

SAMPLE RUBRICS AND PLANS FOR AUDITIONS, SEATING PLACEMENT, CHALLENGES, AND MORE ... Plus, I've included some text for philosophical consideration.

As I said in **RW10.4** (Sample Grading Policies & Lesson Rubrics), these documents represent *my* style and, as such, they may not work well for your program without careful adaptation. My sole goal remains the same: to provide *source material* that you can adjust to help make your own teaching even more effective and engaging. Use any documents that can meet your needs; *revise* others if they're close.

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A word about fair, understandable, *weighted* scoresheets for auditions

Over many years, I admit I developed unique opinions about auditions for seating-placement, and about grading/evaluating those auditions. Obviously, we'd like our students to develop into well-rounded 'complete' musicians. We try to help them refine the beauty of their sound, the wide array of technical performance skills, their knowledge-base, their cognitive and aural perception, and their interpretive and creative artistry.

But in terms of seating auditions for *placement* in the band, I came to believe that **some skill-categories are more important than others**. Most audition scoring rubrics tend to assign equal weight to each category. For example, *Rhythm* is usually scored the same as *Interpretation* and other components of a student's musicianship. I disagree; let me explain.

The aesthetic elements of musicianship – phrasing, intonation, human emotion, 'feel', vibrato, 'soul' *and so much more* – are surely imperative characteristics. However, we teachers will find that our students and our Bands can progress more effectively when the players are competent in some elements earlier. I know for instance that I can guide students to *shape* a phrase during our instructional time together, even if the feigned 'artistry' is not truly theirs by choice; they're just mimicking my demonstration and responding to my instructions. But the students with poor rhythm and pulse will be the source of time-consuming issues in the context of an ensemble. Those same students (with poor rhythm) are also not the best *leaders* for their sections, even when they play with naturally beautiful tone.

So, I searched for ways to recognize some elements more heavily than others, at least for seating placement. I want to give extra importance to categories I feel are more critical to fast learning, including Rhythm/Pulse, Sight-Reading, and Technique. Those skill-categories (especially the ability to internalize pulse and rhythms) are the building blocks of *independence* for a student musician. By putting students into leadership positions based on their *independent* musical skills, you're helping to ensure that the band can progress faster. Music teachers agree almost universally that the *hierarchy* of teaching/learning has pulse and rhythm at the top of the list. This ideology is based on a common belief that ***an incorrect pitch performed at the right time is partially correct, but a correct pitch executed at the incorrect time is completely wrong***. 'Correctness' in music relies largely on rhythm.

BASIC Examples: A 'jumping-off' point before addressing Auditions

Here is an example of a typical rubric. This model uses numeric scores (0-1-2-3-4) that are substantiated with text descriptions. The "Pulse/Beat" category is followed by Rhythms, Tone, Accuracy, Intonation, Expression, and other standard categories. This rubric treats each element the same, with 4 points available for the *superior* performance. A student who scores poorly in "Rhythm" will also be likely to score poorly in "Pulse/Beat" and the opposite is true too; therefore, there is a hint of "weighting" in this rubric because there are two rhythm-related categories.

A - A standard rubric for instrumental music:

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC PERFORMANCE RUBRIC

4 = "Artistic" 3 = Proficient 2 = Developing 1 = Beginning

0 = Not Yet Demonstrated

PULSE / BEAT

- 4 Pulse is very steady. Demonstrates *accel.*, *ritard*, *rubato* effects with control.
- 3 Pulse is mostly steady. May not yet have full control of *accel.*, *ritard*, *rubato*
- 2 Pulse generally unsteady. Deliberate pulse-changes are not demonstrated.
- 1 Performs without measurable steady pulse.
- 0 No demonstrated understanding of, or ability to perform with **pulse**, steady or unsteady.

RHYTHM

- 4 Understands and performs all rhythmic figures accurately, within appropriate pulse.
- 3 Understands all rhythms. Generally performs rhythmic figures accurately.
- 2 Demonstrates *general* understanding of rhythmic figures, but with frequent performing and/or writing errors.
- 1 Demonstrates some basic performance and understanding of rhythm, but with *significant & frequent* errors.
- 0 No demonstrated understanding of, or ability to perform rhythm.

TONE

- 4 Very steady airstream & embouchure. Consistent, stable volume. Clear & resonant projection. Plays in the 'center' of the tone to produce characteristic tone.
- 3 Generally steady airstream & embouchure. Generally consistent & stable volume. Projection is slightly lacking in clarity & resonance. Tone is somewhat uncentered but is still mostly characteristic of the instrument.
- 2 Generally unsteady airstream and/or embouchure. Volume is inconsistent. Projection lacks clarity & resonance. Tone is generally uncharacteristic and not centered.
- 1 Airstream and embouchure are unsteady. Volume/sound is unsteady & intermittent. Tone is not characteristic of the instrument. Without clarity & resonance, there is minimal or no projection.
- 0 No sound.

ACCURACY (Pitches & Fingerings/Positions)

- 4 Performs all pitches correctly, with appropriate fingerings /positions (alternates chosen for smoothness/speed/intonation/tone)
- 3 Performs all or *nearly all* pitches correctly (appx. >95%), but may not always use most appropriate fingerings.
- 2 Performs *most* pitches correctly (appx. 80%-95%), with *basic* fingering/position choices.
- 1 Performs *some* pitches correctly (appx. 50%-80%).
- 0 Performs *mostly incorrect* pitches (< 50% correct).

ARTICULATION

- 4 Observes all printed articulation markings, and performs all types of standard articulations with control.
- 3 Observes most printed articulations and/or performs most articulations with minor difficulties.
- 2 Inconsistently observes printed articulation markings, and/or performs articulations poorly or with significant difficulty.
- 1 Very little observance of printed articulations, and great difficulty with performance of articulations.
- 0 Demonstrates no use of the tongue, and/or no observance of articulation markings.

STYLE (Expression)

- 4 Demonstrates correct: 1) tempo; 2) observance of written expression markings; 3) musical phrases; 4) appropriate note-grouping within phrases; 5) stylistic articulation; 6) creative musical elements.
- 3 Demonstrates four or five of the desired musical / expressive characteristics listed above.
- 2 Demonstrates two or three of the desired musical / expressive characteristics listed above.
- 1 May demonstrate one of the desired musical / expressive characteristics listed above.
- 0 Demonstrates no attention to any of the desired characteristics listed above.

VIBRATO (if appropriate)

- 4 Demonstrates full control for an artistic musical performance. "Artistic" vibrato enhances tone quality.
- 3 Demonstrates general control of speed & width. "Proficient" vibrato may occur without fully-developed tone quality.
- 2 Control is developing, but tone and/or musicality are not enhanced. "Developing" vibrato may be distracting.
- 1 Speed & width are not controlled. Vibrato is not used consistently. "Beginning" level vibrato distracts from basic tone quality.
- 0 Vibrato is not yet demonstrated, particularly when it would be appropriate.

B – An example of a binary-response “check-off” rubric: does the student demonstrate the skill, or not? This one may be effective for the first impression ... what do you observe the first time you ever hear him/her?

HS Band

~ Instrumental Music Check-Off Rubric ~

Student's Name _____ Instrument _____ Grade _____ Date _____

PHYSIQUE

- _____ **Posture** is correct and appropriate for the player and the instrument.
- _____ **Holding Position & Hand Positions** are correct.
- _____ **Breathing process** is done correctly. Student demonstrates obvious care with deep breathing and control of the airstream. Percussion: the player demonstrates breathing as it relates to the beginnings and endings of phrases.
- _____ **Embouchure (Percussion: Stick-height & Stroke-style)** is correct and controlled.

PULSE & RHYTHM

- _____ **Pulse (Beat)** is maintained very steadily whenever appropriate.
- _____ **Meter** of the performance music is performed correctly.
- _____ **Basic Rhythms** in the performance are all correct.
- _____ (NA) **Advanced Rhythms (syncopations, tied-rhythms, triplets, alternate notations, etc.)** are all performed correctly.
- _____ (NA) **Notated Pulse-changes** are performed with control, if called for (*accel., rit., rubato, etc.*)
- _____ (NA) **Non-notated Pulse-changes** are performed artistically in music which calls for it.

TONE

- _____ **Tone Quality – Timbre** – is clear, stable and projected, and is characteristic of the instrument
- _____ The player performs the **Beginning, Body and Ending** of each tone correctly.
- _____ Tone is **consistent** through all registers and dynamic changes
- _____ **Vibrato**, if appropriate, is employed at an appropriate level.

TECHNIQUE & ARTICULATION

- _____ **Technique (*finger movements, slide positions, sticking*)** is correct and fluent at the appropriate level
- _____ **Written Articulations** are observed and performed correctly.
- _____ (NA) **Articulation technique** is correct and fluent, including a controlled finger-tongue coordination.

ACCURACY

- _____ **Pitches (*and/or Percussion Figures*)** are performed correctly in all or nearly-all cases. This includes: all types of accidentals, the “Accidental Carryover” rule, Key Signature, and correct harmonics.

STYLE & EXPRESSION

- _____ **Phrasing & note-grouping** skills are evident in the performance.
- _____ **Written performance notations** are observed and performed correctly.
- _____ **Tempo** and other stylistic considerations (including historical authenticity) are demonstrated appropriately.
- _____ Performance demonstrates solid **confidence and preparedness**.

INTONATION

- _____ (NA) **Intonation** – to self and to *accompanying sounds* – is maintained to a pleasant standard. Check here _____ if *specific tones only are out-of-tune*.

OTHER

- _____ **Effort and Participation** levels are maintained at an expected level.
- _____ **Materials** are brought, organized and cared for.

===== TOTAL CHECKS

21-25 Checks: SUPERIOR 16-20: EXCELLENT 11-15: SATISFACTORY 6-10: DEVELOPING

These (above), however, are not particularly good for comparative placement auditions. For acceptance into a group (*instrumentation*), and for assigning parts (*balance*), and for Seating placement (*sculpting the best Section*), other types of scoresheets are more helpful.

Next, here are examples of scoring plans that offer a *weighted* value to certain categories of musical performance:

SAMPLE Evaluation Forms: Better versions to use for Auditions

Example 1 - A quick and easy method ~ simply *add points* to each category that you feel is more important (in this case, Rhythm/Pulse and Sight-Reading):

Audition Performance Scoring

Scales	(5)_____
.....	(5)_____
.....	(5)_____
Rhythm/Pulse	(20)_____
Articulation/Mechanics	(10)_____
Intonation	(10)_____
Dynamics	(10)_____
Phrasing/Expressiveness	(10)_____
Tone Quality	(10)_____
Sight Reading	(15)_____
TOTAL (100 Possible)	_____

Example 2 – This rubric may be more time-consuming for the teacher, but it also provides a detailed profile of the player’s various strengths/weaknesses. Note that I’ve added even more weight to “Rhythm” by making separate categories, one for Pulse-Tempo and another for the accuracy of the Rhythmic *figures*. In this version, I’ve chosen to elevate the importance of Tone Quality as well:

<u>ELEMENT</u> ↓	<u>SCORE</u> →	<u>Outstanding</u>	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Satisfactory</u>	<u>Unsatis.</u>	<u>Incomplete</u>
20-POINT ELEMENTS							
Pulse / Tempo		20	16	12	8	4	0
Rhythms		20	16	12	8	4	0
Tone Quality		20	16	12	8	4	0
Sight-Reading		20	16	12	8	4	0
10-POINT ELEMENTS							
Accuracy/Mechanics		10	8	6	4	2	0
Articulation		10	8	6	4	2	0
Dynamics		10	8	6	4	2	0
Phrasing/Expressiveness		10	8	6	4	2	0
5-POINT ELEMENTS							
Chromatic Scale		5	4	3	2	1	0
Scale #1_____		5	4	3	2	1	0
Scale #2_____		5	4	3	2	1	0
Scale #3_____		5	4	3	2	1	0
TOTAL SCORE (of 140) =							

Example 3 – This rubric makes use of *formulas* in an Excel spreadsheet. One excellent benefit of using Excel (or a similar plan) is that the totals will appear automatically when each category’s score is entered. All students and scores can then be sorted in any way you choose. In this version, I’ve included other, more *subjective* categories to help the teacher with placements, comparisons, part-assignments and record-keeping. I designed my own *categories* and gave each its own weight, based on parts of my personal philosophy; more details in blue, below.

Instrument	Name	Grade	a: Grade Points	b: Tone Quality	c: Dynamics / Phrasing / Artistry / Intonation	d: Mechanics & Accuracy	e: Excerpt Difficulty	f: Pulse / Rhythm	g: Appropriateness for Principal Seat	h: Scales (from 15)	i: Sight-Reading (15)	j: Xtra Crdt- Range (15)	k: XC-Masterful playing	TOTAL SCORE
<i>Sortable in Excel</i>	<i>Student's Name</i>	GiS				x2	x3	x4		x2				= <i>Sortable!</i>
Clarinet	Claire Annette Reed	12	15	8	8	8.5	7	8	5	13	12	0	0	= 144
Clarinet	Melody Clarion	11	10	9.2	9	9	7	9	8	15	13	0	1	= 154.2
Clarinet	Carol Ling	10	6	6	5	6	7	5	0	10	9	0	0	= 95
Clarinet	Amanda Lynn Pick	9	3	6	5	6	7	5	0	10	9	0	0	= 92
Clarinet	Selmer Hayak	9	3	9.2	9	9	7	9	8	15	13	0	1	= 147.2

Look at the detailed explanations of each category to illuminate its design:

a: Grade Points - This small adjustment can help manage the social structure of the band. It does not have to be used, of course, but it assists by breaking ties and shading other ‘close-call’ scoring in favor of older students. You’ll notice that two *pairs* of students got exactly the same scores in every performance category (Melody & Selmer, and Carol & Amanda), but the Tie is solved in favor of seniority because of the added grade-points. On this spreadsheet, the grade points are automatically entered because of an Excel *formula* in the cell. The teacher enters the Grade-in-School (9,10,11,12) and the grade points automatically appear because a *formula* has been written for this cell: =IF(C3>11,15,IF(C3>10,10,IF(C3>9,6,IF(C3>8,3,0))))

b: Tone Quality – Some might choose to offer this element a higher weight because, after all, we’re all about *sound*

c: Varied expressive elements are grouped together on this rubric, but that’s only a suggestion

d: Mechanics & Accuracy – This could also be Technique, Melodic Accuracy, Articulation or other descriptors. Since this is a demonstration of technical/physical skills *that are required by higher-seated band members who must play the more demanding parts*, this category is given a *double* value.

e: Excerpt Difficulty – This entry will be the same when students are all using the same music. However, this triple-value category helps to adjust the scores appropriately when students audition on *different* parts. A student choosing a harder excerpt is rewarded for its greater difficulty.

f: Pulse/Rhythm – The score earned in this category is multiplied *four times*.

g: Appropriateness for Principal Seat – This is a spot for a score (extra points) based on your *subjective* observation (“*how well do I feel this student will be able to lead the Clarinet Section?*”)

h: Scales – Offered extra value (2x) because scales are required fundamentals for musicians and, in auditions, these should be the ‘gimme’ points.

i: Sight-Reading – Note that this category has a larger value to start, with 15 points available. Consider displaying a *blank* version of the rubric to help students prepare for what will be evaluated, and to promote your belief that “*excellent sight reading is a top characteristic among the most excellent instrumentalists.*”

j: Extra Credit for Range – This can assist teachers by helping to identify students who are better matched for certain parts, and those who haven’t yet developed the range required for “1st” parts. For example, a Clarinetist who hasn’t learned altissimo fingerings is not yet qualified to play high parts without frustration, even if the total score is high for this specific audition. A ‘range’ category identifies *first-part* players throughout the band, especially in the brass instruments.

k: Extra Credit for “Masterful Playing” – Generally left blank, this is a way for the teacher to add “wow” points for an exceptionally impressive performance.

Example 4: One of my versions of an Audition Form for Jazz

JAZZ ENSEMBLE AUDITION EVALUATION FORM

Name _____ Instrument _____ Date _____

MUSIC EXCERPTS

	Superior	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unacceptable	Score
Rhythmic Accuracy/Pulse	5	4	3	2	1	_____
Note Accuracy	5	4	3	2	1	_____
Tone Quality/Intonation	5	4	3	2	1	_____
Articulation	5	4	3	2	1	_____
Phrasing/Dynamics	5	4	3	2	1	_____
Style	5	4	3	2	1	_____
“LEAD” Potential	Yes			No		

General preparedness of the EXCERPTS (circle):	<i>Superior</i>	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Not so good</i>
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IMPROVISATION

Note Accuracy	5	4	3	2	1	_____
Rhythmic Aspects / Pulse	5	4	3	2	1	_____
Musicality/Originality	5	4	3	2	1	_____
Style /Phrasing	5	4	3	2	1	_____

General preparedness for IMPROVISED Solos (circle):	<i>Superior</i>	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Not so good</i>
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SPECIAL ~ RHYTHM SECTION:

Appropriateness for serving this role in the Jazz Band	5	4	3	2	1	_____
Style / Feel	5	4	3	2	1	_____
Leadership/Independence	5	4	3	2	1	_____
Time-Keeping (& Solos)	5	4	3	2	1	_____

TOTAL SCORE _____

GENERAL COMMENTS (Range considerations; special skills to note; recommendation for a specific part; etc.)

RECOMMENDED _____
NOT Recommended _____

Judge(s) Signature(s) _____

Additional thoughts about *Band Audition Rubrics*

These are simply examples of scoresheet-designs that *could be* used. My point is that audition scoring can be weighted to assist with seating, part-assignments, identifying students' strengths & weaknesses, and more. *These scoresheets, assessment designs and rubrics are just templates, adjustable to meet your needs.* The strategic band director will find creative and inventive ways to score seating auditions.

Above all: for the audition process, be sure that the audition requirements are communicated precisely, and that all students understand the expectations. Display the list of requirements in a location that can't be missed. Include a blank copy of your chosen scoresheet so students will understand how they'll be evaluated. And state very clearly the *timeline* for the auditions: when they will be heard, and by whom.

Most band directors aren't surprised to hear rumblings and complaints, both before the auditions and especially *afterward* when the results are announced. If those complaints become pervasive in your program, consider some of the extra models I've added, below, with regard to seating placement, rotation options, *challenge* auditions, and an innovative way to manage auditions when students play music to *different levels of difficulty* for the audition itself.

A SEATING AUDITION model to streamline your work:

Occasionally (or often?), you'll experience a situation where the "top" and "bottom" of a Section are both really obvious, but all the musicians in the middle seem almost interchangeable. For example, in your Flute Section of *eighteen players*, you're able to hear the top three players, in order, very easily, and you *surely* know who's at the very end of the Section. But those dozen-or-so players in the middle might be seated in any order, without much difference to the quality of the full band's performance.

Additionally, an important part of band membership for *some* adolescents is that they're sharing time with their *friends*. Those students - even if there are only a few of them - prefer to sit next to friends; a seating plan that, to them, is uncomfortable may reduce some of the enjoyment they'll get from band. But of course you might not know who their hopeful stand-partners might be.

Both of these situations may be easier to manage with a Multi-Tiered Audition design, where students get to choose how rigorous they'd like their auditions and expectations to be. For this plan, choose three *Sight-Reading* excerpts (Advanced, Intermediate, Easy) and *two* Etudes (Adv, Interm) for each instrument. Choose the duration of students' preparation period (two weeks?) and distribute the Etudes.

With that background in mind, the model excerpted below is self-explanatory:

SYMPHONIC BAND SEATING AUDITIONS

To audition for **PRINCIPAL CHAIR** in your Section, follow the “A” instructions

To audition for a **1ST PART** in your Section (1st Flute, 1st Clarinet, etcetera), follow the “B” instructions

For a **GENERAL AUDITION** - or if you don't care where you sit in your Section - follow the “C” instructions

FLUTES

A - To try for **PRINCIPAL CHAIR**:

- Play the B-flat Major scale three times ~
 1. One Octave up & down, *slowly* to demonstrate Tone, with Vibrato
 2. TWO Octaves up & down, all slurred at a *moderate-to-fast* Tempo, as fluently as possible
 3. TWO Octaves up & down, tongued staccato, at your *fastest possible controlled* tempo
- Play the E Major scale TWO Octaves up and down, *in 3rds* (slurred or tongued - your choice)
- Play the Chromatic Scale, TWO Octaves up and down, slurred (start on Low C)
- Play Flute Audition Excerpt “A”
- Perform Sight-Reading Excerpt “A”

B - To audition for a “1st Flute” part:

- Play the B-flat Major scale three times ~
 1. One Octave up & down, *slowly* to demonstrate Tone, with Vibrato
 2. TWO Octaves up & down, all slurred at a *moderate-to-fast* Tempo, as fluently as possible
 3. TWO Octaves up & down, tongued staccato, at your *fastest possible controlled* tempo
- Play the F Major scale TWO Octaves up and down, *in 3rds* (slurred or tongued - your choice)
- Play the Chromatic Scale, TWO Octaves up and down, slurred (start on Low C, C# or D)
- Play Flute Audition Excerpt “B”
- Perform Sight-Reading Excerpt “B”

C - For general seating-placement:

- Play the B-flat Major scale three times ~
 1. One Octave up & down, *slowly* to demonstrate your best Tone quality (with Vibrato if possible)
 2. One Octave up & down, all slurred at a *moderate-to-fast* Tempo, as fluently as possible
 3. One Octave up & down, tongued staccato, at your *fastest possible controlled* tempo
- Play the F Major scale TWO Octaves up and down (slurred or tongued - your choice)
- Play the Chromatic Scale, ONE Octave up and down at a the fastest tempo you can comfortably do
- Play *anything you want to play*, with this criterion: It should be the *most difficult music to feel you can play well*
- Perform Sight-Reading Excerpt “C”

CLARINETS

A - To try for **PRINCIPAL CHAIR**:

- Play the C Major Scale (Concert B-flat) three times ~
 1. One Octave up & down, *slowly* to demonstrate Tone
 2. TWO Octaves up & down, all slurred at a *moderate-to-fast* Tempo, as fluently as possible
 3. TWO Octaves up & down, tongued staccato, at your *fastest possible controlled* tempo
- Play the E-flat Major scale (Concert D-flat) TWO Octaves up and down, *in 3rds* (slurred or tongued - your choice)
- Play the Chromatic Scale, THREE Octaves up and down, slurred (start on Low E)

- Play Clarinet Audition Excerpt “A”
- Perform Sight-Reading Excerpt “A”

B – To audition for a “1st Clarinet” part:

- Play the C Major Scale (Concert B-flat) three times ~
 1. One Octave up & down, *slowly* to demonstrate Tone
 2. TWO Octaves up & down, all slurred at a *moderate-to-fast* Tempo, as fluently as possible
 3. TWO Octaves up & down, tongued staccato, at your *fastest possible controlled* tempo
- Play the F Major scale (Concert Eb) TWO Octaves up and down, *in 3rds* (slurred or tongued – your choice)
- Play the Chromatic Scale, TWO Octaves up and down, slurred (start on Low E or F)
- Play Clarinet Audition Excerpt “B”
- Perform Sight-Reading Excerpt “B”

C – For general seating-placement:

- Play your C Major scale three times ~
 1. One Octave up & down, *slowly* to demonstrate your best Tone quality
 2. One Octave up & down, all slurred at a *moderate-to-fast* Tempo, as fluently as possible
 3. One Octave up & down, tongued staccato, at your *fastest possible controlled* tempo
- Play the F Major scale TWO Octaves up and down (slurred or tongued – your choice)
- Play the Chromatic Scale, ONE Octave up and down at the fastest tempo you can comfortably do
- Play *anything you want to play*, with this criterion: It should be the *most difficult music to feel you can play well*
- Perform Sight-Reading Excerpt “C”

TRUMPETS

A – To try for PRINCIPAL CHAIR:

- Play your C Major Scale three times ~
 1. One Octave up & down, *slowly* to demonstrate Tone, with *Vibrato*
 2. TWO Octaves up & down, all slurred at a *moderate-to-fast* Tempo, as fluently as possible
 3. TWO Octaves up & down, tongued staccato, at your *fastest possible controlled* tempo
- Play your B-flat Major scale TWO Octaves up and down, *in 3rds* (slurred or tongued – your choice)
- Play the Chromatic Scale, two octaves, slurred (Start on G, B-flat or C)
- Play Trumpet Audition Excerpt “A”
- Perform Sight-Reading Excerpt “A”

B – To audition for a “1st” part:

- Play your C Major Scale three times ~
 1. One Octave up & down, *slowly* to demonstrate Tone
 2. TWO Octaves up & down, all slurred at a *moderate-to-fast* Tempo, as fluently as possible
 3. TWO Octaves up & down, tongued staccato, at your *fastest possible controlled* tempo
- Play your B-flat Major scale TWO Octaves up and down, *in 3rds* (slurred or tongued – your choice)
- Play the Chromatic Scale, any TWO Octaves up and down, slurred
- Play Trumpet Audition Excerpt “B”
- Perform Sight-Reading Excerpt “B”

C – For general seating-placement:

- Play your C Major scale three times ~
 1. One Octave up & down, *slowly* to demonstrate your best Tone quality
 2. One Octave up & down, all slurred at a *moderate-to-fast* Tempo, as fluently as possible
 3. One Octave up & down, tongued staccato, at your fastest possible controlled tempo

- Play your B-flat Major scale ONE Octave up and down (slurred or tongued – your choice)
- Play the Chromatic Scale, ONE Octave up and down at the fastest tempo you can comfortably do
- Play *anything you want to play*, with this criterion: It should be the *most difficult music to feel you can play well*
- Perform Sight-Reading Excerpt “C”

A Specific *template* to guide students to understand more about their own playing, as related to SEATING PLACEMENT and PART-ASSIGNMENTS:

This (below) is just a short segment of a comprehensive document that has two nice functions:

1. I might use *by myself* to categorize my students. This can help me to design an individualized course-of-study for *each student*. Or,
2. I might post this, or I could put it in students’ folders. When students are more aware of what skills they *could* have, not only do they better understand their shortcomings, but also they’re able to view a set of *goals* to which they’ll aspire next.

Here are ‘tiered’ skill-set statements for Flute, Clarinet, Saxophone, and Trombone/Euphonium. Hopefully, these models will guide you in preparation of your own version of this document, should you decide it’s helpful for your program.

FLUTE

A	B	C
<p>Scales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Chromatic, Full-range Low C to High Bb, in 16th notes at MM=72+ ⇒ Major Scales (C, F, Bb, Eb, Ab, G, D, A, E), two octaves in 16th notes at MM 72+ ⇒ Any <i>one</i> minor scale of your choice, one octave, to demonstrate Natural, Harmonic & Melodic Forms 	<p>Scales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Chromatic, any <i>two octaves</i>, in 8th notes at MM=72+ ⇒ Major Scales (C, F, Bb, Eb, G, D, A), in 8th notes at MM 72+. All are <i>two octaves</i> except Bb, which is <i>one octave</i> 	<p>Scales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Chromatic, any <i>one octave</i>, in quarter notes at MM=72+ ⇒ Major Scales (C, F, Bb, Eb, G, D, A), <i>one octave</i>, in quarter notes at MM 72+.
<p>Technique: Student performs a passage of average HS Band difficulty with virtually no mistakes</p>	<p>Technique: Student performs a passage of average HS Band difficulty with several mistakes</p>	<p>Technique: Student performs a passage of average HS Band difficulty with <i>frequent</i> mistakes</p>
<p>Single-Tonguing is coordinated with fast fingerings (i.e. 16th notes at MM72 or more). Double-Tonguing can be used in musical passages.</p>	<p>Single-Tonguing is coordinated with moderate fingering speed (i.e. 16th notes at MM60 or less). Double-Tonguing is developing, but is not used in musical passages.</p>	<p>Single-Tonguing is at a basic level, and Double-Tonguing is not yet developed.</p>
<p>Sight-Reading of Level 4 material is nearly flawless.</p>	<p>Sight-Reading of Level 4 material yields some errors, but the basic character of the piece is heard.</p>	<p>Sight-Reading of Level 4 material is mostly incorrect at the intended tempo.</p>
<p>Vibrato is used musically</p>	<p>Vibrato is beginning to develop.</p>	<p>Vibrato is uncomfortable, or not used at all</p>
<p>“A” = Appx. NYSSMA level 5 & 6</p>	<p>“B” = Appx. NYSSMA level 4</p>	<p>“C” = Appx. NYSSMA level 1-2-3</p>

CLARINET

A	B	C
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<p>Scales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Chromatic, Full-range Low E to High E, in 16th notes at MM=72+ ⇒ Major Scales (C, F, Bb, Eb, Ab, G, D, A, E), two octaves in 16th notes at MM 72+ ⇒ Any <i>one</i> minor scale of your choice, one octave, to demonstrate Natural, Harmonic & Melodic Forms 	<p>Scales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Chromatic, any <i>two octaves</i>, in 8th notes at MM=72+ ⇒ Major Scales (C, F, Bb, Eb, G, D, A), in 8th notes at MM 72+. All are <i>two octaves</i> except Bb, which is <i>one octave</i> 	<p>Scales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Chromatic, any <i>one octave</i>, in quarter notes at MM=72+ ⇒ Major Scales (C, F, Bb, Eb, G, D, A), <i>one octave</i>, in quarter notes at MM 72+.
<p>Technique: Student performs a passage of average HS Band difficulty with virtually no mistakes</p>	<p>Technique: Student performs a passage of average HS Band difficulty with several mistakes</p>	<p>Technique: Student performs a passage of average HS Band difficulty with <i>frequent</i> mistakes</p>
<p>Tonguing is clear and coordinated with fast fingerings (i.e. 16th notes at MM72 or more). Tonguing does not adversely affect Tone Quality in any register.</p>	<p>Tonguing is fairly clear and is coordinated with moderate fingering speed (i.e. 8th notes at MM72 or less). Tonguing may have adverse effects on Tone Quality in the high register.</p>	<p>Tonguing is at a basic level, and has adverse effects on Tone Quality in most registers. Some players at this level are unable to begin pitches with the tongue.</p>
<p>Sight-Reading of Level 4 material is nearly flawless.</p>	<p>Sight-Reading of Level 4 material yields some errors, but the basic character of the piece is heard.</p>	<p>Sight-Reading of Level 4 material is mostly incorrect at the intended tempo.</p>
<p>“A” = <i>Appx. NYSSMA level 5 & 6</i></p>	<p>“B” = <i>Appx. NYSSMA level 4</i></p>	<p>“C” = <i>Appx. NYSSMA level 1-2-3</i></p>

SAXOPHONE

A	B	C
<p>Scales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Chromatic, Full-range Low Bb to High F, in 16th notes at MM=72+ ⇒ Major Scales (C, F, Bb, Eb, Ab, G, D, A, E), <i>Full Range</i> in 16th notes at MM 72+ ⇒ Any <i>one</i> minor scale of your choice, one octave, to demonstrate Natural, Harmonic & Melodic Forms 	<p>Scales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Chromatic, any <i>two octaves</i>, in 8th notes at MM=72+ ⇒ Major Scales (C, F, Bb, Eb, G, D, A), in 8th notes at MM 72+. All are <i>two octaves</i> except G and A, which are <i>one octave</i> scales 	<p>Scales:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Chromatic, any <i>one octave</i>, in quarter notes at MM=72+ ⇒ Major Scales (C, F, Bb, Eb, G, D, A), <i>one octave</i>, in quarter notes at MM 72+.
<p>Technique: Student performs a passage of average HS Band difficulty with virtually no mistakes</p>	<p>Technique: Student performs a passage of average HS Band difficulty with several mistakes</p>	<p>Technique: Student performs a passage of average HS Band difficulty with <i>frequent</i> mistakes</p>
<p>Tonguing is clear and coordinated with fast fingerings (i.e. 16th notes at MM72 or more). Tonguing does not adversely affect Tone Quality in any register.</p>	<p>Tonguing is fairly clear and is coordinated with moderate fingering speed (i.e. 8th notes at MM72 or less). Tonguing may have adverse effects on Tone Quality in the high register.</p>	<p>Tonguing is at a basic level, and has adverse effects on Tone Quality in most registers. Some players at this level are unable to begin pitches with the tongue.</p>

Sight-Reading of Level 4 material is nearly flawless.	Sight-Reading of Level 4 material yields some errors, but the basic character of the piece is heard.	Sight-Reading of Level 4 material is mostly incorrect at the intended tempo.
Student has a working knowledge of most Alternate Fingerings (and the ‘cases’ for which they are used, especially to affect Intonation) and has begun to use Altissimo .	Student knows some Alternate Fingerings and can correctly use Side C, Chromatic F#, and at least 3 Bb fingerings.	Student <i>may know</i> some Alternate Fingerings but uses primarily basic fingerings without intervention, especially in sight-reading.
Vibrato is used musically	Vibrato is beginning to develop.	Vibrato is uncomfortable, or not used at all
“A” = Appx. NYSSMA level 5 & 6	“B” = Appx. NYSSMA level 4	“C” = Appx. NYSSMA level 1-2-3

TROMBONE / EUPHONIUM

A	B	C
Scales: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Chromatic, Low F to High F, in 8th notes at MM=100+ ⇒ Major Scales (C, F, Bb, Eb, Ab, G, D, A, E), in 8th notes at MM 100+ Two-octave scales are F, G, Ab ⇒ Any <i>one</i> minor scale of your choice, one octave, to demonstrate Natural, Harmonic & Melodic Forms 	Scales: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Chromatic, any <i>one octave</i>, in 8th notes at MM=72+ ⇒ Major Scales (C, F, Bb, Eb, Ab, G, D), in 8th notes at MM 72+. All are <i>one octave</i> except G, which is <i>two octaves</i> 	Scales: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Chromatic, any <i>one octave</i>, in quarter notes at MM=72+ ⇒ Major Scales (C, F, Bb, Eb, Ab, G, D), <i>one octave</i>, in quarter notes at MM 72+.
Technique: Student performs a passage of average HS Band difficulty with virtually no mistakes	Technique: Student performs a passage of average HS Band difficulty with several mistakes	Technique: Student performs a passage of average HS Band difficulty with <i>frequent</i> mistakes
Single-Tonguing is coordinated with fast fingerings/slide movement (i.e. 16 th notes at MM72 or more). Multiple-Tonguing can be used in musical passages.	Single-Tonguing is coordinated with moderate fingering speed (i.e. 16 th notes at MM60 or less). Double-Tonguing is developing, but is not used in musical passages.	Single-Tonguing is at a basic level, and Double-Tonguing is not yet developed.
Sight-Reading of Level 4 material is nearly flawless.	Sight-Reading of Level 4 material yields some errors, but the basic character of the piece is heard.	Sight-Reading of Level 4 material is mostly incorrect at the intended tempo.
Range is from Low E to High A <i>or higher</i> , as a minimum. Pedal notes are playable. Student is predictably accurate in high-range playing, and has good endurance .	Range is from Low G to High F, as a minimum. Student may be able to play higher occasionally, but endurance is unpredictable.	Range is anything less than the “A” and “B” descriptions.
“A” = Appx. NYSSMA level 5 & 6	“B” = Appx. NYSSMA level 4	“C” = Appx. NYSSMA level 1-2-3

MODEL: A start-up Seating Plan

I designed this for my own *optional* use in years when I didn't think I could give up a week for auditions. I could use it to *seat the Band quickly*, but then I'd follow with *actual* seating auditions. Sometimes – when I determined that things were going quite well – I'd announce that the follow-up Seating Auditions would be “*only for those of you who want to move higher up in your Section.*” When new students have been given just a few days to assess themselves against others, we may need to do only a *small* number of full seating auditions because students can recognize that they're seated in a logical spot. At that point, it's easy to use the more important and challenging excerpts from the literature we're already working on (plus scales/sight-reading as desired) as the source-material for the audition. My own process was to re-audition for seating placement after each Concert.



MEHS SPARTAN SYMPHONIC BAND

Seating arrangement plan *ONLY* for the first two weeks of school

Name _____ Instrument _____ Grade _____

FILL IN YOUR STARTING SCORE: _____

Senior =15 points Junior =10 Sophomore =6 Freshman =2

SUBTRACT 2 points for *each* year you didn't play your instrument since 5th grade - _____

ADD points for your All-County experience if it happened within the past two school years.

Choose only *one* (choose the most valuable statement that's true for you):

- 10 Sr High All-County 1st Chair
- 9 Sr High All-County Membership
- 6 Jr High All-County 1st Chair
- 5 Jr High All-County Membership
- 2 Auditioned for All-County, but didn't make it + _____

ADD points for your highest-ever NYSSMA Solo Score

- 8 points Level 6A or 6A+
- 7 points Level 6A- or 5A+
- 5 points Level 6B+, 6B, 6B- or 5A, 5A-
- 4 points Level 5B-/B/B+ or Level 4 “Outstanding”
- 3 points Level 4 “Excellent” or Level 3 “Outstanding”
- 2.5 points Level 3 “Excellent”
- 2 points Level 4 “Good”
- 1 point Other Level 2 or 3 + _____

ADD 4 points if you took private lessons on your Band instrument for the whole *last year*. + _____

ADD 2 points if you performed a NYSSMA Small Ensemble (Duet, Trio, etc.) *last year*. + _____

TOTAL SCORE: _____

A word about Challenge Auditions (and this could be applied to “auditions” in general as well):

I often found that students were dissatisfied with their seating placement, even in cases when I was sure there was a profound reason the student was on the right part, and/or in the correct seat-order. I personally appreciate the lack of bias (even the lack of *appearance* of bias) gained through *screened, anonymous auditions*, so I found a way to simulate that process without a major disruption to my teaching.

In this “Challenge Audition” model, I told students to be prepared to play the audition the morning after a Concert, and I provided them a *specific list* of what to play. As a supportive part of the plan, I chose concert repertoire excerpts that I knew still needed some ‘finessing’ and I announced the material two or three weeks before the Concert.

Here’s a brief outline of how it worked:

- I prepared a *recording station* in advance (mic, music stand, and pre-set recording levels).
- I assigned and trained a neutral *third party* to run the recording session. Sometimes it was a Senior student Officer, but eventually I moved to using adult *Monitors* (e.g. Teacher Aides, Student Teachers, visiting college students, an English Teacher with a free period, etc.)
- The *monitor* recorded the session using the instructions on the students’ sheets (below). The *monitor* would keep the names of the students secure, sometimes delivering them to me in a sealed envelope for anonymity.

NOTE: *While these auditions are occurring, I’m still on-task with the normal class activities, engaging the remainder of the students without interruption.*

- I’d listen to the recordings (at lunch, after school, or in the evening). The results are *almost* always quite obvious to the Teacher anyway, but I feel that the students involved might have some unintended bias of their own (i.e. “*I know I was better than him because I could hear him through the door!*”). So *when it was needed, and when it was appropriate*, I could add an easy step to teach the students that the seating-order was chosen *correctly*, based only on the performances ...
- I could always find a short representative section of the excerpt that would easily delineate the difference in performance quality. Using Audacity, GarageBand or the like, I’d Cut that portion of the audition recording, and then Paste into a single track, consecutively: the track would then be Student A, followed immediately by Student B, then C.
- *When it was needed*, and when it was appropriate*, I’d then have the recording queued up to play for the whole Band or for the small group of students involved in the auditions. (*in severe cases when conversations among cliques, or social-media chatter was at risk of eroding the bonds within the band) I could then play the recording, saying only

“This is Flute Player A, followed by B, followed by C, all playing the same excerpt.” This playback might take no more than 30-60 seconds.

- **A scripted (example) concluding announcement might sound like this:** *“Congratulations to ALL of the players ... these were really good performances, and auditions are always nerve-wracking! In this specific audition, on these specific measures, I know you all can agree that the best performance was given by Player B, followed by C, and then A. So the seating order after this Challenge is B > C > A. No, who is Player B? Congratulations! ”*
- **Using this method, I never** (really: *never*) **had to defend the audition results, or hear complaints from students who claimed the process had been ‘unfair.’** Occasionally – and only from certain kinds of people – I’d hear innocuous comments from a disappointed student like, *“Well, my keys were sticking,” “Joe was by the door making noise while I was playing,” or “I was really sick but I came to school just for the audition.”*

Here's a clip of what I'd provide to the students (along with telling them exactly *when* the challenge would take place):

TO RECORD A SEATING CHALLENGE ...

- A. Let the *Monitor* start the recording and announce your Instrument & Number into the microphone (for example, *“This is Flute #1”*).
- B. Play the list below, in the order given, without saying anything and without long hesitations.
- C. Good Luck!!

FLUTES

- 1) Eb Major Scale, 2 Octaves
- 2) G Major Scale, 2 Octaves
- 3) A Major Scale, 1 Octave
- 4) Sea Songs, meas. 5-20
- 5) Festive Fanfare for the Holidays, Beginning to meas. 25

CLARINETS

- 1) Bb Major Scale, 2 Octaves
- 2) D Major Scale, 2 Octaves
- 3) A Major Scale, 1 Octave
- 4) Sea Songs, meas. 5-20 *and* Trio
- 5) Festive Fanfare for the Holidays, Beginning to meas. 25

SEATING CHALLENGE AUDITIONS
General Information

There are many reasons a Band member may feel that his/her placement (part & chair) within the Band should be re-evaluated. Typical valid reasons might include:

- *At the time of the audition, the student was ill or had just returned from an extended absence*
- *The student had suffered a significant distraction around the time of the audition, like a family move, school projects, vacation, etcetera.*
- *The student feels that s/he has made significant personal progress due to private lessons, better practice habits, or some other reason.*
- *A student feels that another student seated ahead of him/her has shown less care in the preparation of the Band music; the student feels s/he could be more dedicated in that position.*

Seating Challenges for Band members will take place only during the first full week of school each month. On rare occasions affected by Band trips, Concerts, Regents/AP testing or vacations, the Challenge scheduling may change; any such changes will be posted well in advance.

THE CHALLENGE PROCESS ...

- 1. Fill out a “Request for Challenge Audition” form. Deadline: 20th day of each month.**
2. *Practice* to prepare for the Audition. You’ll be told what material will be used for the audition; in most cases, the audition would include scales, excerpts from the Band’s current music, and sight-reading. Your Tone, Articulation, Range, Technique, Rhythm, Musicality and all other facets of your playing will certainly play a part in the judging.
3. The Director will inform you of the date/time of the Challenge audition. Each student will be given the same amount of time to prepare the material.
4. The actual Challenge Audition will be ‘*screened*’ – this is a very common process for music auditions: Auditionees will perform *anonymously* from behind a screen, and will be heard by the Band’s full membership* to ensure fairness. The Band members will give numerical scores to “Player #1” and “Player #2.” The identity of the players will be revealed *only* after the scoring has been tabulated. One Officer of the Band – usually the President – will help oversee the process with the Director to further ensure fairness. * If auditionees prefer not to perform for the entire membership, there is another option: fairness can also be ensured with *recorded* auditions that will be heard later by the Director and an unbiased panel of listeners.

See next page ...

SEATING CHALLENGE AUDITION “F.A.Q”

Who may challenge whom?

Any student may challenge another student for his/her Chair. Except for **special cases***, students should challenge *only* the next person (the player in the very next chair).

**Special cases: With permission from the Director, a student may challenge someone more than one seat away. In that case, all affected students will be invited to participate in a new multiple-player Audition.*

What happens to the winner & loser of the Challenge?

If the Challenger wins, s/he takes the seat of the person challenged, who will therefore move down one seat. If the person being challenged wins, there is no change in seating.

What if I don't do my best during the Challenge?

As in any other part of normal competition, these types of risks exist. Also, it's important to recognize that – no matter how well or how poorly you play – there will be players who are better and worse than you.

What is one of the Challenge participants doesn't show up?

In the case of an *excusable* absence, the Challenge will take place the very next day. If one of the students simply doesn't show up (a “No Show”) the result is a forfeit.

What if I'm dissatisfied with the results of my Challenge?

Try it again, one month later.

What if – as in the “special cases” listed above – there are several people in between the two members involved in the Challenge?

First, it should be understood that conditions like this will occur only under very worthy circumstances which the Challenger will be asked to identify (see the “Request for Challenge Audition” form). If such a multiple-person Challenge is approved, all players in between will be invited to participate. Those who decline will forfeit their current seats to those who do audition. Those who accept will take part in the Challenge, meaning more than two players will perform screened from view. If there are four or more students involved, the entire Section will be asked to re-audition outside of the Band period. Since these are such complicated circumstances, requests will be evaluated very carefully before approval.

High School Band
SEATING CHALLENGE AUDITIONS
Request for Challenge Audition

I hereby request the opportunity to challenge _____ for his/her seat in
the Symphonic Band. Signature: _____ Date: _____

If the person you want to challenge is more than one seat ahead of you, use the space below to describe the circumstances you feel should be considered. You'll be notified about whether or not your Challenge has been approved.

This completed form is to be given to the Director *on or before* the 20th day of the month. You'll receive a written notification of 1) what material will be asked for the Challenge, and 2) when the Challenge will take place.

Fill out the bottom portion of this page, detach it, and give it to the person you want to challenge. You must turn in both halves of this page on the same day.

.....
Detach here – Give the top half to the Director, and ...

.....
Give the bottom half to the person you're Challenging.

TO: _____

FROM: _____

DATE: _____

I have just turned in my request for the opportunity to challenge you for your seat in the _____ Band. The Director will notify us both in writing about 1) what material will be asked for the Challenge, and 2) when the Challenge will take place. The Challenge will take place sometime during the first full week of next month.

SAMPLE: An innovative rubric allowing effective comparison when students have self-selected music at different levels of difficulty

I initially invented this device (again, like many other pedagogical choices) simply to solve my own problem >>> As a Band Director for *American Music Abroad*, I had to select repertoire *and* organize the Parts/Seating assignments for the full band ... before ever meeting the students. This condition is common for summer camps, touring groups, special-event ensembles and more: the directors learn about the performers from written recommendations, resumes, and recorded “auditions” ranging from a full-length Concerto to a simple play-through of a one-octave scale and an 8-measure lesson book exercise.

We were very successful using this model to *sort* students according to skill-levels, even when they submitted outrageously different audition performances. Afterward, I adapted it for use at my own High School; I could allow students to play *whatever they wanted to* for their seating audition during the first days of school, and the scoring can convert mismatched performances into a fairly reliable ranking. They’d choose their own audition piece based on the only instruction: “*play the most difficult music you feel you can play well.*”

MAINE-ENDWELL High School Bands ~ September Seating Audition

Band members can play *any chosen music, with this recommendation: *You should play the most difficult music you feel you can play well, even if that means playing something extremely easy. What you’ll play is completely your choice.***

*Options ~ a full NYSSMA Solo; a short excerpt of a Solo; a passage from last year’s Band music; a Folk Song or Pop Song; or, just Scales

Name _____ Instrument _____

Grade 9 10 11 12 Date _____

I. SCALES/RUDIMENTS of your Choice (the first impression)

(Description, <i>below</i>)	Point Value
Incorrect (Any incorrect pitch constitutes an <i>Incorrect Scale</i>)	0
“Glitch”, but student immediately changes to correct pitch	2
Correct, but slow or hesitant	4
Correct with steady pulse – 1 Octave	6
<< All descriptors below assume that the Scale is <u>Correct</u> & <u>Steady</u> , with a <i>fluent</i> feel >>	
▪ One Octave, <i>fluently</i>	8
One Octave plus <i>Arpeggio</i>	10
2 Octaves (or more) - <u>OR</u> - One Octave plus <i>Arpeggio</i> & <i>Scale-in-3rds</i>	11
2+ Oct plus <i>Arpeggio</i> - <u>OR</u> - 1 Oct plus <i>Arpeggio</i> , <i>Scale-in-3rds</i> & <i>Chromatic Scale</i>	12
2+ Octaves, plus <i>Arpeggio</i> & <i>Scale-in-3rds</i>	13
2+ Octaves, plus <i>Arpeggio</i> , <i>Scale-in-3rds</i> & <i>Chromatic Scale</i>	14

Scale of _____ Score: _____

Scale of _____ Score: _____
 Scale of _____ Score: _____
 Extra Credit for choosing less-common scales: + _____

II. BASIC AUDITION RATING on your *chosen music* (the player's performance)

Pulse / Rhythm	10	8	6	4	2
Mechanics (incl. <i>Technique & Articulation</i>)	10	8	6	4	2
Tone Quality	10	8	6	4	2
Intonation	10	8	6	4	2
Dynamics	10	8	6	4	2
Phrasing / Artistry	10	8	6	4	2
<i>Appropriateness for Principal Seat</i>	10	8	6	4	2
General Impression of this player	10	8	6	4	2
Add Scale-Points from #I, above					+ _____

TOTAL Points Scored: _____

III. FOR RANKING WITHIN THE SECTION (the player's demonstrated achievement)

In order to RANK players who perform at different levels of difficulty, the Basic Audition score from #II will be multiplied by a "conversion factor", described below

Level of Difficulty for the material chosen by the Student for himself/herself:

Very Advanced (i.e. NY Level 6 in Technical demand, Range, Endurance, etc.)	Multiply by:	1.4
Advanced (Level 5 in Technique, Range & more; Or, a short passage from Level 6)		1.15
Medium (Level 4 in Technical demand, Range & more; Or, an 'easier' Level 5 passage)		1
Medium Easy (Level 3 in Technical demand, Range & more; Or, a, 'easier' Level 4 passage)		.9
Easy (NY Level 2 & shorter Level 3 passages)		.75
Very Easy (NY Level 1 & shorter Level 2 passages; Or, a Scale or very short melody)		.6

AUDITION SCORE _____ x conversion factor _____ = THIS PLAYER'S BASIC RATING:

IV. FURTHER INSTRUCTOR'S NOTES (the player's potential ~ can serve to break Ties)

Independence concerns/strengths: e.g. this player demonstrates:

- ___ Confident Independence; the ability to lead a Section Rhythmically & Stylistically
- ___ Apparent Independence, but there are indications he/she might not be a leader
- ___ The apparent need to play *with the Section* for security & accuracy
- ___ A more severe risk with rhythms/entrances/pulse/accuracy

Sight-Reading concerns/strengths: this player's most recent Watkins-Farnum Score = _____

Range concerns/strengths: (e.g. Does the Clarinetist lack confidence/flexibility above high C? Does the Trumpet player lack command of high C & above? Is the Horn player inaccurate in the upper register? Etc.) Remember to note any factors that could influence choice of Band Literature.

V. A LABEL FOR THIS PLAYER

Assessment of this player in three categories (*circle*):

Level of Difficulty (technical achievement)	6	5	4	3	2	1
Musicianship within that Level (artistic achievement)	A	B	C	D		
Control & Achievement Scales/Rudiments & Sight-Reading	++	+	✓+	✓-	-	x

First Seating Placement: # _____ among _____ total in the Section

Part(s) to be played by this student: _____

SAMPLE: A *Rotation Plan* allowing students to play alternate parts.

Note: There are better examples than this one, but I've included it *only* to inspire you toward other research. Seek alternate designs to match your needs. *Readers – please contact me to submit your suggestions.*

Rotating Seating Plan

I. Section Players

Each member of the Symphonic Band will be identified according to his/her *current* level of playing ability. Levels “A”, “B” and “C” are used to designate how well each student *currently* plays. The specific skills expected at each Level will be posted by the Bands bulletin board. Students should examine the requirements for each Level and should label *themselves* as “A”, “B” or “C” level performers. Note to students: the choice must be made with care and honesty, since you may be asked at any time to demonstrate your choice if the Director feels you may have given yourself an incorrect Level.

Once each performer has selected the Level, he/she should share a folder with a friend who plays *at the same Level*. Those two students will be stand partners, and will perform together from the shared folder.

Each pair of Section partners will be asked to play certain parts appropriate for the level of ability, and may be assigned a mixture of parts (1st, 2nd, 3rd) to ensure the best possible balance within the Section.

For larger Sections such as the Clarinets & Trumpets, a *typical* rotation might work as follows:

- “A” folders contain parts I & II, with *occasional* III as necessary
- “B” folders contain mostly part II music, with *occasional* I & III
- “C” folders contain mostly part III

NOTE: Rotation assignments will be made as soon as the performance Repertoire is selected, and the rotation will be printed for display & distribution.

II. Principal Players

Each Section will have a *Principal* player. The position is assigned to the best player in the Section, chosen after head-to-head seating auditions. If necessary, two equivalent performers may be name “Co-Principal” players. Students who are dissatisfied with the results may request a *Challenge Audition*. Challenges take place during the week after a Concert performance to ensure that the winning candidate will keep the honor through at least one Concert. Note: the *Principal* player may also be the *Section Leader*, but it should be understood that the two positions are distinct and separate from one another.

An example of how Trumpet Folders might be organized in a Rotated Seating plan:

Trumpet Students	F O L D E R	P A R T S	Chant and Jubilo	With Good Will and Glad Tidings	On An American Spiritual	Fate of the Gods	Brazilian Sleigh Bells	Into the Clouds! (Tpts 1 & 2 only)	McMorran Suite
Billie A / Bobbie B	29	Tpt 1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Bryant C / Brooke D	30	T 1-2	2	1	2	1	2	1	1
Barb E / Brian E	31	T 2-1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2
Bella F / Benji G	32	T 2-1	2	2	1	2	1	2	2
Blake H / Brianna I	33	Tpt 3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
Bailey J / Bradley K	34	Tpt 3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3

Finally, a short essay exposing a bit of my philosophy on Grading in Music. This is steeped in my personal opinion, but perhaps you’ll find something pertinent and/or helpful for you.

Yes, it’s true that a grade represents a ‘snapshot’ of skills/development/understanding at a specific time. However – and here comes the arguable part – for performance-based classes like *non-classroom* Music (Band/Chorus/Orchestra and Lesson classes), Art, Phys Ed and perhaps others, it cannot be overlooked that students develop their skills at different rates and at different times. The following quote is not mine, but I’m a firm believer in this philosophy:

Almost all children can learn *in time*, but not all can learn ‘*on time*’.

My point in invoking that quote is that with regard to performance-based education, *process* is definitely an important component, as is “effort.” The personal progress and learning achieved by the student is tied innately to his/her individual effort. Music Practice (and equivalent tasks/processes in Art, Dance, Phys Ed, etc.) is entirely different from a homework assignment found in most academic subjects. Like weightlifting in Phys Ed, a Music student can get no benefit by having a parent do the *practicing* for him/her. Thus, there’s no risk that using effort/participation as a component of the calculation will yield a skewed grade. Admittedly, the ability to evaluate ‘effort’ is more subjective, but that’s where fine, creative teachers show their excellence and experience.

I don’t think *anyone* would stand confidently in agreement with this statement of expectation at a “rigorous standard”, if it’s applied to Football, for instance:

All football players on the varsity team, regardless of age or physical stature, will perform 10 reps of a 250-lb weight within one 20-second time limit, and must do so on September 10th.

That seems facetious, of course, because we know all athletes develop different skills at different times. Further, there is a tremendous variety of skills needed by a “football player”. The standard expectation above can be applied to a set of strong linebackers, but it doesn’t address what the punter, kicker, quarterback

or receivers need in their skill-set. Similarly, in Music there are (of course) far too many variables for us to assign an all-purpose task like, “*Every member must play a two-octave G-flat Major Scale in staccato-tongued 16th notes, at Quarter Note MM=120, by memory, on September 10th.*”

Imagine this concrete example: “*I have two 12th grade sisters of equal ability. Both have been playing Saxophone since elementary school, but when the Band needed an Oboist one of the sisters agreed to switch to oboe. Who will perform better on the achievement test – the sister with seven years of saxophone experience, or the sister with seven months on a new instrument? And how do I justify the grade to the students and their parents?*”

By micro-managing a finite set of educational standards and assessments for each Course on a specific calendar, we risk turning a partially-blind eye to the ages-old cognizance of *developmental readiness*. But with careful design of our own grading systems, we can recognize that the cookie-cutter approach doesn’t fit every model. For instance, a 9th grade Trumpet player with two years’ experience but significant fine-motor difficulties certainly cannot perform the same skills at the same time (nor should he) as the talented & “able” Senior trumpet-player who has been studying since 4th grade. In Art class, some students have greater difficulties with sculpting than with sketching, just as any given basketball player might not develop pinpoint accuracy on foul-shots at the same time as peers, if at all. Performance skills differ for every human.

In terms of performance-based activities, *development* and *progress* are as important (and perhaps far *more important*) than actual achievement. Therefore – in too many words – I’m just trying to point out that a grading policy for a performance-based class can *still* be reflective, successful and demanding while not based on “this-skill-by-this-date”.

Do you have rubrics, audition sheets, seating plans, or other suggestions to share with readers?
Please feel free to contact me: r200lina@gmail.com