

## Formative / On-Going Assessment in a Band Rehearsal

Brett T. Hosterman, Director of Instrumental Music

Whether working 3-on-1, 1-on-1, or in a large ensemble, on-going assessments are made to further a student's musical understanding and performance. During a band rehearsal constant feedback is given to the ensemble or specific sections by the director based on how the students are performing and what the director is hearing. Depending on where you are on the timeline of preparing a piece for performance, the director may be listening for different things in a culminating fashion. For example:

Month 1 – Are the students playing correct notes and rhythms?

Month 2 – Are the students playing correct notes and rhythms while achieving the dynamic contrasts that are written?

Month 3 – In addition to above items, are the students beginning to play musically?  
Proper phrasing, breathing, dynamics, rubato, etc.

Students obtain levels of proficiency at achieving and performing these musical concepts. Unlike other academic subjects, where students are only responsible for their personal grade, members of the band are working together to produce a unified sound, articulation, phrase, and performance. Small group and individual lessons are necessary to work with students who are not performing at the advanced level. Playing at a partially proficient level is not good enough and we are always striving to be better than we were the day before.

*Non Proficient* - These students are not performing rhythms correctly, are playing wrong notes, and have no care in the world about dynamics that are written in the music. For these students I design warm-up activities to reinforce correct notes (scales) and rhythms. Non Proficient students are required to use a pencil to mark their music with reminders.

*Partially Proficient* - I find that these students can do all of the individual musical skills, however putting rubato together with dynamics, proper breathing, phrasing, and notes is rather challenging for them. For these students we are able to break the music down in chunks so that the student can concentrate on a lot of different concepts but not be overwhelmed by an entire piece of music.

*Advanced* - These students can handle playing a piece of music both technically and stylistically accurate. All students are working at preparing the district band solo for next year (regardless if they want to try out or not). With my advanced students, we spend time looking at applying the principles of music (as listed above) to an advanced classical instrument solo that is specific to their instrument.