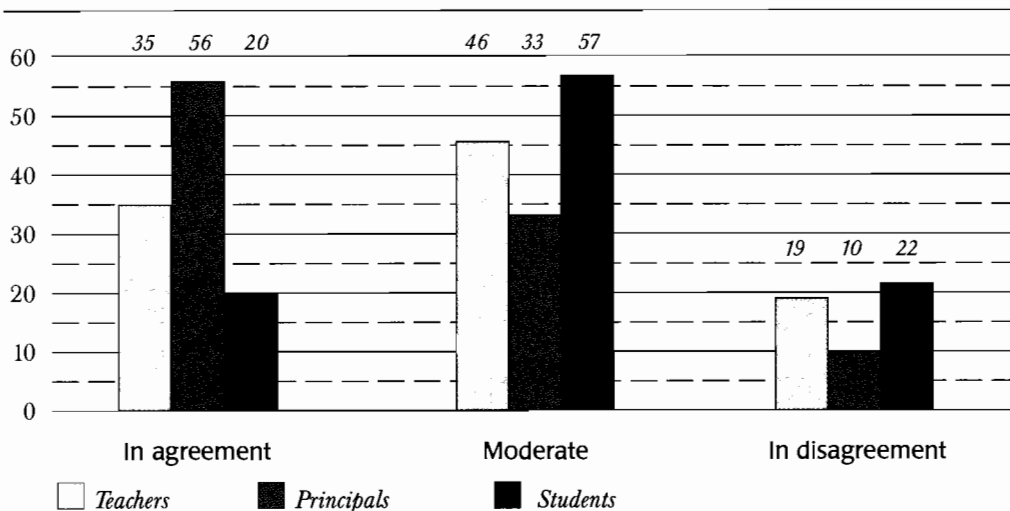
Percentage of Agreement on Suitability: Participation (Teachers and Principals)



In the set of statements that focused the suitability of the various formats to assess student learning in the high school choral classroom, portfolio received the least support (see Figure 11). One reason for the principals' positive support for the portfolio may be the result of experiences with portfolios in other classes in the school. One reason for the teachers' and students' symmetrical responses may be the result of the untried newness of the music portfolio as an assessment format in the choral performance classroom.

Figure 11

Percentage of Agreement: Suitability of Performance Task Tests (Teachers and Principals) and Sightreading Tests (Students)



Summary

A summary of the results for all three groups in this study indicates that grades are an important dimension of the choral performance classroom. Teachers and principals indicated that grades should reflect specific learning objectives, and all three groups responded that grades can affect individual motivation. An important conclusion drawn from the results of this study is that the manner in which high school choral grades are determined and the thoughtfulness with which individual learning is assessed and objectively measured are specific behaviors that can affect the value and status gap between high school choral performance music and high school core academic subjects.

Results indicated a variety of suitable assessment formats for assessing learning in the choral music classroom (see Table 7). However, findings indicate that present learning assessment and grading practices do not reflect assessment suitability responses. Whereas the all-group means for extra-musical skills were participation (95%), attitude (72%), and attendance (63%), the students' indication of meaningful inclusion (about half to mostly all) of these extra-musical skills into their six-week grade was attitude and participation (84%) and attendance (46%). Whereas the all-group means for musical criteria were performance task tests (76%) and pencil-and-paper tests (46%), the students' indication of meaningful inclusion (about half to mostly all) into their six-week grade was performance task tests (35%) and pencil-and-paper tests (8%). Strong support for extra-musical skills as a means to assess learning in the choral performance classroom suggests the support of opportunities for students to demonstrate and opportunities for teachers to measure achievement in the affective domain.

Table 7

Summary of In-Agreement Group Responses for Assessment Format/ Category Suitability, in Percentages

<i>Formats/categories</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Principals</i>
Attitude	NI	83	68
Attitude and participation	66	NI	NI
Participation	NI	100	89
Performance tests*	NI	96	82
On-the music tests	51	NI	NI
Sightreading tests	49	NI	NI
Attendance	38	81	70
Pencil-and-paper tests	16	70	52
Portfolios	20	35	56

Note. NI = not included on survey in this manner

* On-the music tests and sight-reading tests

Conclusions

The conclusions for this study are based on the data collected from five research questions and three surveys. The survey respondents were comprised of three groups: (a) 615 members of the 1995 Georgia Senior High All-State Choruses; (b) 150 choral performance

teachers of the All-State students; and (c) 150 principals from high schools in which the choral teachers were employed. The research questions probed a number of current practices, attitudes, and perceptions of students, teachers, and principals relating to learning assessment and grading practices in the high school choral performance classroom.

1. What are student responses to tests, grades, and report (grading) systems as they relate to academic achievement and achievement motivation? Findings indicated that tests were perceived by students to provide important assessment information. Respondents associated pencil-and-paper tests with core academic classes but not with choral performance classes. Respondents preferred precise reporting systems such as letter grades or percentages, were motivated to work for grades, and worked harder in courses that offered full academic credit.

2. What portion of the students' six-weeks (summative) grade is comprised of assessment based on pencil-and-paper tests, attendance, participation and attitude, or performance task tests? Eighty-four percent of the students responded that attitude and participation accounted for between half to all of their six weeks grade. Attendance (46%) was second, performance task tests were third (35%) and pencil-and-paper tests (8%) were a distant last.

3. What are student, teacher, and principal responses to the suitability of the following formats and categories for assessing student musical achievement: performance task tests (sightreading tests and on-the-music tests), pencil-and-paper tests, portfolios, class attendance, attitude, and participation? The following percentages for in-agreement are arranged by group in rank order:

- (a) Students—attitude (66%), on-the-music tests (51%), sight-reading tests (49%), attendance (38%), portfolios (20%), pencil-and-paper tests (16%);
- (b) Teachers—participation (100%), performance tests (96%), attitude (83%), attendance (81%), pencil-and-paper tests (70%), portfolios (35%);
- (c) Principals—participation (89%), performance tests (82%), attendance (70%), attitude (68%), pencil-and-paper tests (52%), portfolios (56%).

4. What are teacher responses to six-week (summative) choral grades as they relate to learning objectives, and achievement motivation? Findings indicated that teachers and principals were in strong agreement: Grades should reflect learning objectives. Teachers and principals tended to agree that grades are perceived as providing students with extrinsic motivation. The teachers and principals had similar mixed responses to the notion that assigning low grades in a choral performance class could negatively affect group dynamics

5. What are teacher and principal responses to public perceptions of value and status associated with choral classroom assessment procedures as they relate to the value and status accorded core academics? Findings indicated that both groups perceived that there was a difference in the public perception of value and status as accorded choral performance classes and the value and status as accorded core academic classes. Principals made a distinction between value and status. Whereas 31% of the principals responded that grades in choral music were perceived as equal in value to core academics, only 18% of the principals agreed that choral music classes are accorded equal status with core academic

subjects. Both groups tended to agree that the way in which assessment was conducted in the choral music classroom affects the public's perception of the educational value and status associated with choral music. Findings also indicated that teachers and principals agreed that teaching a choir is not limited to producing good sound.

Findings in this study strongly indicate that learning outcomes in school choirs should reflect achievement in all the learning domains (affective, psychomotor, and cognitive), as well as and including the successful development of necessary extramusical skills. The choir based in an educational setting becomes a vehicle for students to experience and to learn about music through the process as well as the product.

The process and the product are guided by precise learning objectives that state what a student is to learn and how the student is to demonstrate that learning has occurred. Not only are learning objectives important in the choral performance classroom (Bryant 1987), but as this study indicates, students, teachers, and principals are in strong agreement that specific learning objectives should be reflected in summative grades. If grades in choral performance classes are to reflect levels of achievement relevant to learning objectives, objective measurement of student progress toward achieving the desired behavior is required. In courses such as choral music performance, teachers should develop skills to assess the progress of the individual as well as the progress of the group.

Kimpton (1989) asserted that until learning content in the music classroom is specified and the student's understanding of that content is measured, music education will never be considered a serious subject in American education. Similarly, results of this study indicate that teachers and principals are inclined to agree that the manner in which student learning is assessed by the teacher affects public perceptions of the educational value and status associated with high school choral music as it compares with core academic subjects. Additional results of this study revealed that students are aware of and value achievement as reflected in assessment. Consequently, objective assessment of learning and thoughtful grading practices provide opportunities for teachers to demonstrate to students, principals, parents, and professional colleagues, the value placed on achievement in the choral performance classroom.

From the results of this study one might conclude that assessment in the choral performance classroom should not be limited to the traditional categories of participation, attitude, and attendance. All groups identified a variety of formats and categories suitable for assessing learning in the choral performance classroom. The rank order, based on an all-groups in-agreement set of means, was participation (95%); performance task tests, e.g., on-the-music tests and sight-reading tests (76%); attitude (72%); attendance (63%); pencil-and-paper tests (46%); and portfolio (37%).

An important finding in this study is the level of support expressed by the teachers for the various assessment formats/categories compared to students' perception of the meaningful inclusion (about half to almost all) of those formats/categories into the composition of their summative grades: teacher suitability for attitude (100%), student perception of attitude criteria inclusion into the six-week grade (84%); teacher suitability for performance task tests (96%), student perception of performance task criteria inclusion into the six-week

grade (35%); teacher suitability of attendance (92%), student perception of attendance criteria inclusion into the six week grade (46%); teacher suitability of pencil-and-paper tests (70%), student perception of pencil-and-paper criteria inclusion into six-week grade (8%). Although findings suggest that teachers, principals, and students agree with the suitability of the different assessment formats/categories for assessing individual achievement, students' perceptions indicate that the use of these assessment tools is limited.

The findings of this study do not imply that all assessment formats/categories should be used in every grading period. However, they do suggest that appropriate learning assessment and the academic weight assigned to each assessment category/format should be guided by course goals and learning objectives, including objectives for extramusical skills, e.g., participation, attitude, and attendance. For established choral performance teachers and music performance students who are new to comprehensive assessment, it is appropriate to begin with small assessment projects and to work toward comprehensive assessment over time.

Summative grades assigned in the high school choral performance music classroom should make every effort to complement music's national standards by reflecting comprehensive musical achievement. Based on a need for comprehensive learning assessments to demonstrate objective achievement and because objective assessment practices in the choral performance classroom have been slow to evolve, there is concern, as McCoy (1991) has asserted, that teachers often teach the way they were taught. It is important for every choral performance conductor/teacher to be keenly aware of the powerful model they provide. There are perhaps too many performance classrooms, elementary through university, wherein performing has been such a primary focus that teaching and learning about music have become secondary. As Schopp (1992) suggests, the choral performance classroom should be a place where a music performance is conceptualized as an outgrowth of teaching and learning, not a culminating activity unto itself.

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