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# Elementary Music Assessment and Report Card Practices in Livingston County, Michigan

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ELEMENTARY MUSIC ASSESSMENT AND REPORT CARD PRACTICES IN  
LIVINGSTON COUNTY, MICHIGAN

By

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Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Music & Dance

Eastern Michigan University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Music Education

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June 1, 2006

Ypsilanti, Michigan

## DEDICATION

To Wayne  
“my beloved, my friend”

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## ABSTRACT

This descriptive study explored how elementary schools in the five public school districts in Livingston County, Michigan, report musical achievement to parents. The purposes were to examine what is assessed in K–4 music classrooms, what grading systems are used to report the assessment data, and how school districts use report cards to convey information about students' musical progress to parents. The study involved questioning district curriculum directors, elementary school principals, and music teachers with response rates above 70%. In addition, music report cards were reviewed and a small sample of parents were surveyed. Analysis of descriptive statistics revealed that elementary music teachers assess musical skills and knowledge in addition to nonmusical factors. Student assessment data were reported in the form of standards-based grades on report cards.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### Problem Statement

How do elementary music teachers report musical achievement to parents in Livingston County, Michigan? This study explored what elementary music teachers assess, how the results of that assessment are reported in the form of grades, and what information is included on report cards.

### Background Information

In 1983, the report *A Nation At Risk* issued bleak statements about the future of education in the United States (Marzano & Kendall, 1998). An alarmed American public soon became very interested in the quality of American education, and an educational reform movement was born. In 1987, this interest prompted President Bush and the nation's governors to participate in an educational summit, which produced six goals entitled *The National Education Goals Report: Building a Nation of Learners*. These goals became law when the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* was passed (MENC, n.d.e.). Included in this act was the statement that the arts are considered to be a core, academic subject. *Goals 2000* addressed the necessity of educational standards in each academic area in order to “encourage high achievement by our young people and to provide benchmarks to determine how well they are learning and performing” (MENC, n.d.e., Education Reform, Standards, and the Arts section, ¶ 2). This requirement led national subject-matter organizations to develop national standards for their respective content areas (Marzano & Kendall). One such organization was the National Association for Music Education, or MENC.

In 1994, MENC, as part of the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, published the *National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts* (MENC, n.d.e.). By 1997, most states had created or adopted standards (Marzano & Kendall, 1998). These standards provided a foundation for assessment reform (MENC, n.d.a.) as educators faced the challenge of assessing in order to determine whether the content standards were being met (MENC, n.d.c.). As assessments were reformed, grading systems also needed to be changed, and when grades were presented in a different format, report cards then had to be redesigned. This study examined how five Michigan school districts have reacted to these reforms.

#### Justification and Significance

Assessment, grading, and reporting information can be used as an advocacy tool for music programs. Along with public performances, this information becomes what the parents and community members know about the music program (Nutter, 1999). Chiodo (2001) wrote, “Teachers, parents, administrators, and others will recognize and respect the value of the music program only if music teachers can demonstrate each student’s achievement of a sequential curriculum of musical skills and knowledge based on state and national standards” (p. 18). In the current educational climate, effective assessment and reporting “is essential for music to remain among the basics of the curriculum” (MENC, n.d.c., Beliefs and Assumptions section, ¶ 3).

#### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to collect detailed information about elementary music assessment, grading, and reporting practices in the five public school districts in

Livingston County, Michigan. This information was used to make comparisons and evaluations of how the districts approach the issue of reporting students' musical progress.

### Objectives

This study had three objectives. The first was to examine what is assessed in K–4 music classrooms in Livingston County, Michigan. The second objective was to examine the grading systems used to report this assessment data. The third objective was to examine how school districts use report cards to convey information about students' musical progress to parents.

### Research Questions and Predictions

The first research question was *What is assessed in K–4 music classrooms in Livingston County, Michigan?* Assessment of musical skills, musical knowledge, and nonmusical factors were examined, in addition to purposes, frequency, methods, and techniques of assessment. This researcher predicted that some teachers formally assess only nonmusical areas, whereas other teachers assess musical skills and knowledge listed in the national standards.

The second research question was *What grading systems are used to report the assessment data?* Grading methods were investigated and each method's advantages and disadvantages were determined. What grades convey and challenges to grading were also studied. This researcher predicted that standards-based grading is used in several of the districts.

The third research question was *How do Livingston County school districts use report cards to convey information about students' musical progress to parents?* Format,

instructional targets, frequency, reform, and parents' feedback were studied. This researcher predicted that some report cards include detailed information about musical progress, whereas other report cards include one vague grade for music.

### Limitations and Delimitations

#### *Limitations*

Not all subjects agreed to participate in this study. In addition, a few questionnaires were returned missing data, and some respondents may have misunderstood the questions. The survey data may have contained slanted or biased information because individuals were self-reporting (Bursuck et al., 1996). To insure accuracy, data submitted by similar categories of subjects (e.g., music teachers from district A) were referenced with data from other subjects and with the sample report cards from that district.

#### *Delimitations*

This research involved public school districts in Livingston County, Michigan. Parochial, private, and charter schools were not considered. Other counties were not included in the study because of time and financial constraints. The study gathered data from kindergarten through fourth grade during the 2005–2006 school year. Data from other school years were not considered.

#### Livingston County Demographic Information

According to the Livingston Educational Service Agency's *School Directory 2005–2006* (LESA, n.d.), Livingston County covers 449 square miles. As of February 2005, the five public school districts were made up of 29,782 students in 49 school buildings. The taxable value per public school pupil is \$210,552.



According to a January 2006 presentation by Bettie Landauer-Menchik, Director of the Data Services Unit of the K–12 Outreach at Michigan State University, the current estimated population of Livingston County is 185,097. The county enjoys an average annual growth rate of 4,931, and since 1990, the county has grown by 69,000. Most parents of school-aged children were born in Michigan, and most children live with two parents. Almost one third of the population in the county is under 18 years of age and 63% are between the ages of 18 and 64. The median family incomes range, by district, from \$70,708 to \$94,609. In the county, parents with children are more affluent than the state average and are more highly educated than other parents in Michigan.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Although much has been published about assessment, grading, and reporting, little of the grading and reporting information pertains specifically to music. This researcher reviewed literature written about the general education classroom and highlighted specific concerns related to elementary music education.

### Assessment Practices

#### *Definition of Terms*

Strickland and Strickland (2000) defined assessment as the “collection of data—information that enlightens the teacher and learner, information that drives instruction” (p. 7). A word sometimes used interchangeably with assessment is *evaluation*. Evaluation as defined by these same authors is the “product of assessment, a step further toward understanding and drawing conclusions” (p. 8). This study used these definitions and did not use assessment and evaluation interchangeably. Measurement is the way in which information is collected or “the use of systematic methodology to observe musical behaviors in order to represent the magnitude of performance capability, task completion, and concept attainment” (Asmus, 1999, p. 21).

#### *Purposes of Assessment*

Strickland and Strickland (2000) presented two purposes of assessment: to help teachers know how to plan further instruction and to provide feedback to students. These authors continued with a third purpose: to provide data that students are learning. It is these data that can be transformed into some form of a grade and reported to parents. Hopple (2005) added that assessment results can be used to communicate with administrators. Walker wrote that in “today’s performance-oriented environment,

educators must increasingly justify their programs through concrete measurements. Music, like any other academic subject, has to produce ‘results,’ and those results are measured in terms of student achievement” (1998, p. 178).

### *Forms of Assessment*

The two main categories of assessment are student assessment and program assessment. This study focused on student assessment or the collection of data about students’ learning (Asmus, 1999). Assessments can take many forms. The most traditional form of assessment is the pencil-and-paper test (Strickland & Strickland, 2000). Gronlund described the recent reaction against “the heavy emphasis” on paper-and-pencil tests and a shift towards the “actual performance of students” (2006, p. 1). This reaction, combined with the standards-based reform movement, led to the widespread use of alternative assessments. Asmus defined alternative assessment as “any assessment technique other than traditional paper and pencil tests that uses strategies for collecting and analyzing information” (p. 21). Asmus also described another type of assessment, called *authentic assessment*, which gathers information about “students’ ability to perform tasks that are found in real-world situations” (p. 21).

One example of authentic assessment is *performance assessment*. This type of assessment “determines a student’s ability to perform assigned tasks rather than his or her ability to answer questions” (Asmus, 1999, p. 21). Hopple wrote, “Because students today can easily retrieve information unavailable to earlier generations, the challenge is not so much to memorize information, but to know how to access it, analyze it, use it, and apply it” (2005, p. 5). Hopple added that performance assessments are “enriching, motivating, and more instructional than a written test” (p. 6). Because music is a

performing art, it is a natural conclusion that many musical assessments should be performance based (Taylor & Nolen, 2005).

Another example of authentic assessment is standards-based assessment “established from school district, state or national standards of content and performance in a subject” (Asmus, 1999, p. 21). Asmus included the definition of a standard: “the content, level, or type of performance expected of students at a particular point in time or stage of development” (p. 21). In this researcher’s experience, standards-based assessment is often measured against a benchmark or “a description that provides information for measuring the student’s progress toward an established standard” (Asmus, p. 21).

Assessment is either criterion or norm referenced. Criterion-referenced assessment “determines the value of a student’s performance by referring to a requirement that was specified prior to the student’s performance of a task” (Asmus, 1999, p. 21). Performance and standards-based assessments are examples of criterion-referenced assessments. Norm-referenced assessment determines the value of a student’s performance by “referring to a norm established from a large number of representative individuals; this value indicates how a student performed in relation to other individuals’ previous performances” (Asmus, p. 21). Standardized tests are an example of norm-referenced assessment. MENC advocates the use of criterion-referenced assessment and discourages norm-referenced assessment (MENC, n.d.b.).

#### *What Is Assessed?*

Individual school districts decide what their music teachers will assess (Nutter, 1999). There are three categories, or areas, that music teachers assess: musical skills,

musical knowledge, and nonmusical factors. Musical skills refer to the ability to perform a task, such as matching pitch when singing, or playing a steady beat. Musical knowledge requires the learner to define concepts, terminologies, and/or symbols common to the discipline. An example is the ability to differentiate quarter notes from eighth notes. In this researcher's experience, musical skills and knowledge are drawn from district curricula that are often based on state and national standards. (The list of the nine content standards for music education, as stated by MENC, is found in Appendix A.) MENC advocates assessment that "should be standards-based and should reflect the music skills and knowledge that are most important for students to learn" (MENC, n.d.c., Guidelines for Assessment, ¶ 1).

Many music teachers do not think they have the time to assess skills on the basis of on all nine national standards (Nutter, 1999). In this researcher's experience, this impression, combined with a lack of school district guidelines or mandates, has led most teachers to assess little or no musical skills or knowledge. In fact, most teachers still depend on traditional nonmusical factors, which include attendance, behavior, attitude, effort, work habits, cooperation, and participation (Lehman, 1997). Although these nonmusical factors can affect success in the music classroom, they do not reflect musical achievement.

### *Challenges of Assessment*

Elementary music teachers face many challenges when assessing students. Some teachers think that the learning of music is very difficult or even impossible to assess and evaluate (Asmus, 1999). The same author wrote that often this belief stems from teachers' lack of training in how to assess students. Walker reported that some music

teachers “resist” assessment because they view it as a “nuisance” or a “disruption of their work” (1998, p. 182). Chiodo (2001) maintained that the challenge is “making time for assessment without sacrificing music learning” (p. 17). In elementary schools, many teachers have “an overwhelming number” of students, and in addition, some teachers teach at more than one school (Nutter, 1999, p. 28). Hopple, an elementary physical education teacher, listed other challenges to assessment, such as limited time with students, short class periods, lack of technology, inadequate facilities, lack of time to deal with assessment results, and lack of personnel to assist with the assessment process (2005). In 1987, Boyle and Radocy wrote that because of limited instructional time, with large numbers of students, teachers may have to collect smaller amounts of assessment data than is considered best practice. To overcome these challenges, teachers must develop assessment methods that are both manageable and successful (Nutter).

#### *Methods of Assessment*

Music teachers assess students’ musical progress, using a wide variety of methods. MENC stated in its publication, *Performance Standards for Music*, that assessment of music in fact “*requires various techniques in various settings*” (MENC, n.d.c., Beliefs and Assumptions section, ¶ 6). Most teachers informally assess and evaluate continually (Strickland & Strickland, 2000) in order to know how to proceed in the classroom. This study is concerned with formal assessment and evaluation that can be reported to parents. Because *how* teachers assess was not a major focus of this study, methods of assessment are listed briefly in this review.

Gronlund (2006) reported that the most common method of assessment is observation. Cope (1996) listed three traditional methods of assessment: pencil-and-paper

tests, recitations, and rating scales. While these methods are still valid, Cope wrote that teachers have developed nontraditional assessments, such as projects, demonstrations, and portfolios. Chiodo (2001) described the technique of “embedded assessment” (p. 20), or regular instructional activities designed to give students an opportunity to perform a skill while the teacher records assessment data. The author stated that during embedded assessment, students may or may not know that they are being assessed. MENC advocated assessment as an “integral part of instruction rather than as an intrusion into—or interruption of—the process of teaching” (MENC, n.d.c., Guidelines for Assessment section, ¶ 2), but recommends that students know that they are being assessed. Other methods include the use of checklists, numerical scales, and rubrics or “sets of scoring guidelines for evaluating students’ work” (Whitcomb, 1999, p. 27). Carlin (1996) advocated the use of videotape to record student performances for later evaluation by the teacher, whereas Wells (1998) suggested the use of student self-assessment. Many teachers combine several of these techniques in order to assess different kinds of musical achievement.

### *Assessment Training*

Studies conducted by Sabol and Bensusan (cited in Dorn, Madeja, & Sabol, 2004) found the following sources of art teachers’ assessment training: half of the teachers were trained in college courses, one third attended assessment workshops or conferences, one fourth were self-taught, fewer than one fifth of teachers received training from their school district, and one fourth of art teachers had no assessment training. Other sources reported were training from colleagues, professional journals, and magazines. Dorn, Madeja, and Sabol concluded that art teachers “lack fundamental knowledge, skills, and

training in assessment” (p. 17). While these studies researched the training of *art* teachers, in this researcher’s experience, these results are similar to the training experiences of music teachers.

### Grading Practices

After teachers have assessed students’ achievement, this achievement must then be translated into some form of grade. Strickland and Strickland (1998, p. 127) wrote that grades are the “one thing that the public thinks they understand and maintains a certainty they want.” The authors continued, saying that grades are “steeped in tradition and politics” (p. 127) and are seen by the public as universal in meaning. In reality, however, this is not the case, as grades have differing purposes and convey various meanings.

### *Purposes of Grading*

Grades report the results of assessments (Montgomery, 2001). Strickland and Strickland (2000) added that grading involves transforming assessment information into a numerical score, letter, percentage, or other descriptive category. According to Guskey and Bailey (2001), the most important purpose of grading is to communicate data about students’ progress to parents. This information can also be used by students for self-evaluation and by teachers for planning purposes (Brookhart, 2004). In addition, grades are used as tools to select students for special programs and to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs and techniques (Guskey & Bailey). Finally, grades can serve as incentives for students to achieve (Guskey & Bailey).

### *What Should Grades Convey?*

Experts have different opinions on what information grades should convey. Brookhart (2004) argued that grades should reflect “achievement of learning goals” (p.



5). Stiggins (cited in Brookhart) divided school achievements into four categories: knowledge, thinking and reasoning, skills, and products. Brookhart wrote that other areas sometimes factored into grades are effort, ability, attitude, and behavior. Other such non-academic areas are participation, attendance, and improvement (Lund & Kirk, 2002). While these items must be taken into consideration, Eby (1997) argued that if these non-academic items are included with the academic grades, the academic grades lose their meaning. Lehman (1997) concluded that a grade should reflect a “high level of knowledge and skill in the subject matter” (p. 58). Brookhart offered that even though non-academic factors such as effort, ability, and behavior affect achievement, these factors should not be the basis for grades. Instead, grades should reflect academic achievement. MENC stated, “Standards-based objectives provide the only justifiable basis for assigning grades” (MENC, n.d.c., Beliefs and Assumptions section, ¶ 7). MENC added that grades based on “noncurricular factors ... may be seen by fellow educators as evidence that music lacks curricular substance” (MENC, n.d.c., Beliefs and Assumptions section, ¶ 7).

### *Grading Methods*

There are many types of grades and grading methods. Lake and Kafka (cited in Guskey & Bailey, 2001) wrote that there is a lack of consensus as to which grading method is most effective at the elementary level. This study addressed seven types of grading methods, as well as each method’s advantages and disadvantages.

### *Letter Grades*

The most common type of grade, except in lower elementary, is letter grades (Brookhart, 2004). Letter grades generally use a five-level scale and the letters A, B, C,

D, and E or F (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). Guskey and Bailey (2001) added that letter grades can also include a plus or minus to allow for finer discrimination along a twelve-level scale. Guskey and Bailey also described one advantage letter grades offer: most parents have been exposed to letter grades in the past and think they understand what the letters mean. Letter grades appeal to school districts because they are “administratively cost-efficient” (Gredler, 1999, p. 205). Another advantage is the simplicity of a single symbol (Guskey & Bailey). This simplicity, however, can also be a disadvantage because a letter grade can be a reflection of varying concepts. Does the letter grade contain information concerning only academic achievement, or does it also include information about behavior and attitude (Boyle & Radocy, 1987)? Are the letter grades norm-referenced or criterion-referenced (Brookhart)? Another disadvantage is that letter grades do not provide any sort of description of an individual student’s strengths or weaknesses (Boyle & Radocy).

### *Categorical Labels*

Categorical labels are designed to be more “affirming” (Guskey & Bailey, 2001, p. 75) than letter grades. Representative labels include Novice, Apprentice, Proficient, and Distinguished. There are also simplifications such as ✓ -, ✓ , and ✓ + and numbers such as 1, 2, 3, and 4 that are more commonly used at the elementary level. Guskey & Bailey described the positive and negative aspects of such a system. The advantages of categorical labels are that they offer more information than letter grades, and labels such as Proficient may not require a key to explain the label. Disadvantages are the facts that parents may not understand the labels used or may inappropriately translate the labels

into letter grades. In addition, these labels do not offer detailed information about students' progress.

### *Percentage Grading*

Percentage grading involves assigning grades as percents that are sometimes converted to letter grades (Brookhart, 2004). Percentage grading is not common in elementary schools (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). Guskey and Bailey described as one advantage of this method the opportunity for “maximum discrimination in evaluation” of students' progress (p. 78). Disadvantages are that all student progress information is conveyed using a single number or letter, teachers and parents find it difficult to differentiate between 92% and 93% percent, and the increased discrimination does not offer more reliability (Guskey & Bailey).

### *Standards-Based Grades*

Standards-based grades include information about each major learning goal. Because these goals specifically describe what students should know or be able to do (Guskey & Bailey, 2001), standards-based grades offer the advantage of more detailed and meaningful information. Standards-based grades are widely used in elementary schools, where performance-level descriptors such as 1, 2, 3, and 4 or Beginning, Progressing, Proficient, and Exceptional are used. Disadvantages are that this system is very time-intensive on the part of the teacher, reporting forms are sometimes difficult for parents to understand, and the performance-level indicator does not include information on the appropriateness of a student's achievement. Taylor and Nolen added that standards-based grading does not “acknowledge important differences among students” (2005, p. 279).

### *Pass/Fail Grading*

Another grading system is the pass/fail system. This system has only two levels: pass and fail, or satisfactory and unsatisfactory (Boyle & Radocy, 1987). According to Boyle and Radocy, if the pass/fail system is criterion-referenced, students are either achieving the criterion or not achieving the criterion. Although the pass/fail descriptors are not generally found in elementary schools (Guskey & Bailey, 2001), it is this researcher's experience that the labels Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory are used frequently in elementary schools. Guskey and Bailey listed as advantages of the pass/fail system the simplicity of the grading process, the ease of understanding the descriptors, and the elimination of the pressure of having to earn a high grade. Disadvantages include the facts that little achievement information is included in the pass/fail descriptor and that students may be motivated to put in the least amount of effort necessary to pass (Guskey & Bailey).

### *Mastery Grades*

Mastery grades also involve two grade categories: mastery and nonmastery (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). In order to reach the mastery level, students must work on a skill until they succeed at an advanced assessment (Brookhart, 2004). It is this researcher's experience that mastery grading is found on a very limited basis in the elementary grades. The primary advantage is that students are given multiple chances to achieve mastery, which motivates them to learn and succeed (Guskey & Bailey). These same authors describe additional advantages: the system is based on the theory that "every student can learn well," and the system is similar to real-life situations (p. 101). Disadvantages are the demands of additional work, time, complex record keeping, and

classroom management skills necessary for this system to be successful (Guskey & Bailey).

### *Narratives*

The most detailed form of grading is the narrative system. Narratives involve written comments on student achievement that are often combined with letter grades (Brookhart, 2004). Narratives are most often found in elementary settings (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). Brookhart wrote that narratives sometimes take the form of standardized menus of comments. Guskey and Bailey described a different kind of narrative consisting of open-ended comments written by the teacher. The greatest advantage of this type of narrative is the possibility of the most detailed, personalized, and helpful comments about student progress. Disadvantages are that narratives can be very subjective and are very time-consuming (Guskey & Bailey). Eby et al. concluded that “most teachers have too many students and too little time to write extensive narratives of each student’s learning on a regular basis” (2006, p. 285).

### *Combination of Methods*

Brookhart (2004) wrote that in many cases, grading systems are a combination of several methods. The author explained that many of the disadvantages of a single grading method can be overcome by combining it with another method. Stiggins (Marzano & Kendall, 1998) summarized the point of view of most grading experts, that a single symbol or grade cannot “adequately summarize all of the complex learning involved in a course of study” (p. 51). Utilizing a combination of grading systems allows “sufficient detail for both teachers to describe and parents to understand” (Eby et al., 2006, p. 282).

Although there is no consensus on which grading system is most effective for elementary students, the challenge is to find a method that allows teachers to “describe and report their direct observations of students’ actual behaviors and accomplishments with sufficient detail so that parents understand the students’ strengths and weaknesses” (Eby, 2001, p. 247).

### *Technology and Grades*

Technology offers several tools to assist teachers with the grading process. Huber wrote that computerized grading software and electronic “grade books” (cited in Guskey & Bailey, 2001, pp. 129–130) make record-keeping tasks easier to manage. Vockell and Fiored argued that spreadsheets and databases offer teachers tools to manipulate numerical evidence (cited in Guskey & Bailey). In Guskey and Bailey’s (p. 133) opinion, however, these kinds of computer software do not help teachers to deal with nonnumerical evidence or take away the responsibility to ensure that grades are “accurate, honest, and fair.”

### *Challenges of Grading*

The greatest challenge elementary music teachers face when assigning grades is the sheer number of students. In this researcher’s experience, an average elementary music teacher instructs 500–1000 students in classes that meet less than one hour per week. Lehman (1997) wrote that faced with this challenge, many music teachers have based their grades on nonmusical factors such as attendance, effort, and attitude. Other teachers assign a satisfactory grade to all students who are not “problems” (Boyle & Radocy, 1987, p. 263). Walker countered that grading based on attendance and/or attitude is “an indication of weakness in the total music education program” (1998, p. 186). He

continued, saying that music “loses respectability in the eyes of school administrators because of the lack of viable grading criteria” and that “serious repercussions can come from the lack of an educationally sound approach for assigning ... grades” (p. 186). Boyle and Radocy asserted that expecting music teachers to provide “meaningful grades every six or nine weeks is unrealistic, especially when a single symbol grade must be used” (p. 280). Despite this challenge, Lehman contended, “the only justifiable basis for grades is student progress in learning specific skills and knowledge in music” (p. 58).

### Report Card Practices

#### *Report Cards as Part of Reporting System*

Report cards are only one piece of a school district’s reporting system. Other parts of the reporting system might include phone calls, newsletters, portfolios, student work, homework, and parent-teacher conferences (Guskey & Bailey, 2001). This study examined only the report card portion of the reporting system.

#### *Purposes of Report Cards*

The purpose of a report card is to communicate grades, or evaluations of students’ performance, to parents (Guskey, 1996). Report cards should communicate information accurately and clearly (Brookhart, 2004). Million wrote that report cards should contain “jargon-free” wording that parents can understand (cited in Guskey & Bailey, 2001, p. 21).

#### *Formats of Report Cards*

Formats of report cards vary from school district to school district (Brookhart, 2004). Brookhart wrote that it is important to study the format of report cards because the form “influences the information it conveys” (p. 124). She described some of the physical

characteristics of report cards, including size of paper, number of pages, handwritten or computer generated, and carbon copies. Brookhart added that report cards contain items that fall under the category of “administrative policy” (p. 123). The author then listed some examples of administrative policy: attendance records; citizenship, behavior, or effort marks; numbers or symbols, such as A, B, C; spaces for teacher and parent comments; spaces for parent signature; district or school mission statements; grading philosophy and policy; and any special services students receive.

#### *Instructional Targets*

Report cards also contain instructional target information (Brookhart, 2004). Brookhart described that some report cards list only the name of the subject, such as “Mathematics” (p. 123), whereas other cards list subheadings that offer more detailed information, such as “Knows basic math facts.” In this researcher’s experience, another type of report card might list specific instructional goals, such as “Can add three-digit numbers.”

#### *Frequency*

Frequency is another varying factor of report card practice. According to Nutter (1999), report cards are sent home at varying intervals; some reports go home as often as every six weeks, whereas others are published twice a year. Eby et al. (2006) wrote that in most school districts, report cards are sent home three to four times a year.

#### *Reform*

Recently, much has been published about report card reform. Montgomery (2001) concluded that many teachers advocate reforming the traditional report card in order to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment. If curriculum, instruction, and assessment



are aligned, the next step is to align the report card. Guskey and Bailey (2001) described an “increased awareness of the large gap between our knowledge base on grading and reporting, and what is common practice” that has prompted some districts to begin changing their grading and reporting systems (p. 11). The increasing interest in standards and performance assessments (Guskey, 2002) has resulted in standards-based reporting. This type of report card uses “evaluation criteria” that describes students’ progress toward meeting the standards and communicates a great deal about the *learning* that occurred during a specific marking period (Montgomery, p. 103). This standards-based information provides parents with much more detailed information than does a single grade.

### *Parents*

Parents’ ideas about grading and reporting are shaped by their own “schooling history, beliefs, and values” (Strickland & Strickland, 1998, p. 127). Marzano and Kendall (1998) added that parents can be upset with report cards that look different than the report cards with which they are familiar. In addition, many parents do not understand the “language” of the new report cards (Guskey & Bailey, 2001, p. 20). Strickland and Strickland wrote that one parent reported that although checklists on a report card informed her about what her son could “do,” the parent still wanted a grade in order to make comparisons with other students (1998, p. 150). These authors also report that parents look for items such as “social learning, ability to get along with others, effort, and potential” on the report card (p. 153). Guskey and Bailey contended that whatever their personal experiences with report cards, parents want more frequent report cards that offer “more detailed and better information about their child’s learning progress” (p. 20).

Strickland and Strickland also found that parents want more than is presented by most report cards but are unsure about how to get that information (1998). Eby (2003) stated that despite the fact that report cards are meant to inform parents, parents themselves are often not included in decisions about what is included on report cards.

#### *How Teachers Approach Report Cards*

Taylor & Nolen (2005) presented two opposing approaches that teachers of young children use when preparing report cards. They stated that some teachers merely rely on their memories of students' achievement when assigning grades. In contrast, Taylor and Nolen identified other teachers who rely on detailed lists of "competencies" (p. 280) that students need to achieve by the end of the marking period, assess students individually, and then fill out the report cards. In this researcher's experience, the second approach, though educationally superior to the first, is utilized less frequently in elementary music education.

#### *Concerns for Elementary Music Teachers*

One report card concern for elementary music teachers is whether music is included with the regular education report card or included on a separate sheet with other "special" areas, such as art and physical education. If music is included as part of the regular report card, music teachers often find there is no available space for detailed information, such as written comments about musical progress (Draper, 1998).

#### *Developmental Profile Progress Reports*

Brophy (2000) described one solution to the elementary music report card. He suggested the use of developmental profile progress reports. This report contains detailed and specific information about a student's progress toward acquiring musical skills and

knowledge. Brophy proposed that this report be included with the regular report card as an insert. The most important advantage this kind of report offers is the amount of detail it communicates about a student's strengths and weaknesses. Another advantage is that this detailed information can advocate for the music program. Brophy stated that parents are often amazed to learn the wide range of skills and knowledge their children are acquiring. Disadvantages of this kind of report are the time required to complete it and the cost of printing and copying the reports.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### Study Design and Type

This study is an example of descriptive quantitative research using questionnaire-based methods. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data collected.

### Study Population, Sample, and Sampling Techniques

All data used in this study came from the public school districts in Livingston County, Michigan. The five school districts are Brighton Area Schools, Fowlerville Community Schools, Hartland Consolidated Schools, Howell Public Schools, and Pinckney Community Schools. The study population consisted of each school district's curriculum director, elementary music teachers, elementary principals, and selected parents of elementary students. Due to the small size of the study population, all curriculum directors, elementary music teachers, and elementary principals were asked to participate in the study (Wigram, 2005). Because it was not economically feasible to survey all the parents of elementary-aged children in Livingston County, cluster sampling was used to select two principals or music teachers from each school district who then sent home 30 questionnaires to parents of one class of students (Fink, 1995). The participating principals and music teachers were selected in the order in which they returned the principal or music teacher questionnaire. Principals were asked to participate, and if they were not willing to do so, music teachers were then asked to participate.

### Data Collection

Before any data were collected, this researcher received approval from the Eastern Michigan University College of Arts and Sciences Human Subjects Committee. (The

approval letter is found in Appendix B.) Data were collected through the use of five questionnaires developed exclusively for this study by this researcher. (The questionnaire forms are found in Appendices C–G.) The questionnaires consisted of predominantly closed-ended questions with preselected answers in order to obtain standardized data. In February 2006, the questionnaires were field-tested with staff from a school district in a neighboring county. After this researcher made all necessary adjustments, the surveys were mailed and the interviews were scheduled in March. In addition, a sample report card was obtained from each district and reviewed.

In order to ensure a high curriculum-director response rate, each school district's curriculum director was contacted via e-mail or telephone and asked to participate in a face-to-face interview. After the interviews were scheduled, an electronic copy of the questionnaire was sent to each director for review. During the 30-minute structured interviews, this researcher recorded the directors' responses, using the questionnaire form. (This form is found in Appendix C.) To ensure that all responses were recorded accurately, interviews were tape-recorded. In addition, each curriculum director was asked to provide a sample copy of a music report card.

Music teacher and principal self-administered questionnaires were mailed with a cover letter and informed consent form explaining the nature of the study. (Refer to Appendices D and E.) Prior to receiving the survey packet, participants were contacted via e-mail with information about this researcher and the study (Fink & Kosecoff, 1998). (Initial contact and all cover letters are found in Appendix H.) The mailed survey packets included a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Participants returned the completed surveys by mail. If subjects did not return the survey within the allotted 14 days, a reminder e-

mail was sent to them. Principals and music teachers were offered the opportunity to receive a copy of the survey results if they completed and returned the questionnaire (Fink & Kosecoff).

Two principals (or music teachers) from each district sent parent surveys home with selected students. The parent survey packet included a cover letter, an informed consent form, a survey questionnaire (Appendix F), and a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

This researcher completed a structured Report Card Review on the sample report cards from each school district (Appendix G). According to Isaac and Michael (1995), report cards taken out of context often need clarification; therefore, curriculum directors were questioned about their report cards during the interview. Interview data and report cards were then compared in order to better understand the reporting practices in each district.

#### Ethical and Confidentiality Concerns

Survey participants were required to sign an informed consent form that described their level of participation in the study. (Informed consent forms are found in Appendix I.) Each consent form stated that all responses would remain confidential and that individual participants' responses would not be identified in the thesis. In addition, participants' responses and/or records would not be identified by school district. Each school district was randomly assigned an alpha letter (A–E) and is referred to by this letter (e.g., District A) throughout this thesis document. Participants were also informed that returning the survey or participating in an interview granted permission to this

researcher to use the responses in the study and publish the results. Report cards provided by school districts are not published in this document.

### Data Analysis

Before this researcher mailed the questionnaires, each answer for every question was assigned a number. After the questionnaires were returned, the appropriate number for each response was entered into a spreadsheet. This researcher used Excel formulas to count the responses, and then reported them in terms of frequency and percentages. In the results section, responses are reported in terms of (N), or size, of the overall data set, and (n), or size, of a group that reported the same response.

### Budget

The cost of this study was approximately \$555.80. Photocopying documents cost \$204.30, and postage totaled \$193.50. Other supplies such as paper, envelopes, and labels cost \$98.00. In addition, to accommodate respondents' schedules, this researcher used two personal business days to conduct interviews with the curriculum directors. (A complete budget is found in Appendix J.)

## CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

### Curriculum Director Results

Four of five curriculum directors granted an interview. In order to obtain information from the fifth district, the music department chair agreed to an interview. The department chair's responses are included with those of the curriculum directors except in the cases that called for information specific to curriculum directors.

District B is in the process of implementing a new reporting system for fall 2006. Therefore, this curriculum director shared information about the new report card instead of the one currently in use. (Composite curriculum director data are found in Appendix K.)

#### *Grading System*

Question 1 confirmed that all five districts' report cards include music. Although there is no consensus among experts about which grading system is most effective at the elementary level (Guskey & Bailey, 2001), three of the five Livingston County school districts currently use standards-based grading. A fourth district will be adopting this system during the upcoming school year. These results confirm this researcher's prediction that standards-based grading is used in Livingston County schools. The fifth school district, District C, considered the use of standards-based grading but decided that the current system is effective. This curriculum director added, "More information about music would be too much information for parents." This school district uses a system of categorical labels. All five districts use narratives or comments in combination with a primary grading format (Questions 2, 3). This supports the writings of Brookhart (2004), Eby et al (2006), and Marzano & Kendall (1998).



When asked why the current grading system was chosen, all four districts that use or soon will use standards-based grades agreed with Guskey and Bailey (2001) that this system provides more detailed information to parents. Despite Guskey's (2001) writings that this system is very time intensive on the part of the teacher, one participant responded that this system is simple for teachers to complete. Other reasons reported but not found in the literature were that this system is "more concrete than a letter grade" and "is a clear representation of what students are learning," that "the numbers take the pressure off students" and "the system aligns with the electronic grade book," and "to maintain consistency across grade levels and subject areas" (Question 4).

#### *Advantages*

Table 1 lists the advantages of districts' grading systems as identified by the curriculum directors. The most common advantage was that the grading system provides more information than a single symbol. "Other" examples included "simple to understand," "less subjective than a letter grade," and "'do-able' for music teachers." An additional advantage listed was "to communicate classroom content" (Question 5).

Table 1

*Advantages of Grading Systems*

Advantages	Number of respondents (N = 5)*
Provides more information than single symbol	3
Provides information about specific learning goals	2
Simple to read	2
Provides very detailed and unique information about each student	2
Other	2
Most parents are familiar with the system	1
Motivates students to learn	1
Similar to real-life situations	1

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

Advantages listed by curriculum directors whose districts use standards-based grades were that the system offers more information than a single symbol (Marzano & Kendall, 1998) and that it provides information about specific learning goals. Although two respondents reported that their systems provide very detailed and unique information about each student, a review of these districts' report cards indicated that this is not the case (Taylor & Nolen, 2005).

The curriculum director whose school district (District C) uses *categorical labels* responded that this system is simple for teachers to complete. She added that each of the music teachers in her district teaches more than 600 students and that to give each student a grade would be impossible. This curriculum director concurred with Guskey and

Bailey's (2001) advantage that categorical labels are simple to read and added that the system is do-able for the music teachers.

### *Disadvantages*

Curriculum directors using standards-based grades were hesitant to list disadvantages of this system. District B is in the process of implementing a new system, and, therefore, it is too early to tell what (if any) disadvantages the system will have. District A's curriculum director listed the fact that music teachers do not report grades during the first trimester. She stated, "The best information to parents is a narrative ... and since we do not really have that, this is a way to deal with lots of students." District E's curriculum director did not share any disadvantages, adding that it is a "fairly good way to assess kids." However, District B's curriculum director did admit that some teachers have been concerned that their records will be very public because parents will be able to access the online grade book at any time, and District D's department chair agreed with Guskey and Bailey (2001) that standards-based system is time consuming for music teachers (Question 6). Disadvantages listed by District C's curriculum director whose district uses categorical labels, were that the system does not offer detailed information to parents and that little motivation is provided to students.

### *Other Systems*

Despite their mention in literature, letter grades, percentage grading, pass/fail grading, and mastery grades were not found in Livingston County (Boyle & Radocy, 1987; Brookhart, 2004; Gredler, 1999; Guskey & Bailey, 2001). This researcher was surprised to learn that the pass/fail system of "satisfactory" and "unsatisfactory" are no longer in use in Livingston County because as recently as 2 years ago, these labels were

commonly found. District A's curriculum director addressed this point when she stated that it is no longer acceptable to give students simply 'S' or 'U' in music. Although District C no longer uses the pass/fail system, the label "satisfactory" is still included as one of four categorical labels.

### *Reporting Systems*

All five districts' representatives responded that they had considered adopting standards-based reporting; four out of the five districts have adopted this system. District C is the only district that has not adopted standards-based reporting. When asked why not, the curriculum director stated that the current system is effective with parents. She added that although District C could list the standards on the back of the report card (as is the practice for math and reading), more information about music on the report card would be too much information for parents. She also stated that District C's teachers each instruct more than 600 students and that assigning each student a grade would be impossible. Therefore, students begin each marking period with an S, or Satisfactory, and then teachers can change that grade if necessary (Questions 7–10). These findings support this researcher's prediction that some school districts' report cards would include detailed information about musical progress, whereas other report cards would include one vague grade.

Of the four districts that have adopted standards-based reporting, all reported that a deciding factor in adopting this system was that it provides parents with more detailed information than previous systems. Three directors also agreed with Montgomery (2001) that the standards-based system aligns curriculum, instruction, assessment, and reporting. Other deciding factors were that this system is "more concrete than a letter grade" and

offers “a clear representation of what students are learning.” In addition, one curriculum director stated that “the numbers (1, 2, 3) take the pressure off students” (Question 11).

When asked if they had considered developmental profile progress reports, all of the interviewees said, “No.” Each participant stated that it would be too time intensive and that the number of students serviced by music teachers makes such a system not feasible. District A’s curriculum director stated, “We have not really looked at that because we were being mindful of the number of students our teachers teach. A narrative based on a student’s skills and performance makes a lot of sense. However, we have already overburdened our teachers, and this system wouldn’t do a lot for us.” District B’s curriculum director reported that her district had adopted this system, but upon this researcher’s examination, it was not an example of a developmental profile progress report (Questions 12, 13).

### *Parents*

When asked how they educate parents about district grading philosophies, policies, and practices, two curriculum directors responded that information is shared at school gatherings, one stated that information is included in school handbooks, and another said that letters are sent home with students. Other responses given were “information shared at open house events,” “individual conferences with parents,” and a “question/answer document sent home when the report card system was first introduced” (Question 14). Regarding the amount of parent feedback received, three of the four directors interviewed responded that they receive little or no feedback. Only one stated that she receives feedback once or twice a year (Question 15).

### *Reform*

In 2001, Guskey and Bailey wrote that the increasing interest in standards and performance assessments was resulting in reporting-system reform. This has definitely been the case in Livingston County, whose five districts' reporting systems have undergone change during the past 5 years. Two districts responded that the current system of reporting had been in place for less than a year. One curriculum director responded that the system had been in place for 1–2 years whereas another answered 3–5 years. A fifth curriculum director stated the system had been in place for 6–10 years. However, the district whose system had been in place the longest recently introduced new indicators that provide teachers with more options than simply S and U. All districts that have adopted standards-based reporting have done so within the last 5 years (Question 17).

When asked how music teachers report their grades, participants responded that four out of five districts use electronic systems. One curriculum director was unsure how grades were reported (Question 16).

Regarding anticipated changes to their present reporting systems, three participants responded that they plan to make changes, whereas the other two are currently satisfied. District B will implement a system of standards-based reporting. District E will be adopting a user-friendlier, web-based management system that will modify the technology and format but not the content of the report card. The biggest change for parents is that learning outcomes will be listed on the front of the card instead of on the back, where parents may not notice them. District A's curriculum director is currently searching for an electronic system that will (a) include an electronic grade book

into which teachers enter assessment data and then (b) automatically generate the report cards. This, too, would be a change in technology and not a change in the content of the report card (Question 19).

*Adequate Amount of Information about Musical Progress*

When curriculum directors were asked if they believed that the current music report card conveys an adequate amount of information about a student's musical progress, respondents were evenly divided. District B's curriculum director believes her district's new report card will convey an adequate amount of information, whereas District E's curriculum director added that the amount of information is "adequate for what is feasible for teachers." Curriculum directors from Districts A and C indicated that the musical information conveyed is insufficient. District A's curriculum director added that her district's report card does not convey enough

because kids are doing lots of things in music, and it's not just the things we have listed. This is just a start. When you look at our benchmarks, there is a lot more involved, but we tried to make it manageable for teachers. It does not convey all that is going on in the classroom. Is it better than it was before? Absolutely!

No curriculum directors responded that the report card provides too much information.

*Frequency*

Results from Livingston County report cards confirm Nutter's (1999) statement that report cards are sent home at varying intervals. Music report cards are published once per quarter in two districts, once per trimester in another, and once per semester in the remaining two. Music report cards are not sent home for the first marking period of the school year in two districts. Music report cards are sent home every time a classroom report card goes home in two districts, whereas in the other three districts, music report cards are sent home less frequently than the classroom report cards (Questions 21–23).

Despite the rationale that music teachers instruct students less than do classroom teachers and therefore cannot provide report cards as frequently, it is this researcher's opinion that fewer report cards translates into placing less importance on the subject of music.

#### *Demographic Information*

Two of the three curriculum directors interviewed reported that they have served in their positions for 1 to 5 years. Only one has been in the position for 10 years (Question 24). All three directors responded that they would be interested in receiving a copy of the results of this study (Question 25).

#### *Summary*

During the past 5 years, four of the five school districts have adopted standards-based reporting systems in an effort to communicate more information to parents. Despite this more detailed communication, the curriculum directors receive infrequent or no feedback from parents and are divided on whether or not their current report card conveys an adequate amount of information about musical progress. Although each curriculum director addressed the issue of the large numbers of students that music teachers instruct and the challenges that fact presents, there was no agreement on report card frequency or how to educate parents about the report cards.

#### *Music Teacher Results*

Survey questionnaires were sent to 23 music teachers; 21 (91%) teachers returned the questionnaire. (Composite music teacher data are found in Appendix L.)



*Teaching Assignment*

Table 2 details the percentage of participants who work in each of the five school districts. Regardless of district size, over 80% of each district's teachers responded (Question 1).

Table 2

*Respondents by School District*

School district	Number of respondents (N = 21)	Percentage of respondents	Response rate by district
District A	3	14%	100%
District B	6	29%	86%
District C	2	10%	100%
District D	4	19%	100%
District E	6	29%	86%

Of the 21 music teacher respondents, 12 (57%) teach kindergarten through fourth grade, 4 (19%) teach first through fourth grade, and the remaining 5 (24%) teach other combinations (Question 2).

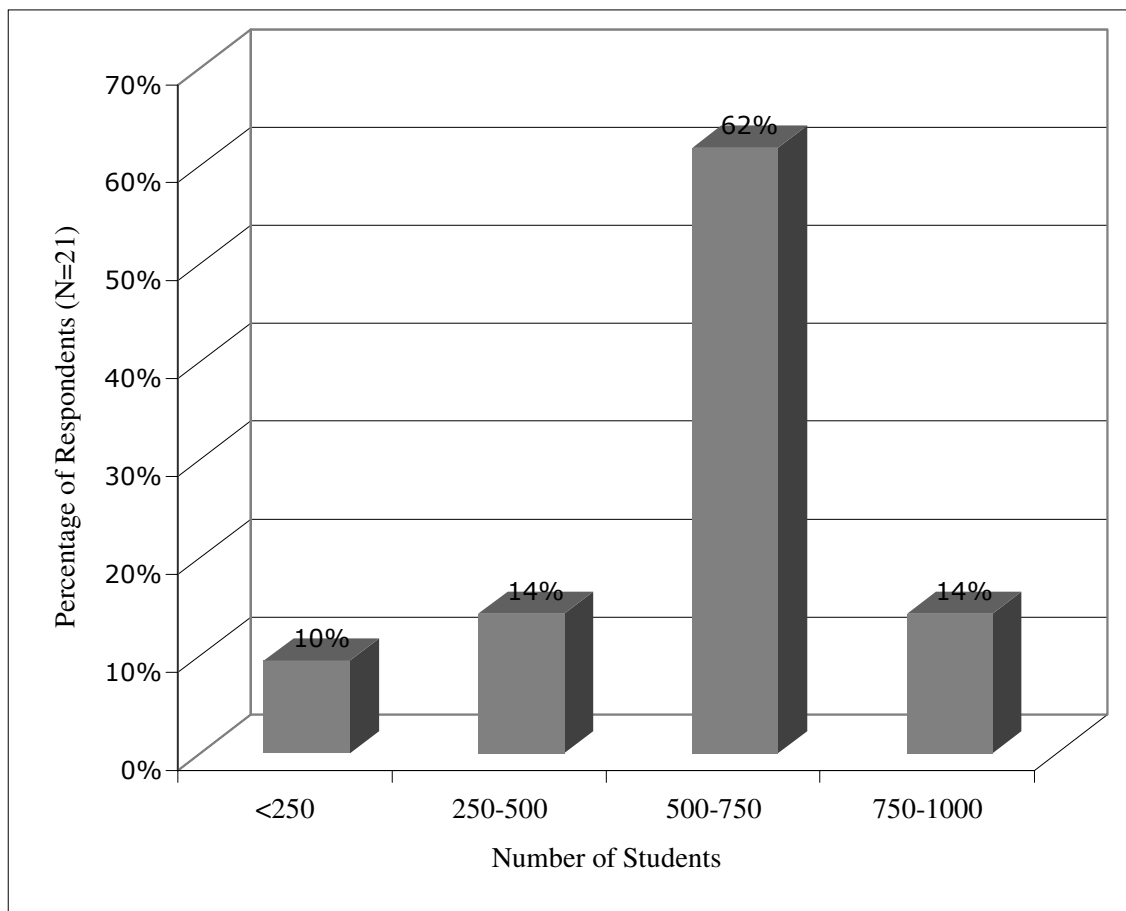
Table 3 lists the average number of minutes of music instruction per week. A discrepancy was noted in District B, where kindergarten music instruction ranged from 25 to 55 minutes per week. For first through fourth grade, the median number of minutes per week across the districts was 60. Whereas some districts offered music once a week, others provided instruction on a three- or four-day rotation (Question 3).

Table 3

*Minutes of Music Instruction per Week*

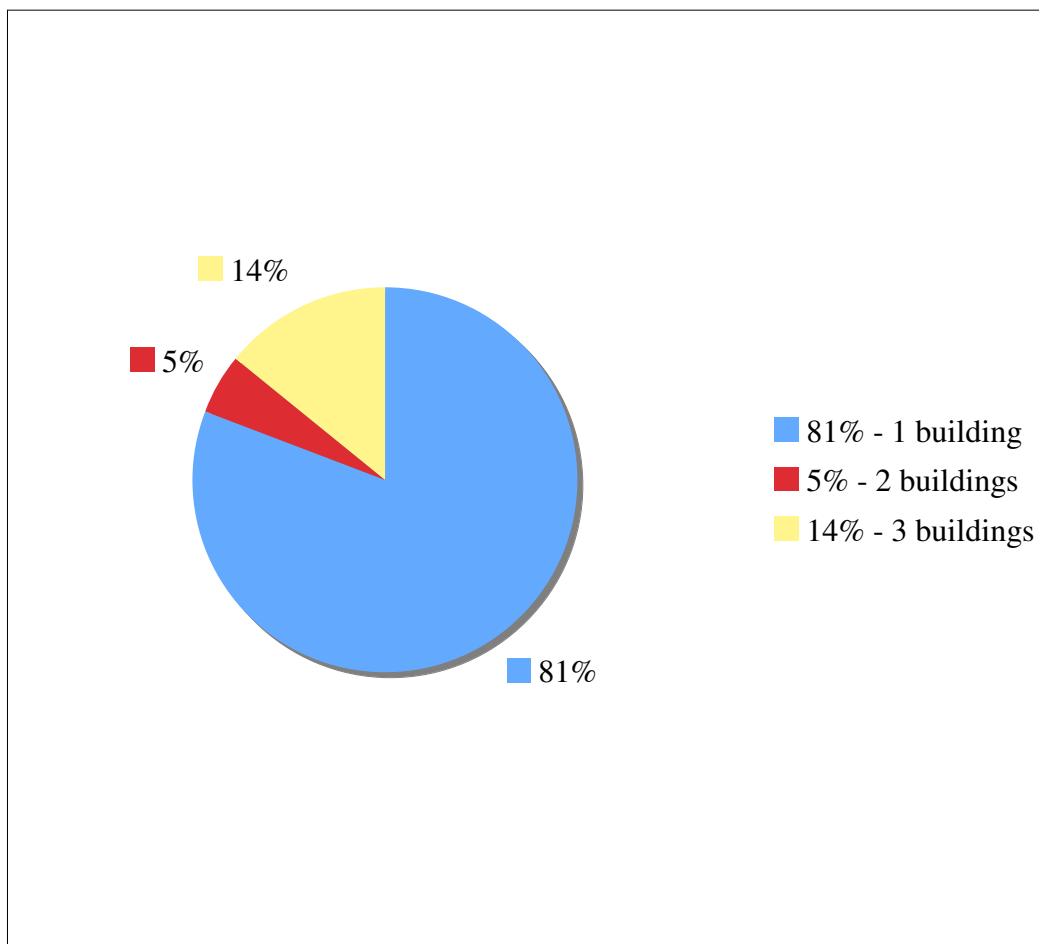
School district	Minutes – Kindergarten	Minutes – Grades 1–4
District A	25	45
District B	25-55	55
District C	30	60
District D	69	69
District E	30	69

Figure 1 depicts the number of students taught by music teachers. Almost two thirds (n = 13, 62%) of the music teachers surveyed instructed 500–750 students. The teachers with fewer than 250 students were employed on a part-time basis. Three of the four teachers with 750–1000 students are employed in District A (Question 4).



*Figure 1.* Number of students per music teacher.

Figure 2 depicts the number of buildings to which music teachers are assigned. The majority (81%,  $n = 17$ ) of the music teachers in the sample teach music in only one building. That 19% of the music teachers travel to and work in more than one building confirms Nutter's (1999) statement that this is not an unusual occurrence in elementary education. Of the four participants who traveled to more than one building, three taught in District A (Question 5).



*Figure 2.* Number of buildings per music teacher.

#### *Assessment*

This researcher's prediction that music teachers assess few musical skills and even less musical knowledge was not proven by the survey results. The majority of the music teachers assess musical skills, musical knowledge, and nonmusical factors.

#### *Musical Skills*

Eighty-six percent ( $n = 18$ ) of the music teachers responded that they assess musical skills. These respondents also reported that the musical skills are drawn from the music curriculum. Ninety percent ( $n = 19$ ) of all respondents answered that the musical skills assessed are reflective of the skills listed in the National Standards (Questions 6–8).

Among the four respondents who do not assess musical skills, there was no consensus as to why skills are not assessed. Table 4 lists the reasons selected by respondents. These results support several of Hopple's (2005) conclusions about the challenges presented by assessment. In addition, one respondent wrote, "Want my students to have many musical experiences. Record keeping takes away their 'doing' time" (Question 9). This respondent's statement provides evidence that some teachers view assessment as a "nuisance" or "disruption of their work" (Walker, 1998, p. 182).

Table 4

*Reasons Why Musical Skills Are Not Assessed*

Reason	Number of respondents (N = 4)*
Lack of manageable record-keeping system	3
Too many students	2
Lack of instructional time with students	1
Not required by the district	1
Other	1

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

*Musical Knowledge*

Ninety percent (n = 19) of all respondents reported that they assess musical knowledge. Eighty-six percent (n = 18) indicated that this knowledge is drawn from the music curriculum. All 19 teachers who assess musical knowledge responded that this knowledge is reflective of the National Standards (Questions 10–12).

Of the three respondents who do not assess musical knowledge, there was no consensus as to why. Table 5 lists the reasons reported. One respondent wrote, “Want their experiences to be positive, non-threatening, enjoyable building skills each year with students not stressed and worried about yet another ‘test’” (Question 13). MENC (n.d.b.) published a statement saying that students and teachers should view assessment as a useful tool rather than a source of fear or anxiety. It is worth noting that the music teacher who consistently expressed the most negative views about assessing and reporting was the teacher with the most years of teaching experience.

Table 5

*Reasons Why Musical Knowledge is Not Assessed*

Reason	Number of respondents (N = 3)*
Lack of instructional time with students	2
Too many students	1
Lack of manageable record-keeping system	1
Not required by the district	1
Other	1

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

*Nonmusical Factors*

Eighty-six percent (n = 18) of the music teachers assess nonmusical factors, such as citizenship or participation. The three teachers who do not assess nonmusical factors teach in the same district (District D) (Question 14).

Table 6 lists the nonmusical factors assessed by teachers. As Lehman (1997) wrote, the majority of teachers assess behavior, participation, cooperation, attitude, and effort. All 18 (100%) music teachers who assess nonmusical factors responded that they assess both behavior and participation. At least 12 (67%) of the music teachers also assess cooperation, attitude, and effort. One respondent who responded “Other” listed the factor “being responsible for your learning” (Question 15).

Table 6

*Nonmusical Factors Assessed*

Nonmusical factors	Number of respondents (N = 18)*	Percentage of respondents
Behavior	18	100%
Participation	18	100%
Cooperation	15	83%
Attitude	13	72%
Effort	12	67%
Work habits	7	39%
Other	2	11%

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

*Purpose of Assessment*

When asked about the purpose of the assessment they perform, a majority of teachers responded that all four purposes listed in Table 7 were relevant to their assessment. Comments about the “Other” purpose included “communication to parents”

and “to show and support that special-needs students often shine in areas other than academics” (Question 16).

Table 7

*Purposes of Assessment – Music Teachers*

Purpose	Number of respondents (N = 21)*	Percentage of respondents
Determine if students are learning	19	90%
Provide data for report card	18	86%
Plan for further instruction	17	81%
Provide feedback for students	16	76%
Other	2	10%

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

*Assessment Techniques*

Almost all (95%, n = 20) music teachers reported using performance-based alternative assessments (Question 18). This supports scholars’ observations that alternative assessments are widely utilized (Asmus, 1999; Gronlund, 2006; Hopple, 2005; Taylor & Nolen, 2005). However, despite the shift away from the paper-and-pencil testing described by Gronlund, 76% of the music teachers reported that they still use traditional assessment techniques. Seventy-one percent (n = 15) of the music teachers employ both traditional and alternative assessment techniques. Five teachers (24%) reported using only alternative techniques, whereas one teacher uses traditional techniques exclusively. With the exception of District B, most districts were fairly uniform in their responses (Question 17).



Ten (48%) of the 21 teachers employ only criterion-referenced assessments, whereas three (14%) teachers use norm-referenced assessments exclusively. Seven (33%) teachers utilize both criterion and norm-referenced assessments, and one teacher uses neither. It is encouraging that the majority (81%) of the music teachers use criterion-referenced assessments as advocated by MENC (n.d.b.). However, despite MENC's recommendations, almost half (47%) of the teachers still use norm-referenced techniques when assessing. Within the individual districts, only one district's music teachers had a consensus about the kinds of assessments in place (Question 19).

Eighty percent (n = 16) of the music teachers use embedded assessment techniques as described by Chiodo (2001) and MENC (n.d.b.). Despite MENC's (n.d.b.) recommendation that students know when they are being assessed, only 33% (n = 7) of the teachers reported that students are *usually* aware. Nine (43%) music teachers noted that students *sometimes* know when they are being assessed, and five (24%) reported that students *rarely* know (Questions 20, 21).

#### *Assessment Methods*

Table 8 lists assessment methods utilized by music teachers. Music teachers' responses concurred with MENC's (n.d.c) recommendation that music teachers use a variety of methods when assessing musical progress. The results confirm statements made by Gronlund (2006) and Cope (1996) that observation, demonstrations or performances, and the more traditional pencil-and-paper tests are the most commonly used methods. "Other" responses included "process drama" and "peer assessment" (Question 23).

Table 8

*Assessment Methods*

Methods	Number of respondents (N = 21)*	Percentages of respondents
Observation	21	100%
Demonstrations/performances	18	86%
Pencil and paper tests	11	52%
Student self-assessment	7	33%
Rating scales	6	29%
Projects	5	24%
Recitations	4	19%
Other	3	14%
Portfolios	1	5%
Videotaped performances for later evaluation	1	5%

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

When the teachers were asked which devices they use to record assessment data, a majority of teachers responded that they use rubrics, checklists, and rating scales, as illustrated in Table 9. These results confirm Whitcomb's writings (1999). "Other" responses included "process drama" and "brief narrative" (Question 22).

Table 9

*Devices for Recording Assessment Data*

Devices	Number of respondents (N = 21)*	Percentages of respondents
Rubrics	16	76%
Checklists	12	57%
Rating scales	12	57%
Other	2	10%

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

*Assessment Training*

Seventy-one percent (n = 15) of the music teachers had received training on assessment methods and/or techniques. Twenty-nine percent (n = 6) reported that they had not undergone any training relative to assessment (Question 24). Table 10 lists the sources of assessment training. The two most commonly reported sources were workshops/conferences and college courses (Question 25).

Table 10

*Sources of Training*

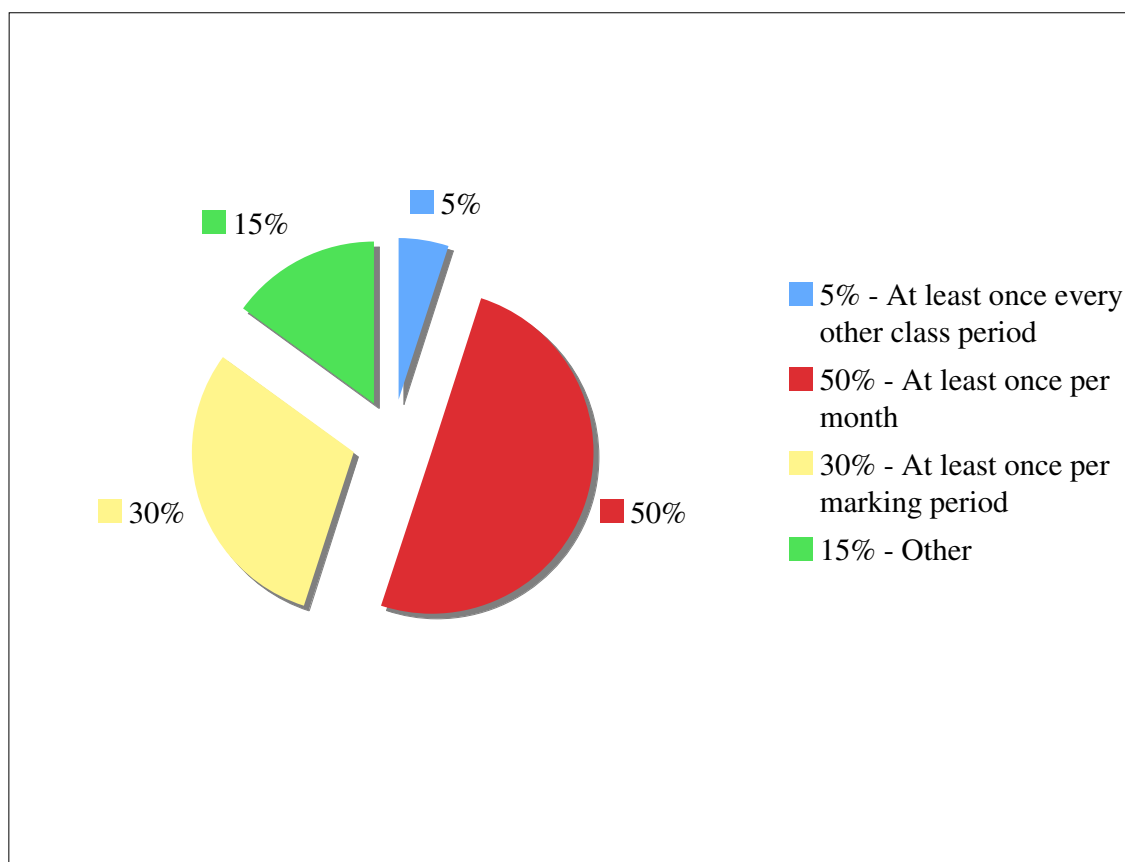
Sources	Number of respondents (N = 18)*	Percentages of respondents
Workshops or conferences	12	67%
College courses	11	61%
Professional journals or magazines	7	39%
Training given by colleagues	4	22%
In-service training by local district	2	11%
No assessment training	2	11%

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

Music teachers' responses about assessment training were similar to the findings of Dorn, Madeja, and Sabol (2004). Their research found that 50% of art teachers were trained in college courses, whereas 61% of the present sample indicated college course training. Concurrently, 33% of art teachers had attended workshops or conferences, whereas 67% of Livingston County music teachers had attended workshops and conferences. Fewer than 25% of both groups had received assessment training from their school districts. Both groups also reported other sources, such as professional journals and magazines and training by colleagues. Although 25% of art teachers reported no assessment training, 29% of the music teachers also reported no assessment training. This is an alarmingly high figure considering that 4 of the 5 districts in Livingston County will be reporting detailed information on their music report cards in the fall of 2006.

### *Frequency of Assessment*

Despite the fact that the majority of the music teachers assess musical skills, musical knowledge, and nonmusical factors, many of those teachers do not assess students' progress very often. Figure 3 lists how frequently music teachers formally assess their students. Half (n = 10) of the 20 participants responded that they assess students at least once per month (Question 26).



*Figure 3.* Frequency of assessment.

Teachers in four of the five districts (76%, n = 16) reported that their school districts do not require them to assess students a prescribed number of times. All four of the teachers whose districts do require them to assess a prescribed number of times work in District D. One of these teachers included a note that the prescribed number was

agreed upon by the music teachers at the beginning of the year. However, when completing the questionnaire, these four teachers gave three differing answers as to how frequently they assess students (Question 27).

Eighty-five percent ( $n = 17$ ) of the music teachers responded that the number of students taught negatively affects the frequency of formal assessments (Question 28). This result confirms statements made by experts in the field, such as Boyle & Radocy (1987), Hopple (2005), and Nutter (1999). Ninety percent of teachers ( $n = 18$ ) agreed with Boyle and Radocy's statement that limited instructional time with large numbers of students leads to smaller amounts of assessment data than are considered best practice. This agreement highlights what Guskey and Bailey (2001) describe as an "increased awareness of the large gap between our knowledge base on grading and reporting and what is common practice" (p. 11).

#### *Report Cards*

Ninety percent ( $n = 19$ ) of the teachers reported that their assessment data are turned into a grade or competency level that is recorded on a report card (Question 30). However, how teachers approach these grades varies. One teacher wrote, "I have no formal assessment, I mentally assess and mark report cards appropriately." This is a real-life example of one of the approaches Taylor and Nolen (2005) described. Another teacher wrote, "I do not 'formally' assess, but once each marking period, I give information to teachers about students' behavior, effort, attitude for parents to see on report cards." This researcher's suspicion is that more teachers take this approach than will admit it, but the questionnaire did not specifically ask about this method.

*Musical Skills, Musical Knowledge, and Nonmusical Factors*

Sixty-two percent (n = 13) of the music teachers responded that the music report card includes information about students' musical skills; these teachers worked in Districts A, D, and E. The remaining 38% of the teachers (from Districts B and C) reported that the music report card does not include such information (Question 31).

Fifty-two percent (n = 11) of the teachers reported that the music report card includes information about students' musical knowledge, whereas 48% (n = 10) reported that the music report card does not. The responses, by district, followed the same pattern as for the previous question except in District D, where teachers were equally divided (Question 32).

Although MENC differentiates between musical knowledge and musical skills, this researcher was unable to find definitions for these terms on the MENC website or in MENC publications. In the survey questionnaires, this researcher gave examples of musical skills and knowledge similar to examples listed in MENC publications. However, musical knowledge seems to be a gray area that is somewhat difficult to separate from musical skill. Musical skills are easy to identify—they require action or doing. However, in order to do most of the skills, some level of knowledge is required. Gronlund (2006, p. 2) wrote that “most types of performance have a knowledge component that is important to the performance.” MENC (n.d.d., Grades K-4 section, ¶ 1) further muddies the issue with this statement: “Learning to read and notate music gives them (students) a skill with which to explore music independently and with others.” This might explain why some teachers reported assessing musical skills but were unsure about the musical knowledge questions.

Ninety percent (n = 19) of the teachers reported that the music report card includes information about nonmusical factors. The two teachers who reported that the card does not include this information teach in District D, where comments about nonmusical factors are an optional report card feature (Question 33).

Fifty-seven percent (n = 12) of the music teachers responded that what is reported on the report card is directly related to the music curriculum. These teachers teach in Districts A, D, and E. Forty-three percent (n = 9) responded that the contents of the report card are not related to the curriculum. These teachers teach in Districts B and C (Question 34).

*Adequate Amount of Information about Musical Progress*

The music teachers were evenly divided as to whether or not the report card conveys an adequate amount of information about a student's musical progress. Fifty percent (n = 10) responded that the report card conveys an adequate amount of information; the majority of these teachers work in Districts D and E. The other 50% (n = 10) who responded that the report card does not convey sufficient information work in Districts A, B, and C. Although it was not surprising that music teachers in District C and District B (districts in which a very generic music grade is given) thought the report card does not convey enough information, it was very surprising that the District A teachers thought their report card (which is one of the more detailed report cards) does not convey enough information. No teachers responded that the report card conveys too much information (Question 35).



### *Report Card Development*

Table 11 indicates those involved in the development of the current report card. The majority of teachers responded that they worked with the curriculum directors. Although special area teachers (e.g. art, physical education) and building principals were involved in fewer than half of the responses, parents were not involved. One “Other” response listed was grade level teachers. Three music teachers did not know who had been involved in the card development (Question 36).

Table 11

#### *People Involved in Development of Reporting System*

People involved	Number of respondents (N = 20)*	Percentages of respondents
Music teachers	15	75%
Curriculum directors	14	70%
Special area teachers	8	40%
Other	4	20%
Building principal	3	15%
Parents	0	0%

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

#### *Upcoming Changes*

When asked if they anticipated making major changes to the report card in the near future, 65% (n = 13) of the teachers answered negatively, whereas 35% (n = 7) responded positively. The majority of teachers who responded that they would be making

changes teach in District B, where they have been developing a new reporting system (Question 37).

### *Parents*

Eighty-six percent (n = 18) of the teachers responded that they receive little or no feedback from parents about the music report card. The other 14% (n = 3) responded that they receive feedback once or twice a year (Question 38). Music teachers' responses to this question were very similar to curriculum directors' responses.

Table 12 lists the methods of educating parents about the music report card. More than half (57%; n = 12) of the music teachers do not educate parents about the music report card. Only one district was unanimous regarding this question. The least amount of education was provided to parents in District C, where music is somewhat generic on the report card. District D provided the most information as a result of the piloting of a new system of music reporting this year (Question 39).

Table 12

*Methods of Educating Parents about Music Report Card – Music Teacher*

Methods	Number of respondents (N = 21)*	Percentages of respondents
No education provided	12	57%
Information shared at open house or nonmusical gatherings	6	29%
Letters sent home	5	24%
Information shared at student musical performances	4	19%
Other	1	5%
Information included in student handbook	0	0%

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

*Demographic Information*

Table 13 lists the music teachers' highest educational level. More than 70% of the music teachers have education beyond a bachelor's degree. No patterns could be distinguished among responses by district (Question 40).

Table 13

*Music Teachers' Highest Educational Level*

Level	Number of respondents (N = 21)	Percentages of respondents
Bachelor's degree	4	19%
Bachelor's plus	6	29%
Master's degree	5	24%
Master's plus	6	29%

Table 14 lists the numbers of years the music teachers have been teaching in their current positions. Fifty-seven percent (n = 12) of the music teachers have taught in their district for 10 years or less. Only one teacher has more than 20 years of experience (Question 41).

Table 14

*Years of Teaching Experience in School District*

Number of years	Number of respondents (N = 21)	Percentages of respondents
1–2	4	19%
3–5	4	19%
6–10	4	19%
11–20	8	38%
More than 21	1	5%

Ninety percent (n = 19) of the music teachers responded that they would be interested in receiving a summary of the results of this study. This indicates that the majority of respondents are interested in the topic of music assessment and reporting (Question 42).

*Summary*

The majority of elementary music teachers in Livingston County teach 500–700 students in grades one through four. These students receive between 45 and 69 minutes of music instruction per week.

Most teachers surveyed reported similar answers about assessment in the music classroom. Almost three quarters of teachers reported having received some assessment training. More than 80% of the teachers assess musical skills and knowledge as well as nonmusical factors such as behavior and participation. Most teachers use both traditional and alternative assessment techniques that include embedded assessment. Although the

most commonly used methods of assessment are observation and demonstrations or performances, half of the teachers still use paper-and-pencil tests. More than 80% of the teachers reported that the number of students they teach and limited instructional time lead to less assessment than is considered best practice.

The music teachers were most divided on issues regarding the report card. Just over half of the teachers reported that the report card contains information about musical skills and knowledge. Only 57% of teachers reported that what is on the report card is even related to the music curriculum. The teachers were evenly divided on whether or not the report card contains an adequate amount of information about students' musical progress. The two items teachers did agree on were that the report card includes nonmusical factors and that they receive little or no feedback from parents about the music report card. At the same time, more than half of the music teachers do not provide any education about the report card to parents.

### Principal Results

Survey questionnaires were sent to 24 principals; 17 (71%) returned the survey. Isaac and Michael (1998) wrote that percentages of nonrespondents under 20% can be ignored. A higher response rate could have been achieved by randomly selecting nonrespondents to be personally interviewed, but this was not feasible because of time and financial constraints. (Composite principal data are found in Appendix M.)

Table 15 lists principal response rates by district (Question 1). At least 50% of the principals in each district responded. Although Isaac and Michael also wrote that participants that have a "good program" are more likely to respond than others, no patterns or trends could be distinguished between the districts with high response rates

and the districts with lower response rates (p. 142). Several principals commented that participation in this study sparked their interest in music assessment and reporting.

Table 15

*Principal Respondents by School District*

School district	Number of respondents (N = 17)	Percentage of total respondents	Response rate by district
District A	4	24%	75%
District B	4	24%	57%
District C	2	12%	100%
District D	2	12%	50%
District E	5	29%	83%

*Assessment*

When asked about the purpose of musical assessment, as performed by the music teacher, 59% (n = 10) of the principals chose all four reasons listed in Table 16. These results were very similar to the responses given by the music teachers. The “Other” purpose provided was to “determine alignment between curriculum, instruction, and standards” (Question 2).

Table 16

*Purposes of Assessment – Principals*

Purposes	Number of respondents (N = 17)*	Percentages of respondents
Determine if students are learning	17	100%
Plan for further instruction	16	94%
Provide feedback for students	12	71%
Provide data for report card	11	65%
Other	1	6%
Not known	0	0%

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

Assessing, grading, and reporting information can be used as an advocacy tool for music programs. Along with public performances, assessing, grading, and reporting information becomes what the parents and community members know about the music program (Nutter, 1999). When asked for an opinion regarding this statement, 81% (n = 13) of the principals agreed with the statement. The district with the most variance in opinion was District B (Question 3).

“Educators must increasingly justify their programs through concrete measurements. Music, like any other academic subject, has to produce “results,” and those results are measured in terms of students achievement” (Walker, 1998, p. 178). When asked about this statement, 81% (n = 13) of the principals agreed (Question 4).

“Music as a subject loses respectability in the eyes of school administrators when there is a lack of viable grading criteria” (Walker, 1998, p. 186). Principals were divided when responding to this statement. Only 25% (n = 4) of the principals agreed, whereas



50% (n = 8) disagreed, and the remaining 25% (n = 4) had no opinion. Only one district's (District C) principals gave a consistent answer (Question 5).

“Teachers, parents, administrators, and others will recognize and respect the value of the music program ONLY if music teachers can demonstrate each student's achievement of a sequential curriculum of musical skills and knowledge based on state and national standards” (Chiodo, 2001, p. 18). When asked about this statement, 71% (n = 12) disagreed. Only one district's (District C) principals gave the same answer (Question 6).

The results from Questions 5 and 6 convey that administrators do not place a high importance on assessment and grading in elementary music. This may be due to the fact that assessment and grading in music are relatively new concepts in elementary music education.

#### *Music Report Card*

Table 17 lists the personnel involved in the development of the music section of the report card. The majority (76%) of the principals responded that both music teachers and curriculum directors worked on the report card. Building principals were involved in fewer than half (41%) of the districts. The principals' responses were very similar to the music teachers' responses to the same question. One “Other” response listed was “general education teachers.” Three (18%) principals did not know who had been involved.

In District E, 100% (n = 5) of the principals indicated that they had been involved in report card development. In Districts B and C, only one principal had been involved,

whereas in Districts A and D, none of the principals noted that they had participated (Question 7).

Table 17

*People Involved in Development of Reporting System*

People involved	Number of respondents (N = 17)*	Percentages of respondents
Music teachers	13	76%
Curriculum directors	13	76%
Building principals	7	41%
Special area teachers	4	24%
Not known	3	18%
Parents	1	6%
Other	1	6%

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

Although Hopple (2005) maintained that assessment results can be communicated with administrators, this does not seem to be happening in Livingston County, where only 24% of the principals use the report card to find out what students are learning. Three districts' (Districts C, D, and E) principals were unanimous in that they do not use the report card for information. Comments made by some of these principals were "not enough on the card to show what they are learning" and "the music report card is new this year." Seventy-five percent (n = 3) of District A's principals responded that they do use the report card as a source of information (Question 8). One hundred percent (N = 17)

of the principals responded that they do not use information from music report cards to reflect on the effectiveness of their building music teacher (Question 9).

*Adequate Amount of Information about Musical Progress*

More than half (59%, n = 10) of the principals responded that the report card does convey an adequate amount of information, whereas 41% (n = 7) responded that it does not. No principals responded that the report card conveys too much information. Four districts' principals were evenly divided, whereas District A's principals agreed that the report card does convey enough information. This is interesting because District A's principals' responses contradicted the responses from that district's music teachers (Question 10).

*Parents*

When asked how principals educate parents about the music report card, the most common response was "letters sent home" (see Table 18). "Other" comments included "It's on the report card" and "curriculum/open house by classroom teachers." In District A, information was shared at student musical gatherings, whereas in District B, information was included in student handbook (Question 11).

Table 18

*Methods of Educating Parents about Music Report Card – Principals*

Methods	Number of respondents (N = 17)*	Percentages of respondents
Letters sent home	8	47%
Information shared at student musical performances	4	24%
Information included in student handbook	4	24%
Information shared at open house or nonmusical gatherings	2	12%
Other	2	12%
I do not educate parents	2	12%

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

When asked how much feedback they receive from parents about the music report card, 100% (N = 17) of the principals reported that they receive little or no feedback (Question 13). In addition, 100% (N = 17) of the principals responded that they have not received questions or comments from parents about the music section of the elementary report card (Question 12). The principals' responses to this question echo the responses of both the curriculum directors and the music teachers.

*Demographic Information*

Table 19 lists the principals' years of experience. The majority (83%) of the principals have fewer than 11 years of experience (Question 14).

Table 19

*Years of Experience as Principal in School District*

Number of years	Number of respondents (N = 17)	Percentages of respondents
1-2	3	18%
3-5	4	24%
6-10	7	41%
11-20	3	18%

Seventy-one percent (n = 12) of the principals indicated that they would be interested in receiving a summary of the results of this study. This indicates that the principals are interested in assessment and reporting (Question 15).

*Summary*

Most principals reported little interaction with the music report card. Fewer than half of the principals were involved in its development. Most of the principals do not use the music report card to find out about what students are learning, and no principals use it to reflect on the effectiveness of the music teacher. Just over half of the principals reported that the music report card contains an adequate amount of information about students' musical progress. All the principals surveyed receive little or no feedback from parents about the music report card.

The majority of the principals agreed that assessment, grading, and reporting, along with performances, form a basis for what parents know about the music program. The majority of the principals also agree that music, as a subject, has to produce student achievement like other academic programs. Almost three quarters of the principals

disagreed that parents, teachers, and administrators will respect the value of the music program only if teachers can demonstrate students' achievement of musical skills and knowledge. The principals were divided on whether or not music loses respectability if a lack of grading criteria exists.

### Parent Results

Survey questionnaires were sent to 270 parents; 54 (20%) of the surveys were returned. Fink (1995) stated that 20% is a typical response rate for the first mailing of unsolicited surveys; Wigram agreed that response rates for this type of survey are usually between 20 and 25 percent (2005). The response rate might have been increased by follow-up mailings and the offer of incentives (Fink, 1995), but neither option was feasible because of financial and time constraints. (Composite parent data are found in Appendix N.)

### *Respondent Information*

Table 20 lists the number of respondents per school district (Question 1). The response rate (43%) from District D was especially high considering that only half the number of questionnaires was sent home in that district in comparison with the other districts. This high response rate might be related to the fact that District D is piloting music on the fourth-grade report card this year, and therefore, the subject is fresh in parents' minds.

The two districts with the lowest parent response rates (10% and 13%) were the districts (Districts B and C) with the least amount of musical information on their current report cards. One of the music teachers from District B expressed a reluctance to send the questionnaires home with students because parents might not understand the questions

that refer to a “music report card.” Indeed, because in these districts the music grade is currently one letter on the classroom report card, parents might not have thought that the questionnaire applied to them or that they knew enough to complete it.

Table 20

*Parent Respondents by School District*

School district	Number of respondents (N = 54)	Percentage of total respondents	Response rate by district
District A	14	26%	24%
District B	8	15%	13%
District C	6	11%	10%
District D	13	24%	43%
District E	13	24%	22%

Table 21 identifies the grade levels of the children whose parents returned the surveys (Question 2). Because the questionnaire packets were sent home with one class of students per selected school, the grade levels of these students were very similar within each school district. This was not intentional but a matter of principal choice.

Table 21

*Respondents' Children by Grade*

Grade	Number of respondents (N = 54)*	Percentages of respondents
K	3	6%
1	7	13%
2	21	39%
3	18	33%
4	21	39%
5	8	15%

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

*Music Report Card*

Table 22 lists the ways parents learn about the report card. The most common response was “letters sent home” (46%; n = 24). This researcher was surprised to learn that only 13% of the parents reported learning about the music report card at student musical performances. Forty-two percent of the parents listed an “Other” method. Examples of these methods include “explanation on report card,” “separate sheet accompanying report card,” “PTO meetings,” “music teacher informed us,” “conferences,” and “never heard of it” (Question 3).



Table 22

*Methods by Which Parents Learn about the Report Card*

Method	Number of respondents (N = 52)*	Percentage of respondents
Letters sent home	24	46%
Other	22	42%
Open house or nonmusical gatherings	13	25%
Student musical performances	7	13%
Student handbook	4	8%

\*Respondents could choose more than one response.

*Format and Grading Systems*

When asked to rate the format of the music report card, 81% (n = 43) of the parents rated it “easy to understand,” whereas 15% (n = 7) rated it “moderately easy to understand.” Two (4%) parents responded that the format is “difficult to understand” (Question 4). Similarly, when rating the grading system, 83% (n = 44) of the parents found it “easy to understand,” whereas 13% (n = 7) rated it “moderately easy to understand.” One parent rated the system “moderately difficult to understand,” whereas another rated it “difficult to understand” (Question 5).

Although some experts claim that parents do not understand the “language” of new report cards (Guskey & Bailey, 2001, p. 20), this is not the case in Livingston County, where almost all (96%) the parents rated both the format and grading systems of the music report cards as at least “moderately easy to understand.” Though Marzano &

Kendall (1998) wrote that parents can be upset with report cards that look different from report cards they are used to, the results from this study do not support this statement.

Parents were divided almost evenly about whether a traditional letter grade would make them more satisfied with the report card. While 54% (n = 29) of the parents responded that they would *not* be more satisfied with a letter grade, 46% (n = 24) responded that they *would* be more satisfied. The majority of the parents in Districts C and E would prefer a letter grade, whereas the majority of the parents in District A and D would not. Parents in District B were divided on this issue (Question 6). Parents' responses support Strickland and Strickland's (1998) statement that *some* parents still want the report card to include a letter grade. Despite the fact that almost half of the parents would prefer a letter grade, the majority (84%) of the parents reported satisfaction with the current report card.

#### *Adequate Amount of Information about Musical Progress*

Parents were also evenly divided on this issue of whether report cards convey an adequate amount of information about musical progress. Although 51% (n = 27) of the parents responded that the music section of the report card does convey an adequate amount of information, 49% (n = 26) of the parents responded that it does not. No parents responded that the report card contains too much information. Parents in Districts A and D responded that the amount of information is adequate, whereas those in Districts B, C, and E responded that insufficient musical information is provided (Question 7).

Although it was expected that the parents from the districts that provide a single symbol representing the assessment of music on the report card (District C and District B) would respond that not enough information is conveyed, this researcher was surprised

that the majority of the parents from District E (a district that uses standards-based reporting) also responded that the report card does not convey enough information. Although planned report card changes may mean parents in District E and District B will receive more detail about musical progress, no such changes are planned in District C.

District A's curriculum director stated, "Our finding is that parents don't want lots and lots of information. They want specific information." This comment was supported by the majority of the parents (69%, n = 39), who responded that specificity of information was more important than the amount of information about musical progress. Only 19% (n = 10) responded that the amount is more valuable, whereas 12% (n = 6) responded that neither is important. The parents in District B were almost equally divided between the three responses, whereas the majority of the parents in all the other districts favored specificity of information (Question 8).

In regard to "more detailed and better information about their child's progress," (Guskey & Bailey, p. 20), several parents commented that they would like to receive more detailed information about how their child is progressing in music class (Strickland & Strickland, 1998). District B's proposed solution to providing more frequent information to parents is to provide an online grade book system that parents can check at any time to monitor their child's musical progress.

#### *Nonmusical Factors*

Strickland and Strickland's (1998) statement that parents want to receive information about nonacademic skills on report cards was supported by responses from Livingston County parents. An overwhelming majority (96%, n = 52) of the parents

responded that they valued information about nonmusical factors on the music report card (Question 9).

### *Frequency*

Although Guskey and Bailey (2001) contended that parents want more frequent report cards, the majority (74%,  $n = 40$ ) responded that they receive an adequate amount of music report cards. The remaining 26% ( $n = 14$ ) responded that they would prefer more frequent report cards. No parents responded that they receive too many report cards (Question 10).

### *Input*

One hundred percent of the parents reported that their school districts have not asked for their input about either the format or the content of the music report card. Ninety-seven percent ( $n = 38$ ) of the parents reported that their school district did not ask for their input about the grading system. These responses support Eby's statement that although report cards are meant to inform parents, parents are not often included in decision making about the report cards (2003). District D parents did not have the opportunity to respond to these three questions because the District D music teacher and administrator asked that these three questions be omitted (Questions 11–13).

### *Satisfaction*

Most of the surveyed parents (84%) in Livingston County are satisfied with their child's music report card. When asked to rate their overall satisfaction, 42% ( $n = 22$ ) of the parents reported that they were *very satisfied* with their child's music report card. Another 42% ( $n = 22$ ) reported that they were *somewhat satisfied* with the report card. Five (9%) parents reported that they were *somewhat unsatisfied*, whereas four (8%)

parents were *very unsatisfied* with the report card. The district with the highest percentage (33%) of unsatisfied parents (District C) is one of the districts that publish the least information about music on the report card. However, because the response rate from this district was low (10%), the sample may not be representative of parents' views in general (Question 14).

Fifty-four percent (n = 28) of the parents agreed with the following statement: "Teachers, parents, administrators, and others will recognize and respect the value of the music program ONLY if music teachers can demonstrate each student's achievement of a sequential curriculum of musical skills and knowledge based on state and national standards" (Chiodo, 2001, p. 18). Thirty-one percent (n = 16) of the parents disagreed, whereas 15% (n = 8) had no opinion.

Parents in Districts B and E largely agreed with the statement, whereas parents in the other three districts were almost evenly divided. One parent who agreed with the statement added, "Beef it up! Raise the bar and the kids can meet it." A parent who disagreed wrote, "Teachers, parents, administrators, and others in our district recognize the importance of music in our curriculum even if it wasn't tied to state and/or national standards" (Question 15).

#### *Comments*

On the last page of the questionnaire, parents had the chance to comment or ask questions about the music report card. (All parent comments are found at the end of Appendix N.) Many of the comments focused on the fact that the report card is too generic or vague and does not provide enough information. Examples of these comments include the following:

- I feel that the music report card is too vague. I have no idea what the children are learning and if the teacher actually knows whom my children are. We value music, as we do art, in our family, and I'm consistently in a quandary about their music classes. Are they learning scales, tones, notes, or playing games that incorporate musical strategies? I understand the music teachers have many students but I would appreciate knowing what they have accomplished each marking period and also if they feel my children have achieved the class/period goals.
- I would like to know specifics with regards to my child's music class i.e.: learning about activities, certain songs, tempo understanding, note recognition, etc. All I get is Outstanding, Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory, which doesn't tell me what she is learning, just about her behavior and her participation.
- The music report card seems quite generic to me. Because of this the subject seems less important. Although I feel behavior in a classroom is important, I do not feel like it should impact the score or grade of a student as far as their musical ability.
- My kids take music lessons outside of school so I get information that is useful from those teachers ... Consequently, my kids' music report cards have very little useful information, but that is okay for me because of their music lessons. Also, to expect a school music teacher (who probably works at 4-5+ schools and who has 600+ students) to grade them on any meaningful scale is not realistic.

Although the comments, “Simple and to the point, of the student’s progress, within the music class” and “I like it” were nods of approval, other comments were negative about the necessity of a music report card.

- I've never found the information on the report card of any use other than my child attended and was disruptive.
- I don't think it gives an adequate snapshot of my child's true musical skills.
- Honestly, a music report card means little to me. It makes no difference to me whether or not my son can hold a tune or play the recorder correctly. I think grading them on the ability to sing in the right voice is a waste of the music teacher’s time!
- I think that a kindergarten–4th grade student should be exposed to music, but not rated on how well they perform. I agree that we should know if they

participate in class and try, but feel that letter grades—if based on performance could hinder musical progress—some start later in years.

- I do not think music should have a letter grade...I feel music is more of an enrichment class than a required class. I agree he needs to be exposed at this age—but a letter grade would only upset him.
- In elementary school, music class is to teach students to enjoy music. I would not want a report card to come home and say, "Your son can't keep a beat." Behavior is important, so that could be on the report card—but details on whether or not they can sing in tune or keep a beat are not necessary—those "labels" could turn them "off" to music for the rest of their lives.

In other comments, three parents wrote that they would like more frequent music report cards. Two parents requested that music be included in the same document as the classroom report card. One parent admitted to not understanding all the words on the report card. Several parents' comments recognized the fact that music teachers teach a large number of students. A number of the parents described their child's musical experiences out of school and/or mentioned either being a "musical" family or knowing nothing about music. In both cases, musical and nonmusical parents requested that more information be shared on the report card.

### *Summary*

More than 80% of the parents reported that they are at least somewhat satisfied with the music report card. More than 90% of the parents found the format and grading system of the music report card to be at least moderately easy to understand. Three quarters of the parents are satisfied with the frequency of report cards. Almost all the parents responded that it is important to receive information about nonmusical factors. All the parents confirmed that their input regarding the report card had not been sought. Parents were divided about whether they would prefer the report card to include a

traditional letter grade and about whether or not the report card conveys an adequate amount of information about musical progress.

### *Reflections on Parent Questionnaire*

The parent questionnaire was the most expensive because of the costs of photocopying and postage for the self-addressed, stamped envelopes, and yet it yielded the lowest response rate. A more economical option for gaining parent input might be to set up a table and interview parents during parent-teacher conferences.

### *Review of Report Cards*

Each school district involved in the study provided this researcher with a copy of a current elementary music report card. District B provided two copies: a current copy and a copy of the new report card that will be implemented in the fall. This study focused on reporting practices currently in place but also noted any significant changes that will be implemented during the coming school year.

Three out of the five districts do not give music report cards to kindergarten students, whereas District D gives music report cards to only fourth-grade students. The individual report cards are not published within this study because several curriculum directors were reluctant for their report cards to be published. (The Report Card Review data are found in Appendix O.)

### *Physical Characteristics*

Although Brookhart (2004) wrote that the formats of elementary report cards vary widely between school districts, Livingston County report cards were fairly similar. All five report cards consisted of two pages that were at least 8.5" by 11". One district's report cards were printed on 8.5" by 14" paper, whereas another district's cards were



printed on 11" by 17" paper. As of this coming fall, all of the report cards will be computer generated (Questions 1-3). In this researcher's opinion, the formats of the report cards from all five districts were easy to read (Question 5).

Two music report cards were documents that included the information from the classroom, as well as the special area subjects. Two other districts' music report cards included only the other special area subjects. The fifth district's report card was made up of information from the classroom and from music but not from any other special area subjects. In this district (District D), the other special area subjects do not report to parents in the form of a report card (Question 4). Although Draper (1998) noted that when music is included on the regular classroom report card, teachers often find no room for their comments, this was not the case in the report cards studied. The advantage of a separate report card for only special areas is that it can be sent out independently of the classroom report card. The disadvantage is that the special area report card might seem less important or might have a lesser chance of being read by parents if it is not included with the classroom report card.

#### *Information Provided*

Despite Brookhart's description of administrative policy items, few of these items were found on the report cards. Three of the five districts' report cards included information about attendance, whereas two of the districts' cards did not include any administrative items. District B's new report card will be the third to include no administrative policy items (Question 6).

The most obvious differences between the five districts' report cards were found in the instructional targets and grading-system labels provided. These differences are

evidence of Brookhart's (2004) statement that there is a wide variety in elementary report cards. Two of the five districts' report cards did not include any specific instructional or behavioral goals for students in music. Conversely, two report cards listed both instructional and behavioral goals, whereas the fifth district listed only instructional goals. Each of the three districts that listed instructional and/or behavioral goals took a different approach to the format of these goals. The specific instructional and behavioral goals listed on the report cards are found in Questions 7, 8, and 9 of Appendix O.

#### *Instructional Goals*

Each of the four districts that listed instructional goals took a different approach to the formatting of these goals. District A's instructional goals were very specific and unique to each grade. District D's instructional goals were specific to fourth-grade skills. District E's report card listed two sets of instructional goals: one set for K–2 and another set for grades 3–5. District B's new report card will include instructional goals that are based on the content standards from the Michigan Department of Education; these goals are broad statements that will apply to all grades.

#### *Behavioral Goals*

The formats of the behavioral goals differed between the two districts that listed them. District A's behavioral goals referred specifically to behavior in the music classroom, whereas District E's behavioral goals were generic to behavior in all special areas. District C's report card did not include behavioral goals but stated, "Students are expected to be attentive listeners, follow directions, and complete tasks."

### *Musical Skills, Musical Knowledge, and Nonmusical Factors*

Three out of the five report cards included information about students' musical skills and musical knowledge. District B's new report card will be the fourth to include this information (Questions 10 and 11). Two of the five report cards included information about nonmusical factors such as attitude, behavior, and participation. District B's new report card will be the third report card to include this information. One report card did not include information about nonmusical factors but stated, "Students are expected to be attentive listeners, follow directions, and complete tasks" (Question 12).

### *Comments*

All five districts' report cards included space for the music teacher to add comments about musical progress. It was unclear to this researcher if these comments would be from a standardized menu or would be open-ended comments (Questions 13 and 14).

### *Grading System*

Three of the five report cards included standards-based grades, whereas the other two report cards included categorical labels. Each of the five districts' report cards provided a key to the grading system's labels, numbers, and/or letters. Two districts used letters in their keys, whereas the other three districts used numbers. For a detailed list of these specific labels, numbers, and/or letters, please refer to questions 15, 16, and 17 in Appendix O.

Three districts' grading systems consisted of a combination of numbers and labels while the other two districts' systems were made up of a combination of letters and labels. Of the districts that used numbers, in two cases the numeral one was the highest

level of proficiency while in the third district the numeral one was the lowest level of proficiency. Both districts that utilize letters (District C and District B) used similar language: S = Satisfactory, P = Progressing or Making Progress, and N = Not meeting Grade Level Expectations or Needs Improvement. District C had a fourth option, E = Exceeds Expectations. Two of the three districts that utilize numbers used similar labels although their number order was reversed: the highest level of proficiency = Meeting Grade Level expectations or Meets Expectations, the second highest level = Developing/Progressing, and the third level = Area of Concern or Not Meeting Expectations. The fifth district combined numbers with the labels Consistently, Usually, Sometimes, and Rarely applies concepts/skills. This researcher was surprised that in the process of introducing a new system of standards-based reporting, District B did not switch over to a number system similar to that of the other three districts that use standards-based reporting.

### *Summary*

As of September 2006, all five districts' music report cards will be computer generated, will include few academic policy items, and will allow music teachers to comment about students' progress. Four of the five districts' report cards will include instructional goals as well as information about students' musical skills and knowledge.

Across the districts, many variations were noted: differing grade levels of students received music report cards, music was only sometimes included with the classroom report card, differing labels systems were in place, and some cards listed behavioral goals and/or nonmusical factors.

### Elementary Music Education in Livingston County

Elementary music seems to have a secure footing in Livingston County school districts. Music is taught by specialists who are trained to teach music. Students in kindergarten receive between 25 and 69 minutes of music instruction per week. In four out of five districts, kindergarten students receive 30 or fewer minutes of music instruction per week. Across the districts, students in grades 1–4 receive between 45 and 69 minutes of music instruction per week. The median number of instructional minutes per week (60) is an impressive number. All students receive music instruction at least once per week, and several districts' students attend music class on a three- or four-day rotation. Students in the county receive enough musical instruction to warrant quality assessment, grading, and reporting practices.

Nearly two thirds (62%) of Livingston County music teachers teach 500–750 students in one building. Only 4 of the 21 music teachers instruct more than 750 students per week. Three of these four teachers also teach in more than one building. The district (District A) in which teachers teach more than 750 students in two or more buildings offers the fewest minutes of instruction to its students.

One hundred percent of the surveyed curriculum directors, 83% of the principals, and 57% of the music teachers have worked in their current positions for 10 or fewer years. Sixty percent of these individuals have been in their positions for fewer than 5 years. These numbers are to be expected because Livingston County has experienced tremendous growth in the last decade (Landauer-Menchik, 2006).

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH, AND POSTLUDE

### Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore what elementary music teachers assess, how the results of that assessment are reported in the form of grades, and what information is included on report cards. The data revealed that music teachers are communicating students' achievement of musical skills, musical knowledge, and nonmusical factors, using standards-based grades and report cards. As Taylor and Nolen attested,

If schools are intended to help all children be successful in life beyond school and to participate knowledgeably in a democratic society, then teaching to, assessing for, and reporting successful achievement of standards through a standards-based grading policy is appropriate for all students. (2005, p. 280)

The first research question explored assessment. The majority of the music teachers assessed musical skills, musical knowledge, and nonmusical factors, but not frequently. Elementary music teachers used embedded assessment techniques as well as both performance and traditional assessment methods when evaluating student achievement.

One assessment challenge teachers must overcome is the large number of students each teacher instructs. All groups that participated in this study referred to this challenge throughout their responses. In most cases, this large number leads to less assessment than is considered best practice. District E's curriculum director stated, "The difficulty is the

number of students. To have a reporting system that is terribly detailed is just not practical.”

Another challenge to musical assessment is the lack of training that almost one third of the teachers reported. Because only 11% of the music teachers received training by their school district, the question must be raised: How do school districts expect their music teachers to assess students without providing any assessment training? Clearly, more training is needed in order for assessment to become more effective and more frequent.

The second research question reviewed grading systems. Standards-based grades, along with secondary narratives, were most commonly used. In most cases, the current grading systems had recently been put into place in order to provide more information to parents and to align curriculum, assessment, grading, and reporting. Parent satisfaction with the current grading systems has been high. Only half of the surveyed parents would prefer that report cards include a letter grade, and these individuals are not demanding change.

The third research question studied reporting systems. Along with standards-based grading, standards-based reporting had recently been or will soon be adopted in the majority of school districts. District A’s curriculum director commented, “When we value music and art as much as we value the other programs, we need to communicate the things we do . . . specific information about music . . . communicates content.” Curriculum directors in these school districts were pleased with their new systems of reporting.

A majority of the parents were also satisfied with the report cards they receive. Parents expressed an overwhelming desire to receive information about nonmusical factors, and most school districts currently provide this information. The standards-based reporting systems included in this study differentiate between the reporting of students' musical skills and knowledge, and students' nonmusical progress. This researcher recommends that as long as it is possible to keep musical and nonmusical factors separated, report cards should continue to include nonmusical factors.

In addition to answering the three research questions, this researcher drew several other important conclusions. One conclusion was that all groups, that is, curriculum directors, music teachers, principals, and parents, were evenly divided about whether the current report cards convey enough information about musical progress. Even educators from districts that report detailed information were not yet satisfied with the amount of information conveyed. These educators continue to search for better systems of reporting.

Though the parents from Districts B and C receive the least detailed information about their children's musical progress, they were no less satisfied than parents in other districts who received more detailed report cards. Is this because the parents in Districts B and C are unaware that more information could be made available? Or are parents in general satisfied with whatever report card information they receive?

Another conclusion is that the lack of parent feedback can be linked to both parent education and communication about the report card. All three groups of educators, that is, curriculum directors, principals, and music teachers, reported little or no report card feedback from parents. In the current climate of schools of choice, in which parents can choose to send their children to neighboring school districts and in which schools fight to



attract and keep as many students as they can because of funding-per-pupil issues, it is a logical conclusion that school personnel would educate parents and then value input from these educated parents. Eastern Michigan University professor Cathy Fleisher stated that when it comes to parents, it is unfair to expect them to know what is going on in the classroom. “We (teachers) have to have patience when we communicate with them and have to educate them as well” (Strickland & Strickland, 1998, p. 157). By not educating parents about the information presented in the music report card, music teachers are missing an opportunity for advocacy.

In the districts studied, there does not seem to be a way for parents to share their thoughts and opinions about report cards. Across the districts, most of the parents were not asked for input when school districts changed their grading and reporting systems. If report cards are generated to inform parents, shouldn't there be some sort of channel of communication for parents to respond to the reported information? It is possible that if parents had the opportunity to be more involved in the report card process, they would show more interest and provide more feedback. This was evidenced by the fact that half of the parents who participated in the research took the time to write comments at the end of the questionnaire. Parents obviously had something to say when given the opportunity, and their comments could enlighten the individuals actually responsible for their children's education.

A second conclusion describes the lack of communication between educators. Clearly, curriculum directors, music teachers, and principals are interested in the topic of assessment and reporting; almost three fourths of each group requested a copy of this study's results. As this researcher communicated with survey participants, many seemed

very interested in what practices were in place in other districts. However, in talking with the curriculum directors, it appeared that they had little knowledge of each others' assessment, grading, and reporting systems. In this researcher's opinion, school districts (especially districts as demographically similar as those studied in Livingston County) could benefit from sharing knowledge and practices. For example, educators might convene for a countywide in-service during which they discuss solutions to the challenges of assessment and reporting.

A similar lack of communication is apparent between music teachers. This researcher's experience was supported by the often-varied answers from music teachers within each district. As an elementary music specialist, this individualism is typical of the music education profession, in which teachers are often isolated from each other. However, music educators could benefit from sharing ideas and practices not only within and between districts, but also within their flagship professional organization, MENC.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

The field of elementary music assessment, grading, and reporting presents many opportunities for further research. District B will implement a new system of standards-based reporting. A follow-up to this research would be to repeat the parent portion of this study in two years to see if parents have new or different opinions. Would parents be more satisfied after receiving more detailed information? Or will the percentage of satisfied parents remain relatively unchanged because most parents will accept whatever they are presented?

Another research possibility is performing demographic analysis with data from this study. Focus questions might include *Do parents with higher educational levels*

*place more value on detailed information about musical progress than parents with less education? and Do more affluent parents expect more detailed reports or provide more feedback to teachers?*

One of the Livingston County curriculum directors suggested a third research possibility. In 5 or 10 years, she would be interested in a study that searches for a correlation between the amount of detail included on elementary music report cards and the number of high school students who enroll in music classes. Focus questions could include *Does standards-based reporting lead to a higher number of students in high school music classes?* and *Is there a relationship between these two issues?*

Further research might examine elementary music teachers' attitudes about assessment, grading, and reporting. This study did not address teachers' attitudes, and more detailed research might reveal additional reasons why teachers do not assess musical progress more frequently. In addition, the following question could be asked: *Does a lack of assessment training negatively affect attitudes about assessment?*

Finally, a more radical experiment might be to stop sending elementary music report cards home to parents for an allotted time with no explanation provided. Would parents protest the lack of information? Would they demand that the music report card be reinstated, or would they even notice?

#### Postlude

In the big picture of music education, assessing and reporting students' musical progress is only one pixel. Although other pieces may seem important to music educators, assessing and reporting are important pieces that the public sees. Assessing and reporting are opportunities for advocacy, for educating parents, and for thrusting

music into the public eye so that it is more difficult to eliminate when budgets become strained. Currently, elementary music instruction in Livingston County provides contractually required preparation time for classroom teachers. Therefore, minutes of music instruction are protected. However, changes in teacher contracts could bring about change. As this researcher has experienced first-hand, some cuts have already occurred at the middle school level, where music is not always tied to preparation time. These initial program cuts underscore the importance of advocacy and the need for integrity-based assessment and reporting practices.

District C's curriculum director addressed the big picture of music in her district when she stated, "We're hit by No Child Left Behind. You know where the focus is. We know, and we are committed in our district—even when funds were cut—when we got rid of counselors—we kept music. In regards to grades and music, we can only do so much. Teachers are assessing every single minute in the room—that's the important thing." Although retaining music in the elementary schools is definitely more important than developing new reporting systems, this school district was the one exception in that it had yet to respond to the educational reforms mandated by *Goals 2000* and the standards-based movement.

The four districts that have worked to develop standards-based reporting and to provide more information to parents are to be commended. They have sought to overcome the challenge of providing more detail about musical progress while teaching large numbers of students, sometimes in less than ideal conditions. Will standards-based reporting prove to be an educational trend that lasts only until the next big reform movement comes along? Only time will tell. In the meantime, music educators will

continue to grapple with the challenges of accurately assessing and reporting students' musical achievement.

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A bibliography is found in Appendix P.



## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: National Standards for Music Education

According to the MENC (n.d.b.), the nine content standards are:

- Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music
- Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments
- Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines
- Reading and notating music
- Listening to, analyzing, and describing music
- Evaluating music and music performances
- Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts
- Understanding music in relation to history and culture

## Appendix B: Human Subjects Approval Letter

February 24, 2006

Dear Ms. Patterson:

The CAS-Human Subjects Committee has considered your application, #2222, "Elementary Music Assessment and Report Card Practices in Livingston County, MI" and rated the proposal as EXEMPT. An EXEMPT rating means that the proposal does not need further consideration by the University Human Subjects Committee, and you may proceed with your research. Please save a copy of this e-mail for submission to the Graduate School with your thesis.

Good luck with your endeavors, and your career.

Sincerely,  
Michael J. Brabec, Chair  
CAS-HSC

## Appendix C: Curriculum Director Questionnaire

<b>Curriculum Director Interview Questionnaire</b>
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School District \_\_\_\_\_

1. Does your current elementary report card include music?

- Yes  
 No

This interview is to gather information about the music portion of your district's elementary report card.

<b>Grading System</b>
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2. What type of grading system is used for the music report card?

(More than one box may be checked.)

- Letter Grades** – A, B, C, D, E, F  
 **Categorical Labels** – Novice, Apprentice  
 **Percentage Grading** – 87%  
 **Standards-Based Grades** – Information about major learning goals in the form of 1, 2, 3, 4 or Beginning, Progressing  
 **Pass/Fail Grading** – Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory  
 **Mastery Grades** – Mastery/Non-mastery  
 **Narratives** – Written comments from standardized menu or open-ended comments  
 **Other:**  
 Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Are narratives or comments a secondary option in addition to the primary format?

- Yes  
 No

**4. Why was the current grading system chosen?**

(More than one box may be checked.)

- Tradition
- Simple for parents to understand
- Provide more detailed information to parents
- Simple for teachers to complete
- Eliminate pressure from students
- Provide additional motivation for students
- Other:  
Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_
- Not known

**5. What are the advantages of your chosen system?**

(More than one box may be checked.)

- Most parents are familiar with system
- Provides more information than a single symbol
- Provides optimal discrimination – such as 57% and 60%
- Provides information about specific learning goals
- Simple to read
- Eliminates pressure on students
- Motivates students to learn
- Provides very detailed and unique information about each student
- Similar to real-life situations
- Other:  
Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. What are the disadvantages of your chosen system?**

(More than one box may be checked.)

- Lack of detailed information provided to parents
- Parents do not readily understand system
- Difficult to discriminate between such specific descriptors – 56% and 57%
- Time-intensive for teachers
- Little motivation is provided for the students
- Demands complex record-keeping, time, work, and classroom management skills from teachers
- Other:  
Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

## Standards-Based Reporting

Recently, much has been published about report card reform. In an effort to align curriculum, instruction, assessment, and reporting, some school districts have adopted standards-based reporting. Standards-based reporting involves reporting information about specific learning goals such as *Demonstrates ability to match pitch* or *Able to keep a steady beat*.

**7. Has your district considered adopting standards-based reporting for the music report card?**

- Yes  
 No  
 Not known

**8. If no, why has your district not considered this system?**

(More than one box may be checked.)

- Current system is effective  
 Budget constraints  
 Too time-consuming for teachers  
 Other:  
 Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**9. If you have considered standards-based reporting, have you adopted it?**

- Yes  
 No

**10. If no, why has your district not adopted this system?**

(More than one box may be checked.)

- Current system is effective  
 Budget constraints  
 Too time-consuming for teachers  
 Other:  
 Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**11. If you have adopted standards-based reporting, what were the deciding factors?**

(More than one box may be checked.)

- Provide parents with more detailed information  
 Align curriculum, instruction, assessment, and reporting  
 Other:  
 Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

### Developmental Profile Progress Reports

**Developmental profile progress reports are inserts included with the regular report card that include detailed and specific information about a student's progress towards acquiring musical skills and knowledge.**

**12. Has your school district considered this format?**

- Yes  
 No

**13. Has your school district adopted this format?**

- Yes  
 No

### Parents

**14. How do you educate parents about grading philosophy, policy, and practices?**

(More than one box may be checked.)

- Letters sent home  
 Information shared at school gatherings  
 Student handbook  
 Other:  
 Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**15. How much feedback do you receive from parents about your district's music report card?**

- Frequent feedback – every time a report card is sent home  
 Infrequent feedback – once or twice a year  
 Little or no feedback  
 Other:  
Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

### Reporting System

**16. How do music teachers report their grades?**

- Electronically  
 Pencil and paper  
 Other:  
Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**17. How long has your current system of reporting been in place?**

- Less than 1 year  
 1–2 years  
 3–5 years  
 6–10 years  
 More than 11 years

**18. Do you anticipate making any major changes in the near future?**

- Yes  
 No

**19. If you anticipate making major changes, please describe what the changes will be.**

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**20. Do you believe that your current music report card conveys an adequate amount of information about a student's musical progress?**

- Yes – The report card conveys an **adequate** amount of information about musical progress.
- No – The report card **does not** convey **enough** information about musical progress.
- No – The report card conveys **too much** information about musical progress.

### Frequency

**21. How often are music report cards sent home to parents?**

- Once per quarter
- Once per trimester
- Once per semester
- Once per school year
- Other:  
Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**22. How often are classroom or grade level report cards sent home to parents?**

- Once per quarter
- Once per trimester
- Once per semester
- Once per school year
- Other:  
Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**23. Is a music grade or report card sent home every time that a classroom or grade level report card is sent home?**

- Yes
- No

### Curriculum Director

**24. How long have you served as curriculum director for your current school district?**

- Less than a year
- 1–5 years
- 6–10 years
- More than 10 years

**25. Would you be interested in receiving a summary of the results of this study?**

- Yes  
 No

Thank you for your participation in this study!

## Appendix D: Music Teacher Questionnaire

<b>Music Teacher Questionnaire</b>
------------------------------------

This questionnaire will gather data about your assessing and reporting practices in grades K–4 only. Please do not respond about other grades you may teach.

Your responses will remain confidential and will not be shared with administrators in your school district.

Please read the following questions and check the boxes that apply.

Job Situation
---------------

**1. In which school district do you teach?**

- Brighton Area Schools  
 Fowlerville Community Schools  
 Hartland Consolidated Schools  
 Howell Public Schools  
 Pinckney Community Schools

**2. What grades do you teach?**

Please check all that apply.

- Kindergarten  
 1<sup>st</sup> grade  
 2<sup>nd</sup> grade  
 3<sup>rd</sup> grade  
 4<sup>th</sup> grade

**3. Please fill in the following blanks if applicable:**

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Minutes of music instruction per week</u>
Kindergarten	_____
1 <sup>st</sup> grade	_____
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	_____
3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	_____
4 <sup>th</sup> grade	_____

**4. How many students do you teach?**

- Fewer than 250  
 250–500  
 500–750  
 750–1000  
 More than 1000

**5. Do you teach music in multiple buildings?**

- No  
 Yes – 2 buildings  
 Yes – 3 buildings  
 Yes – More than 3 buildings

**Assessment**

*While teachers informally assess and evaluate continually in order to know how to proceed in the classroom, this study is to gather data about FORMAL assessment that is recorded.*

**Musical Skills****6. Do you assess musical skills such as *can match pitch* or *demonstrates steady beat*?**

- Yes  
 No

**7. If you assess musical skills, are the skills drawn from your music curriculum?**

- Yes  
 No  
 I do not assess musical skills

**8. If you assess musical skills, are the skills reflective of the skills listed in the National Standards for Music Education developed by MENC?**

- Yes  
 No  
 I do not assess music skills

**9. If musical skills are NOT assessed, why not?**

More than one box may be checked.

- Lack of instructional time with students
- Too many students
- Lack of manageable record-keeping system
- Not required by the district
- Musical skills are assessed
- Other:

Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Musical Knowledge</b>
--------------------------

**10. Do you assess musical knowledge such as *identifying quarter notes*?**

- Yes
- No

**11. If you assess musical knowledge, is that knowledge drawn from your music curriculum?**

- Yes
- No
- I do not assess musical skills

**12. If you assess musical knowledge, is it that knowledge reflective of the knowledge described by the National Standards?**

- Yes
- No
- I do not assess music skills

**13. If musical knowledge is not assessed, why not?**

More than one box may be checked.

- Lack of instructional time with students
- Too many students
- Lack of manageable record-keeping system
- Not required by the district
- Musical knowledge is assessed
- Other:

Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Nonmusical Factors</b>
---------------------------

**14. Do you assess nonmusical factors such as *citizenship* or *participation*?**

- Yes  
 No

**15. If you assess nonmusical factors, please check which of the following you assess:**

More than one box may be checked.

- Attitude  
 Behavior  
 Cooperation  
 Effort  
 Participation  
 Work habits  
 Other:

Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Purpose of Assessment</b>
------------------------------

**16. What is the purpose of the assessing you perform?**

More than one box may be checked.

- Determine if students are learning  
 Plan for further instruction  
 Provide feedback for students  
 Provide data for report card  
 Other:

Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Assessment Techniques</b>
------------------------------

**17. What kinds of FORMAL assessment techniques do you use?**

- Traditional assessments – pencil and paper tests  
 Alternative assessments – anything other than the above – sometimes called authentic assessment  
 Both traditional and alternative assessments

**18. If you use alternative assessments, do you use *performance* or *skill-based* assessment where students *demonstrate* what they can do?**

- Yes  
 No  
 I do not use alternative assessment.

**19. If you use performance-based assessments, are they criterion or norm-referenced?**

- Criterion-referenced – performance measured against a predetermined requirement such as a rubric  
 Norm-referenced – compared to others’ performances  
 Some assessments are criterion-referenced while others are norm-referenced  
 I do not use performance-based assessments.

**20. Do you use embedded assessment techniques that consist of regular instructional activities that are designed to give students opportunities to perform a skill while the teacher records the assessment data?**

- Yes  
 No

**21. When you formally assess students, do they know that they are being assessed?**

- Students *usually* know they are being assessed.  
 Students *sometimes* know they are being assessed.  
 Students *rarely* know they are being assessed.

<b>Assessment Methods</b>
---------------------------

**22. When recording assessment data, which of the following devices do you use?**

More than one box may be checked.

- Checklists  
 Rating scales  
 Rubrics  
 Other:  
 Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**23. Which of the following types of assessment methods do you use on a regular basis?**

More than one box may be checked.

- Observation
- Pencil and paper tests
- Recitations
- Rating scales
- Projects
- Demonstrations or performances
- Portfolios
- Videotaped performances for later evaluation
- Student self-assessment
- Other:  
Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**24. Have you received any training on assessment methods and/or techniques?**

- Yes
- No

**25. If you have received training, what has been the source of your training?**

More than one box may be checked.

- College courses
- Workshops or conferences
- In-service training by local district
- Training given by colleagues
- Professional journals or magazines
- I have not had any assessment training
- Other:  
Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Frequency of Assessment</b>
--------------------------------

**26. How often do you formally assess students?**

- At least once per class period
- At least once every other class period
- At least once per month
- At least once per marking period
- Other:  
Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_



**27. Does your school district require you to assess students a prescribed number of times?**

- Yes  
 No

**28. Does the number of students you teach negatively affect the amount of formal assessing you perform?**

- Yes  
 No

**29. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statement:**

*Limited instructional time with large numbers of students leads to smaller amounts of assessment data than is considered best practice.*

- I agree with the above statement.  
 I disagree with the above statement.

### Report Cards

**30. Is your assessment data turned into a grade (A, B, C) or competency level (Satisfactory, Beginning, etc) that is reported on a report card?**

- Yes  
 No

**31. Does the music report card include information about students' musical skills?**

- Yes  
 No

**32. Does the music report card include information about students' musical knowledge?**

- Yes  
 No

**33. Does the music report card include information about nonmusical factors?**

- Yes  
 No

**34. Is what is reported on the report card directly related to the music curriculum?**

- Yes  
 No

**35. Do you believe that your current music report card conveys an adequate amount of information about a student's musical progress?**

- Yes – The report card conveys an **adequate** amount of information about musical progress.  
 No – The report card **does not** convey **enough** information about musical progress.  
 No – The report card conveys **too much** information about musical progress.

**36. Who was involved in the development of the current system of reporting in your district?**

More than one box may be checked.

- Music teachers  
 Special area teachers  
 Building principal  
 Curriculum director  
 Parents  
 Other:  
 Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**37. Do you anticipate making any major changes to your report card in the near future?**

- Yes  
 No

**38. How much feedback do you receive from *parents* about your district's music report card?**

- Frequent feedback – every time a report card is sent home  
 Infrequent feedback – once or twice a year  
 Little or no feedback  
 Other:  
 Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**39. How do you educate parents about your district's music report card?**

More than one box may be checked.

- Letters sent home  
 Information shared at open house or other nonmusical gatherings  
 Information shared at student musical performances  
 Information included in student handbook  
 I do not educate parents about the report card  
 Other:  
 Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Teacher Information</b>
----------------------------

**40. What is the highest educational level that you have completed?**

- Bachelors Degree  
 Bachelors Plus  
 Masters Degree  
 Masters Plus

**41. How long have you been teaching music in this school district?**

- 1–2 years  
 3–5 years  
 6–10 years  
 11–20 years  
 More than 21 years

<b>Results</b>
----------------

**42. I would be interested in receiving a summary of the results of this study.**

- Yes  
 No

**Thank you for your participation in this research study!**

**PLEASE TURN OVER**

**Please return this questionnaire *along with the SIGNED informed consent form* to:**

**Jennifer Patterson**

**A self-addressed stamped envelope has been provided for your use.**

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

**If you have additional comments about assessing or reporting, please use the rest of this page for those comments.**

## Appendix E: Principal Questionnaire

<b>Principal Questionnaire</b>
--------------------------------

This questionnaire is designed to collect information about your district's elementary MUSIC assessment and reporting practices. Your responses will remain confidential and will not be shared with other administrators in your school district.

Please read the following questions and check the boxes that apply.

**1. In which school district are you a principal?**

- Brighton Area Schools
- Fowlerville Community Schools
- Hartland Consolidated Schools
- Howell Public Schools
- Pinckney Community Schools

<b>Assessment</b>
-------------------

**2. What is the purpose of the assessment that your building's music teacher performs?**

More than one box may be checked.

- Determine if students are learning
- Plan for further instruction
- Provide feedback for students
- Provide data for report card
- Not known
- Other:  
Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement:**

**Assessment, grading, and reporting information can be used as an advocacy tool for music programs. Along with public performances, assessing, grading, and reporting information become what the parents and community members know about the music program (Nutter, 1999).**

- I **agree** with the above statement
- I **disagree** with the above statement
- I have **no opinion** about the above statement

**4. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement:**

**“Educators must increasingly justify their programs through concrete measurements. Music, like any other academic subject, has to produce “results,” and those results are measured in terms of student achievement”** (Walker, 1998, p. 178).

- I **agree** with the above statement  
 I **disagree** with the above statement  
 I have **no opinion** about the above statement

**5. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement:**

**“Music as a subject loses respectability in the eyes of school administrators when there is a lack of viable grading criteria”** (Walker, 1998, p. 186).

- I **agree** with the above statement  
 I **disagree** with the above statement  
 I have **no opinion** about the above statement

**6. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement:**

**“Teachers, parents, administrators, and others will recognize and respect the value of the music program ONLY if music teachers can demonstrate each student’s achievement of a sequential curriculum of musical skills and knowledge based on state and national standards”** (Chiodo, 2001, p. 18).

- I **agree** with the above statement  
 I **disagree** with the above statement  
 I have **no opinion** about the above statement

### Music Report Card

**7. Who was involved in the development of the music section of the elementary report card?**

More than one box may be checked.

- Music teachers  
 Special area teachers  
 Building principals  
 Curriculum director  
 Parents  
 Not known  
 Other:

Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you use the music report card as a tool to find out about what students are learning?

- Yes  
 No

9. Do you use information from the report cards to reflect on the effectiveness of your building's music teacher?

- Yes  
 No

10. Do you believe that the music section of your current report card conveys an adequate amount of information about students' musical progress?

- Yes – The report card conveys an **adequate** amount of information about musical progress.  
 No – The report card **does not** convey **enough** information about musical progress.  
 No – The report card conveys **too much** information about musical progress.

### Parents

11. How do you educate parents about your district's music report card?

More than one box may be checked.

- Letters sent home  
 Information shared at open house or other nonmusical gatherings  
 Information shared at student musical performances  
 Information included in student handbook  
 I do not educate parents about the report card  
 Other:  
 Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Have you received questions or comments from parents about the music section of your elementary report card?

- Yes  
 No

**13. How much feedback do you receive from parents about the music section of your elementary report card?**

- Frequent feedback – every time a report card is sent home  
 Infrequent feedback – once or twice a year  
 Little or no feedback  
 Other:  
 Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

**14. How long have you been a principal in this school district?**

- 1–2 years  
 3–5 years  
 6–10 years  
 11–20 years  
 More than 21 years

**Results**

**15. I would be interested in receiving a summary of the results of this study.**

- Yes  
 No

**Thank you for your participation in this research study!**

**Please return this questionnaire *along with the SIGNED informed consent form* to:**

**Jennifer Patterson**

**A self-addressed stamped envelope has been provided for your use.  
 If you would like to include additional comments about elementary music  
 assessment or reporting, you may attach an additional sheet.**

References

- Chiodo, P. (2001). Assessing a cast of thousands. *Music Educators Journal*, 87(6), 17–23.  
 Nutter, K. (1999). Managing assessment in music education. *Teaching Music*, 7(1), 26–31, 59.  
 Walker, D. E. (1998). *Teaching music: Managing the successful music program* (2nd ed.). New York: Schirmer Books.



## Appendix F: Parent Questionnaire

<b>Parent Questionnaire</b>
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**This research study will collect information about your opinions of the MUSIC section of your child's elementary report card.**

**Your responses are confidential and will not be shared with anyone in your school district.**

**Please read the following questions and check the boxes that apply.**

<b>My Child</b>
-----------------

**1. My child (or children) attends:**

- Brighton Area Schools
- Fowlerville Community Schools
- Hartland Consolidated Schools
- Howell Public Schools
- Pinckney Community Schools

**2. I have a child (or children) in the following grade(s):**

Please check all that apply.

- Kindergarten
- 1<sup>st</sup> grade
- 2<sup>nd</sup> grade
- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade
- 4<sup>th</sup> grade

<b>Music Report Card</b>
--------------------------

**3. How do you learn about your district's elementary music report card?**

More than one box may be checked.

- Letters sent home
- Information shared at open house or other nonmusical gatherings
- Information shared at student musical performances
- Information included in student handbook
- Other:

Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Please rate the FORMAT** (physical characteristics such as the layout of information, size of paper, number of pages, handwritten or computer generated, etc) **of your child's music report card:**

- The format of the music report card is **easy** to understand.  
 The format of the music report card is **moderately easy** to understand.  
 The format of the music report card is **moderately difficult** to understand.  
 The format of the music report card is **difficult** to understand.

5. **Please rate the GRADING SYSTEM** (ie: Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory or Meets expectations/Does not meet expectations, etc) **of your child's music report card:**

- The grading system is **easy** to understand.  
 The grading system is **moderately easy** to understand.  
 The grading system is **moderately difficult** to understand.  
 The grading system is **difficult** to understand.

6. **Would you be more satisfied with your child's report card if it included a traditional letter grade (A, B, C, etc)?**

- Yes  
 No

7. **Do you believe that the music section of your child's report card conveys an adequate amount of information about students' MUSICAL PROGRESS?**

- Yes – The report card conveys an **adequate** amount of information about musical progress.  
 No – The report card **does not** convey **enough** information about musical progress.  
 No – The report card conveys **too much** information about musical progress.

8. **Which is more important in regards to your child's music report card?**

- The **AMOUNT** of information about my child's musical progress  
 The **SPECIFICITY** of the information about my child's musical progress  
 Neither is important to me

9. **Is it important to receive information about nonmusical factors such as participation, behavior, attitude, effort, etc in the MUSIC section of the report card?**

- Yes  
 No

10. Please rate your satisfaction with the **FREQUENCY** you receive a report card that includes music.

- I receive **too many** music report cards during the school year.  
 I receive an **adequate** amount of music report cards during the school year.  
 I **do not receive enough** music report cards during the school year.

11. Has your school district asked for your input concerning the **FORMAT** of the elementary music report card?

- Yes  
 No

12. Has your school district asked for your input concerning the **CONTENT** of the elementary music report card?

- Yes  
 No

13. Has your school district asked for your input concerning the **GRADING SYSTEM** of the elementary music report card?

- Yes  
 No

14. Please rate your overall satisfaction with your child's music report card.

- Very Satisfied  
 Somewhat Satisfied  
 Somewhat Unsatisfied  
 Very Unsatisfied

15. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement:

**“Teachers, parents, administrators, and others will recognize and respect the value of the music program ONLY if music teachers can demonstrate each student's achievement of a sequential curriculum of musical skills and knowledge based on state and national standards” (Chiodo, 2001, p. 18).**

- I **agree** with the above statement  
 I **disagree** with the above statement  
 I have **no opinion** about the above statement

**16. Please use the remaining lines for any additional comments or questions you have about your child's music report card.**

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**Thank you for your participation in this research study!**

**Please return this questionnaire *along with the informed consent form* to:**

**Jennifer Patterson**

**A self-addressed, stamped envelope has been provided for your use.**

## Appendix G: Report Card Review

**Report Card Review**

School District \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_

**Physical Characteristics****1. Size of paper**

- 11 x 14  
 8.5 x 11  
 8.5 x 5.5  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Number of pages**

- Half-sheet  
 1 page  
 2 pages  
 3 pages  
 More than 3 pages

**3. Format of pages**

- Hand-written  
 Computer generated

**4. The music report card is a:**

- Separate document  
 Document that includes other special area subjects (Art, PE, etc) only  
 Document that includes academic report card and other special area subjects  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Is the format of the report card easy to read?**

- Yes  
 No

**Information Provided**

**6. Which of the following administrative policy items are included on the music report card?**

- Attendance
- District mission statement
- District grading philosophy
- District grading policy
- Parent signature
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- No administrative policy items are listed

**7. Does the musical section of the report card list only the name of the subject or specific instructional or behavioral goals?**

- Name of subject only
- Specific behavioral goals
- Specific instructional goals
- Both behavioral and instructional goals
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. List any specific behavioral goals stated on the report card:**

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**9. List any specific instructional goals stated on the report card:**

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**10. Does the music report card include information about students' musical skills?**

- Yes  
 No

**11. Does the music report card include information about students' musical knowledge?**

- Yes  
 No

**12. Does the music section of the report card include any information about the nonmusical factors listed below?**

- Attitude  
 Behavior  
 Citizenship  
 Effort  
 Participation  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 No nonmusical factors

**13. Is there space for the music teacher to add comments about musical progress?**

- Yes  
 No

**14. If yes, are the comments from a standardized menu or open-ended?**

- Standardized
- Open-ended
- Both
- Information not available

### Grading System

**15. What type of grading system is used?**

- Letter Grades – A, B, C, D, E, F
- Categorical Labels – Novice, Apprentice or 1, 2, 3, 4
- Percentage Grading – 87%
- Standards-Based Grades – 1, 2, 3, 4 or Beginning, Progressing
- Pass/Fail Grading – Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory
- Mastery Grades – Mastery/Non-mastery
- Narratives – Written comments from standardized menu or open-ended comments
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**16. List the specific labels, numbers or letters used in the above grading system.**

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**17. Is a key to the grading system provided (ie S = Satisfactory, U = Unsatisfactory)?**

- Yes
- No



## Appendix H: Contact Letters

## Initial Contact Letter

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Hello from a music education student pursuing a masters thesis on elementary music assessment and reporting practices in Livingston County! As part of my thesis research, I hope to survey all principals in Livingston County.

A manila envelope with the study documents has been mailed to you and should be arriving in the next few days. The questionnaire takes less than 15 minutes to complete and will provide important information about how musical progress is assessed and reported in the five school districts in Livingston County.

I appreciate your taking the time out of a busy administrative schedule to read this e-mail and hope you will consider participating in this study.

If you have any questions about this e-mail or the study, please call or e-mail me.

Thanks,

Jennifer Patterson  
Music Teacher  
Saline Area Schools

## Music Teacher Questionnaire Cover Letter

**Jennifer Patterson**  
Music Education Graduate Student  
Eastern Michigan University

March 6, 2006

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a graduate music education student at Eastern Michigan University researching *elementary music assessment and reporting practices* in Livingston County, Michigan. In order to complete my research, I am surveying music teachers, elementary principals, curriculum directors, and parents in the five school districts in Livingston County.

The results of this study will benefit the education profession by providing a snapshot of how educators in one county are dealing with the issue of assessing and reporting students' musical progress. This snapshot, along with the conclusions drawn from it, may be used as a resource for school districts that are re-examining these practices.

The attached questionnaire has been pre-tested by a group of music teachers. Their suggestions resulted in revisions in order to obtain pertinent data while requiring a minimal time commitment averaging 12–15 minutes. **I am particularly interested in obtaining your responses since you offer a unique perspective as a music educator who regularly assesses and reports students' musical progress.**

I am requesting that you complete this questionnaire, along with the signed informed consent form, prior to **March 20**, and return it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Thank you for your participation in this important research. If you have questions, please call or e-mail me.

Kind regards,

Jennifer Patterson

Enclosures

## Principal Questionnaire Cover Letter

**Jennifer Patterson**  
Music Education Graduate Student  
Eastern Michigan University

March 6, 2006

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a graduate music education student at Eastern Michigan University researching *elementary music assessment and reporting practices* in Livingston County, Michigan. In order to complete my research, I am surveying elementary principals, curriculum directors, music teachers, and parents in the five school districts in Livingston County.

The results of this study will benefit the education profession by providing a snapshot of how educators in one county are dealing with the issue of assessing and reporting students' musical progress. This snapshot, along with the conclusions drawn from it, may be used as a resource for school districts that are re-examining these practices.

The attached questionnaire has been designed to obtain data while requiring a minimal time commitment of less than 15 minutes. **I am particularly interested in obtaining your responses since you offer the unique perspective of an administrator who deals with the issues of assessment and report cards.**

I am requesting that you complete this questionnaire, along with the signed informed consent form, prior to **March 20**, and return it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Thank you for your participation in this important research. If you have questions, please call or email me.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Patterson

Enclosures

Parent Questionnaire Cover Letter

**Jennifer Patterson**  
**Music Education Graduate Student**  
Eastern Michigan University

March 2006

Dear Parent:

I am a graduate music education student at Eastern Michigan University researching *elementary music assessment and reporting practices* in Livingston County, Michigan. In order to complete my research, I am surveying **parents**, music teachers, elementary principals, and curriculum directors in the five school districts in Livingston County.

The results of this study will benefit the education profession by providing a snapshot of how educators in one county are dealing with the issue of assessing and reporting students' musical progress. This snapshot, along with the conclusions drawn from it, may be used as a resource for school districts that are re-examining these practices.

The attached questionnaire has been pre-tested by a group of parents. Their suggestions resulted in revisions in order to obtain pertinent data while requiring a minimal time commitment averaging less than 10–15 minutes. **I am particularly interested in obtaining your responses since you offer a unique perspective as a parent who regularly receives report cards detailing your student's progress in school.**

I am requesting that you complete this questionnaire, along with the signed informed consent form, prior to **April 10**, and return it in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Thank you for your participation in this important research. If you have questions, please call or e-mail me.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Patterson

Enclosures

## Appendix I: Informed Consent Forms

**Informed Consent Form – Curriculum Director**

**Federal and university regulations require signed consent for participation in research involving human subjects.**

**After reading the statements below, indicate your consent by signing this form.**

**Title of Research:**

Elementary Music Assessment and Report Card Practices in Livingston County, Michigan

**Principal Investigator:** Jennifer Patterson

**Organization:** Eastern Michigan University Department of Music and Dance

**Purposes of Study:**

- To examine what is assessed in the elementary music classrooms in the five public school districts in Livingston County, Michigan
- To examine how the five school districts use report cards to convey this assessment information to parents
- To examine how each district's report cards benefit students, parents, teachers, and the school district itself

**Procedure:**

- Curriculum directors will participate in a tape-recorded interview.
- Curriculum directors will be asked to provide a sample report card for each grade (K–4<sup>th</sup> grade).

**Time Requirements:**

- The curriculum director interview will last less than an hour.

**Benefits:**

- The results of this research will benefit the education profession in that it will provide a snapshot of how educators in one county are dealing with the issue of assessing and reporting students' musical progress.
- The results of this study may be studied by school districts that are re-examining their methods of assessing and reporting information about musical progress.

**Risks:**

- This study poses no risks to the participants.

**Confidentiality:**

- Participants' identities will be kept confidential. Participants' names will not appear on the questionnaire documents.
- The results of the study will be published for professional purposes, but will not list specific participants' names or any identifiable references to individual participants.
- The names of the individual school districts studied will not be published. Each will be assigned a pseudonym and will be referred to by that pseudonym.
- Recordings of the curriculum directors' interviews will be destroyed as soon as the interviews are transcribed.
- Completed study documents and interview transcripts will be retained by the researcher until the documents are no longer necessary for the research. The documents will then be destroyed.
- If student names appear on the sample report cards, the names will be removed before the report cards are published in the thesis document.

**Rights and Privileges:**

- Participation in this study is voluntary and monetary compensation will not be provided to the participants. Copies of the study's results will be made available to interested participants.
- Participants may discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Discontinued participation will in no way affect participants' future interactions with Eastern Michigan University.

**If you have any questions regarding this consent agreement or research protocol approval procedures, please contact the EMU Human Subjects Committee co-Chairs:**

Dr. Patrick Melia or Dr. Steve Pernecky

**If you have any questions about this particular study, please contact:**

Jennifer Patterson

**I certify that I have read and understand the procedures of this research study, and I agree to participate. I understand that I may discontinue participation at any time. A copy of this consent form has been provided for my records.**

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Addendum to Curriculum Director Informed Consent Form**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (printed name), grant the researcher permission to make an audio recording of this interview. This audio recording will not be published. The interview tape will be erased as soon as the researcher has transcribed it.

---

**Signature**

**If the researcher has any additional questions, my preferred method of contact is:**

- E-mail**  
E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_
- Phone**  
Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Informed Consent Form – Music Teacher

**Federal and university regulations require signed consent for participation in research involving human subjects.**

**After reading the statements below, indicate your consent by signing this form.**

**Title of Research:**

Elementary Music Assessment and Report Card Practices in Livingston County, Michigan

**Principal Investigator:** Jennifer Patterson

**Organization:** Eastern Michigan University Department of Music and Dance

**Purposes of Study:**

- To examine what is assessed in the elementary music classrooms in the five public school districts in Livingston County, Michigan
- To examine how the five school districts use report cards to convey this assessment information to parents
- To examine how each district's report cards benefit students, parents, teachers, and the school district itself

**Procedures:**

- Music teachers will complete the questionnaire and mail it to the researcher.

**Time Requirements:**

- The music teacher questionnaire can be completed in approximately 15 minutes.

**Benefits:**

- The results of this research will benefit the education profession in that it will provide a snapshot of how educators in one county are dealing with the issue of assessing and reporting students' musical progress.
- The results of this study may be studied by school districts that are re-examining their methods of assessing and reporting information about musical progress.

**Risks:**

- This study poses no risks to the participants.



**Confidentiality:**

- Participants' identities will be kept confidential. Participants' names will not appear on the questionnaire documents. Each participant will be assigned a number and the questionnaire documents will be numbered accordingly.
- The results of the study will be published for professional purposes, but will not list specific participants' names or any identifiable references to individual participants. Individual school districts will also be assigned a pseudonym and will not be identified by name.
- Completed questionnaire documents will be retained by the researcher until the documents are no longer necessary for the research. The documents will then be destroyed.

**Rights and Privileges:**

- Participation in this study is voluntary and monetary compensation will not be provided to the participants. Copies of the study's results will be made available to interested participants.
- Participants may discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Discontinued participation will in no way affect participants' future interactions with Eastern Michigan University.

**If you have any questions regarding this consent agreement or research protocol approval procedures, please contact the EMU Human Subjects Committee co-Chairs:**

Dr. Patrick Melia or Dr. Steve Pernecky

**If you have any questions about this particular study, please contact:**

Jennifer Patterson

**I certify that I have read and understand the procedures of this research study, and I agree to participate. I understand that I may discontinue participation at any time. A copy of this consent form has been provided for my records.**

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name** \_\_\_\_\_

## Informed Consent Form – Principal

**Federal and university regulations require signed consent for participation in research involving human subjects.**

**After reading the statements below, indicate your consent by signing this form.**

**Title of Research:**

Elementary Music Assessment and Report Card Practices in Southeast Michigan

**Principal Investigator:** Jennifer Patterson

**Organization:** Eastern Michigan University Department of Music and Dance

**Purposes of Study:**

- To examine what is assessed in the elementary music classrooms in the five public school districts in Livingston County, Michigan
- To examine how the five school districts use report cards to convey this assessment information to parents
- To examine how each district's report cards benefit students, parents, teachers, and the school district itself

**Procedure:**

- Principals will complete the questionnaire and mail it to the researcher.

**Time Requirements:**

- The principal questionnaire can be completed in less than 15 minutes.

**Benefits:**

- The results of this research will benefit the education profession in that it will provide a snapshot of how educators in one county are dealing with the issue of assessing and reporting students' musical progress.
- The results of this study may be studied by school districts that are re-examining their methods of assessing and reporting information about musical progress.

**Risks:**

- This study poses no risks to the participants.

**Confidentiality:**

- Participants' identities will be kept confidential. Participants' names will not appear on the questionnaire documents.
- The results of the study will be published for professional purposes, but will not list specific participants' names or any identifiable references to individual participants.
- The names of the individual school districts studied will not be published. Each will be assigned a pseudonym and will be referred to by that pseudonym.
- Completed study documents will be retained by the researcher until the documents are no longer necessary for the research. The documents will then be destroyed.

**Rights and Privileges:**

- Participation in this study is voluntary and monetary compensation will not be provided to the participants. Copies of the study's results will be made available to interested participants.
- Participants may discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Discontinued participation will in no way affect participants' future interactions with Eastern Michigan University.

**If you have any questions regarding this consent agreement or research protocol approval procedures, please contact the EMU Human Subjects Committee co-Chairs:**

Dr. Patrick Melia or Dr. Steve Pernecky

**If you have any questions about this particular study, please contact:**

Jennifer Patterson

**I certify that I have read and understand the procedures of this research study, and I agree to participate. I understand that I may discontinue participation at any time. A copy of this consent form has been provided for my records.**

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name** \_\_\_\_\_

## Informed Consent Form – Parent

**Federal and university regulations require signed consent for participation in research involving human subjects.**

**After reading the statements below, indicate your consent by signing this form.**

**Title of Research:**

Elementary Music Assessment and Report Card Practices in Southeast Michigan

**Principal Investigator:** Jennifer Patterson

**Organization:** Eastern Michigan University Department of Music and Dance

**Purposes of Study:**

- To examine what is assessed in the elementary music classrooms in the five public school districts in Livingston County, Michigan
- To examine how the five school districts use report cards to convey this assessment information to parents
- To examine how each district's report cards benefit students, parents, teachers, and the school district itself

**Procedure:**

- Parents will complete the questionnaire and mail it to the researcher.

**Time Requirements:**

- The parent questionnaire can be completed in less than 15 minutes.

**Benefits:**

- The results of this research will benefit the education profession in that it will provide a snapshot of how educators in one county are dealing with the issue of assessing and reporting students' musical progress.
- The results of this study may be studied by school districts that are re-examining their methods of assessing and reporting information about musical progress.

**Risks:**

- This study poses no risks to the participants.

**Confidentiality:**

- Participants' identities will be kept confidential. Participants' names will not appear on the questionnaire documents.
- The results of the study will be published for professional purposes, but will not list specific participants' names or any identifiable references to individual participants.
- The names of the individual school districts studied will not be published. Each will be assigned a pseudonym and will be referred to by that pseudonym.
- Completed study documents will be retained by the researcher until the documents are no longer necessary for the research. The documents will then be destroyed.

**Rights and Privileges:**

- Participation in this study is voluntary and monetary compensation will not be provided to the participants. Copies of the study's results will be made available to interested participants.
- Participants may discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Discontinued participation will in no way affect participants' future interactions with Eastern Michigan University.

**If you have any questions regarding this consent agreement or research protocol approval procedures, please contact the EMU Human Subjects Committee co-Chairs:**

Dr. Patrick Melia or Dr. Steve Pernecky

**If you have any questions about this particular study, please contact:**

Jennifer Patterson

**I certify that I have read and understand the procedures of this research study, and I agree to participate. I understand that I may discontinue participation at any time. A copy of this consent form has been provided for my records.**

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix J: Budget

**Copying Costs**

Curriculum Director Surveys	\$2.70
Curriculum Director Consent	\$1.20
Parent Cover Letters	\$21.00
Parent Surveys	\$72.00
Parent Consent	\$72.00
Principal Surveys	\$6.00
Principal Consent	\$6.00
Music Teacher Surveys	\$15.00
Music Teacher Consent	\$6.00
Report Card Review Forms	<u>\$2.40</u>
	<b>\$204.30</b>

**Postage**

Stamps for SASE	\$136.50
Parent Packets	\$12.00
Music Teacher Packets	\$22.50
Principal Packets	<u>\$22.50</u>
	<b>\$193.50</b>

**Supplies**

Manila Envelopes	\$5.00
Business Envelopes	\$5.00
Paper	\$12.00
Resume Paper	\$8.00
Labels	\$40.00
Printer Cartridge	<u>\$28.00</u>
	<b>\$98.00</b>

**Gas** **\$60.00**

**Total** **\$555.80**

## Appendix K: Curriculum Director Data

**Curriculum Director Interview Questionnaire Data****1. Does your current elementary report card include music?**

N = 5

n = 5	100%	Yes
n = 0	0%	No

**2. What type of grading system is used for the music report card?**

N = 5 (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 0	0%	<b>Letter Grades</b> – A, B, C, D, E, F
n = 2	40%	<b>Categorical Labels</b> – Novice, Apprentice
n = 0	0%	<b>Percentage Grading</b> – 87%
n = 4	80%	<b>Standards-Based Grades</b> – Information about major learning goals in the form of 1, 2, 3, 4 or Beginning, Progressing
n = 0	0%	<b>Pass/Fail Grading</b> – Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory
n = 0	0%	<b>Mastery Grades</b> – Mastery/Non-mastery
n = 1	20%	<b>Narratives</b> – Written comments from standardized menu or open-ended comments
n = 0	0%	<b>Other</b>

**3. Are narratives or comments a secondary option in addition to the primary format?**

N = 5

n = 5	100%	Yes
n = 0	0%	No

**4. Why was the current grading system chosen?**

N = 5 (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 0	0%	Tradition
n = 0	0%	Simple for parents to understand
n = 3	60%	Provide more detailed information to parents
n = 2	40%	Simple for teachers to complete
n = 0	0%	Eliminate pressure from students
n = 0	0%	Provide additional motivation for students
n = 2	40%	Other
n = 0	0%	Not known

**5. What are the advantages of your chosen system?**

**N = 5** (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 1	20%	Most parents are familiar with system
n = 3	60%	Provides more information than a single symbol
n = 0	0%	Provides optimal discrimination – such as 57% and 60%
n = 2	40%	Provides information about specific learning goals
n = 2	40%	Simple to read
n = 0	0%	Eliminates pressure on students
n = 1	20%	Motivates students to learn
n = 2	40%	Provides very detailed and unique information about each student
n = 1	20%	Similar to real-life situations
n = 2	40%	Other

**6. What are the disadvantages of your chosen system?**

**N = 5** (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 1	20%	Lack of detailed information provided to parents
n = 0	0%	Parents do not readily understand system
n = 0	0%	Difficult to discriminate between such specific descriptors – 56% and 57%
n = 1	20%	Time-intensive for teachers
n = 1	20%	Little motivation is provided for the students
n = 0	0%	Demands complex record-keeping, time, work, and classroom management skills from teachers
n = 3	60%	Other

**7. Has your district considered adopting standards-based reporting for the music report card?**

**N = 5**

n = 5	100%	Yes
n = 0	0%	No
n = 0	0%	Not known

**8. If no, why has your district not considered this system?**

**N = 0** (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 0	0%	Current system is effective
n = 0	0%	Budget constraints
n = 0	0%	Too time-consuming for teachers
n = 0	0%	Other



**9. If you have considered standards-based reporting, have you adopted it?**  
**N = 5**

n = 4	80%	Yes
n = 1	20%	No

**10. If no, why has your district not adopted this system?**  
**N = 1** (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 1	100%	Current system is effective
n = 0	0%	Budget constraints
n = 0	0%	Too time-consuming for teachers
n = 1	100%	Other

**11. If you have adopted standards-based reporting, what were the deciding factors?**  
**N = 4** (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 4	100%	Provide parents with more detailed information
n = 3	75%	Align curriculum, instruction, assessment, and reporting
n = 3	75%	Other

**12. Has your school district considered the developmental profile progress report format?**  
**N = 5**

n = 1	20%	Yes
n = 2	80%	No

**13. Has your school district adopted this format?**  
**N = 5**

n = 1	20%	Yes
n = 4	80%	No

**14. How do you educate parents about grading philosophy, policy, and practices?**  
**N = 4** (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 1	25%	Letters sent home
n = 2	50%	Information shared at school gatherings
n = 1	25%	Student handbook
n = 2	50%	Other

**15. How much feedback do you receive from parents about your district's music report card?**

**N = 4**

n = 0	0%	Frequent feedback – every time a report card is sent home
n = 1	25%	Infrequent feedback – once or twice a year
n = 3	75%	Little or no feedback
n = 0	0%	Other

**16. How do music teachers report their grades?**

**N = 5**

n = 4	80%	Electronically
n = 0	0%	Pencil and paper
n = 1	20%	Other

**17. How long has your current system of reporting been in place?**

**N = 5**

n = 2	40%	Less than 1 year
n = 1	20%	1–2 years
n = 1	20%	3–5 years
n = 1	20%	6–10 years
n = 0	0%	More than 11 years

**18. Do you anticipate making any major changes in the near future?**

**N = 4**

n = 2	50%	Yes
n = 2	50%	No

**19. If you anticipate making major changes, please describe what the changes will be.**

**N = 2**

- We are making changes because the electronic system we are using is not very user friendly. We are sharing discs. It is not web-based. We just recently (this year) adopted a web-based management system that we can use. So we are planning on taking information from current report card and putting on the web-based system. It will be a matter of changing the technology—not the content of the report card.
- The major change I would like to make is identifying a better system for standards-based report cards. The other major change would be what does it look like to have a grade book included.

**20. Do you believe that your current music report card conveys an adequate amount of information about a student's musical progress?**

**N = 4**

n = 2	50%	Yes – The report card conveys an <b>adequate</b> amount of information about musical progress.
n = 2	50%	No – The report card <b>does not</b> convey <b>enough</b> information about musical progress.
n = 0	0%	No – The report card conveys <b>too much</b> information about musical progress.

**21. How often are music report cards sent home to parents?**

**N = 5**

n = 2	40%	Once per quarter
n = 1	20%	Once per trimester
n = 2	40%	Once per semester
n = 0	0%	Once per school year
n = 0	0%	Other

**22. How often are classroom or grade level report cards sent home to parents?**

**N = 5**

n = 3	60%	Once per quarter
n = 1	20%	Once per trimester
n = 1	20%	Once per semester
n = 0	0%	Once per school year
n = 0	0%	Other

**23. Is a music grade or report card sent home every time that a classroom or grade level report card is sent home?**

**N = 5**

n = 3	60%	Yes
n = 2	40%	No

**24. How long have you served as curriculum director for your current school district?**

**N = 4**

n = 0	0%	Less than a year
n = 3	75%	1–5 years
n = 0	0%	6–10 years
n = 1	25%	More than 10 years

**25. Would you be interested in receiving a summary of the results of this study?**

N = 4

n = 4	100%	Yes
n = 0	0%	No

**Comments:****District A**

- What students are able to do in music classes and then where are they in relation to the standards. The music teachers have so many students that we didn't want to make it too complicated for them. They are working with many standards—whittled down to present to parents. Standards are sequenced from grade to grade—not the only thing students are learning. I feel good about it because the standards let parents know that we have high expectations of music class.
- Expectations developed by the academic group who developed the whole report card. We chose the indicators because they would be consistent across the grades. The one way to show parents some consistency.

**District B**

- District B is in the process of adopting a new report card.
- The new system is an online system and is standards-based.
- To align with our electronic gradebook which also includes standards and benchmarks.

**District C**

- We're hit by No Child Left Behind. You know where the focus is. We know and we are committed in our district—even when funds were cut—when we got rid of counselors—we kept music.
- In regards to grades and music—we can only do so much.
- Teachers are assessing every single minute in the room—that's the important thing.
- It would be interesting to survey the districts who are pursuing standards-based reporting in the future and see—what are the numbers like in the high school. Was the program more consistent across the levels.
- It's a tough time to be looking at this—finances are tough.
- We are focusing on building a K–12 music program.
- Specials help the other courses achieve—they are just as important in the elementary grades.
- Teachers have over 600 students. To give them each a grade would be impossible
- Students begin with an S and teachers go from there

**District E:**

- We will be using a similar web-based format as that of District D.
- All three specials on one report card (currently sharing disc).
- Our code will be modified—will have consistently, sometimes, an area of concern
- Learning outcomes are printed on back-side of card
- Because our music teachers see 500 kids, that is why you see the outcomes in the descriptors.
- When we go to the Zangle approach, we are going to take some of the outcomes and put them on the actual card. That will be the change we are making.
- Report card will read more detailed to parents. The teachers will be reporting on same standards but the part the parents read will seem more detailed—will have more descriptors.
- The change will go into effect Fall 2006.
- Begin web-based format with specials teachers.
- System developed for consistency between specials and to value the card more. This format gave report card more formality and importance.
- What we really like is that we met in a collaborative way and created a common code and language and format that isn't going to be that hard to move into web-based.
- They all have same social behaviors and in general format is same across specials.
- The difficulty is the number of students. To have a reporting system that is terrible detailed is just not practical.
- Kindergarten music teacher does not mark report card—send home information note about curriculum—no assessments given in Kindergarten—as long as parents know what is covered
- I don't think that reporting in detail is best use of Kind teacher or students' time
- Current system of grading—Fairly simple for teachers to work with and Provided more information than just a letter grade

## Appendix L: Music Teacher Data

<b>Music Teacher Questionnaire Data</b>
---

**1. In which school district do you teach?****N = 21**

n = 6	29%	District E Area Schools
n = 2	10%	District C Community Schools
n = 4	19%	District D Consolidated Schools
n = 6	29%	District B Public Schools
n = 3	14%	District A Community Schools

**2. What grades do you teach?****N = 21** (More than one response may be checked.)

71%	Kindergarten	
90%	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	
90%	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	
81%	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	
90%	4 <sup>th</sup> grade	
n = 12	57%	K–4
n = 4	19%	1–4
n = 5	24%	other combinations of grades

**3. Minutes of Music Instruction per Week****N = 21**

<u>School District</u>	<u>Minutes—Kindergarten</u>	<u>Minutes—Grades 1–4</u>
District A	25	45
District B	25–55	55
District C	30	60
District D	69	69
District E	30	69

**4. How many students do you teach?****N = 21**

n = 2	10%	Fewer than 250
n = 3	14%	250–500
n = 13	62%	500–750
n = 3	14%	750–1000
n = 0	0%	More than 1000

5. **Do you teach music in multiple buildings?**  
N = 21
- |        |     |                             |
|--------|-----|-----------------------------|
| n = 17 | 81% | No                          |
| n = 1  | 5%  | Yes – 2 buildings           |
| n = 3  | 14% | Yes – 3 buildings           |
| n = 0  | 0%  | Yes – More than 3 buildings |
6. **Do you assess musical skills such as *can match pitch* or *demonstrates steady beat*?**  
N = 21
- |        |     |     |
|--------|-----|-----|
| n = 18 | 86% | Yes |
| n = 3  | 14% | No  |
7. **If you assess musical skills, are the skills drawn from your music curriculum?**  
N = 21
- |        |     |                                |
|--------|-----|--------------------------------|
| n = 18 | 86% | Yes                            |
| n = 0  | 0%  | No                             |
| n = 3  | 14% | I do not assess musical skills |
8. **If you assess musical skills, are the skills reflective of the skills listed in the National Standards for Music Education developed by MENC?**  
N = 21
- |        |     |                              |
|--------|-----|------------------------------|
| n = 19 | 90% | Yes                          |
| n = 0  | 0%  | No                           |
| n = 2  | 10% | I do not assess music skills |
9. **If musical skills are NOT assessed, why not?**  
N = 21 (More than one response may be checked.)
- |        |     |  |
|--------|-----|--|
| n = 1  | 5%  | Lack of instructional time with students |
| n = 2  | 10% | Too many students                        |
| n = 3  | 14% | Lack of manageable record-keeping system |
| n = 1  | 5%  | Not required by the district             |
| n = 17 | 81% | Musical skills are assessed              |
| n = 1  | 5%  | Other                                    |
10. **Do you assess musical knowledge such as *identifying quarter notes*?**  
N = 21
- |        |     |     |
|--------|-----|-----|
| n = 19 | 90% | Yes |
| n = 2  | 10% | No  |

11. If you assess musical knowledge, is that knowledge drawn from your music curriculum?

N = 21

n = 18	86%	Yes
n = 1	5%	No
n = 2	10%	I do not assess musical skills

12. If you assess musical knowledge, is it that knowledge reflective of the knowledge described by the National Standards?

N = 21

n = 19	90%	Yes
n = 0	0%	No
n = 2	10%	I do not assess music skills

13. If musical knowledge is not assessed, why not?

N = 21 (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 1	5%	Lack of instructional time with students
n = 2	10%	Too many students
n = 1	5%	Lack of manageable record-keeping system
n = 1	5%	Not required by the district
n = 18	86%	Musical knowledge is assessed
n = 1	5%	Other

14. Do you assess nonmusical factors such as *citizenship* or *participation*?

N = 21

n = 18	86%	Yes
n = 3	14%	No

15. If you assess nonmusical factors, please check which of the following you assess:

N = 18 (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 13	72%	Attitude
n = 18	100%	Behavior
n = 15	83%	Cooperation
n = 12	67%	Effort
n = 18	100%	Participation
n = 7	39%	Work habits
n = 2	11%	Other



**16. What is the purpose of the assessing you perform?**

N = 21 (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 19	90%	Determine if students are learning
n = 17	81%	Plan for further instruction
n = 16	76%	Provide feedback for students
n = 18	86%	Provide data for report card
n = 2	10%	Other

**17. What kinds of FORMAL assessment techniques do you use?**

N = 21

n = 1	5%	Traditional assessments
n = 5	24%	Alternative assessments
n = 15	71%	Both traditional and alternative assessments

**18. If you use alternative assessments, do you use *performance* or *skill-based* assessment where students *demonstrate* what they can do?**

N = 21

n = 20	95%	Yes
n = 0	0%	No
n = 1	5%	I do not use alternative assessment.

**19. If you use performance-based assessments, are they criterion or norm-referenced?**

N = 21

n = 10	48%	Criterion-referenced
n = 2	14%	Norm-referenced
n = 7	33%	Some assessments are criterion-referenced while others are norm-referenced
n = 1	5%	I do not use performance-based assessments.

**20. Do you use embedded assessment techniques that consist of regular instructional activities that are designed to give students opportunities to perform a skill while the teacher records the assessment data?**

N = 20

n = 16	80%	Yes
n = 4	20%	No

**21. When you formally assess students, do they know that they are being assessed?**

**N = 21**

n = 7	33%	Students <i>usually</i> know they are being assessed.
n = 9	43%	Students <i>sometimes</i> know they are being assessed.
n = 5	24%	Students <i>rarely</i> know they are being assessed.

**22. When recording assessment data, which of the following devices do you use?**

**N = 21** (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 12	57%	Checklists
n = 12	57%	Rating scales
n = 16	76%	Rubrics
n = 2	10%	Other

**23. Which of the following types of assessment methods do you use on a regular basis?**

**N = 21** (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 21	100%	Observation
n = 11	52%	Pencil and paper tests
n = 4	19%	Recitations
n = 6	29%	Rating scales
n = 5	24%	Projects
n = 18	86%	Demonstrations or performances
n = 1	5%	Portfolios
n = 1	5%	Videotaped performances for later evaluation
n = 7	33%	Student self-assessment
n = 3	14%	Other

**24. Have you received any training on assessment methods and/or techniques?**

**N = 21**

n = 15	71%	Yes
n = 6	29%	No

**25. If you have received training, what has been the source of your training?**

**N = 18** (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 11	61%	College courses
n = 12	67%	Workshops or conferences
n = 2	11%	In-service training by local district
n = 4	22%	Training given by colleagues
n = 7	39%	Professional journals or magazines
n = 2	11%	I have not had any assessment training
n = 0	0%	Other

- 26. How often do you formally assess students?**  
N = 21
- |        |     |  |
|--------|-----|--|
| n = 0  | 0%  | At least once per class period         |
| n = 1  | 5%  | At least once every other class period |
| n = 10 | 50% | At least once per month                |
| n = 6  | 30% | At least once per marking period       |
| n = 3  | 15% | Other                                  |
- 27. Does your school district require you to assess students a prescribed number of times?**  
N = 21
- |        |     |     |
|--------|-----|-----|
| n = 5  | 24% | Yes |
| n = 16 | 76% | No  |
- 28. Does the number of students you teach negatively affect the amount of formal assessing you perform?**  
N = 20
- |        |     |     |
|--------|-----|-----|
| n = 17 | 85% | Yes |
| n = 3  | 15% | No  |
- 29. Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statement: *Limited instructional time with large numbers of students leads to smaller amounts of assessment data than is considered best practice.***  
N = 20
- |        |     |                                      |
|--------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| n = 18 | 90% | I agree with the above statement.    |
| n = 2  | 10% | I disagree with the above statement. |
- 30. Is your assessment data turned into a grade (A, B, C) or competency level (Satisfactory, Beginning, etc) that is reported on a report card?**  
N = 21
- |        |     |     |
|--------|-----|-----|
| n = 19 | 90% | Yes |
| n = 2  | 10% | No  |
- 31. Does the music report card include information about students' musical skills?**  
N = 21
- |        |     |     |
|--------|-----|-----|
| n = 13 | 62% | Yes |
| n = 8  | 38% | No  |

- 32. Does the music report card include information about students' musical knowledge?**  
N = 21
- |        |     |     |
|--------|-----|-----|
| n = 11 | 52% | Yes |
| n = 10 | 48% | No  |
- 33. Does the music report card include information about nonmusical factors?**  
N = 21
- |        |     |     |
|--------|-----|-----|
| n = 19 | 90% | Yes |
| n = 2  | 10% | No  |
- 34. Is what is reported on the report card directly related to the music curriculum?**  
N = 21
- |        |     |     |
|--------|-----|-----|
| n = 12 | 57% | Yes |
| n = 9  | 43% | No  |
- 35. Do you believe that your current music report card conveys an adequate amount of information about a student's musical progress?**  
N = 20
- |        |     |  |
|--------|-----|--|
| n = 10 | 50% | Yes – The report card conveys an <b>adequate</b> amount of information about musical progress. |
| n = 10 | 50% | No – The report card <b>does not</b> convey <b>enough</b> information about musical progress.  |
| n = 0  | 0%  | No – The report card conveys <b>too much</b> information about musical progress.               |
- 36. Who was involved in the development of the current system of reporting in your district?**  
N = 20 (More than one response may be checked.)
- |        |     |                       |
|--------|-----|-----------------------|
| n = 15 | 75% | Music teachers        |
| n = 8  | 40% | Special area teachers |
| n = 3  | 15% | Building principal    |
| n = 14 | 70% | Curriculum director   |
| n = 0  | 0%  | Parents               |
| n = 4  | 20% | Other                 |
- 37. Do you anticipate making any major changes to your report card in the near future?**  
N = 20
- |        |     |     |
|--------|-----|-----|
| n = 7  | 35% | Yes |
| n = 13 | 65% | No  |

**38. How much feedback do you receive from *parents* about your district's music report card?**

**N = 21**

n = 0	0%	Frequent feedback – every time a report card is sent home
n = 3	14%	Infrequent feedback – once or twice a year
n = 18	86%	Little or no feedback
n = 0	0%	Other

**39. How do you educate parents about your district's music report card?**

**N = 21** (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 5	24%	Letters sent home
n = 6	29%	Information shared at open house or other nonmusical gatherings
n = 4	19%	Information shared at student musical performances
n = 0	0%	Information included in student handbook
n = 12	57%	I do not educate parents about the report card
n = 1	5%	Other

**40. What is the highest educational level that you have completed?**

**N = 21**

n = 4	19%	Bachelors Degree
n = 6	29%	Bachelors Plus
n = 5	24%	Masters Degree
n = 6	29%	Masters Plus

**41. How long have you been teaching music in this school district?**

**N = 21**

n = 4	19%	1-2 years
n = 4	19%	3-5 years
n = 4	19%	6-10 years
n = 8	38%	11-20 years
n = 1	5%	More than 21 years

**42. I would be interested in receiving a summary of the results of this study.**

**N = 21**

n = 19	90%	Yes
n = 2	10%	No

## Appendix M: Principal Data

<b>Principal Questionnaire Data</b>
-------------------------------------

**1. In which school district are you a principal?**

N = 17

n = 5	29%	District E Area Schools
n = 2	12%	District C Community Schools
n = 2	12%	District D Consolidated Schools
n = 4	24%	District B Public Schools
n = 4	24%	District A Community Schools

**2. What is the purpose of the assessment that your building's music teacher performs?**

N = 17 (More than one box may be checked)

n = 16	94%	Determine if students are learning
n = 17	100%	Plan for further instruction
n = 12	71%	Provide feedback for students
n = 11	65%	Provide data for report card
n = 0	0%	Not known
n = 1	6%	Other

**3. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement:**

**Assessment, grading, and reporting information can be used as an advocacy tool for music programs. Along with public performances, assessing, grading, and reporting information become what the parents and community members know about the music program (Nutter, 1999).**

N = 16

n = 81	13%	I <b>agree</b> with the above statement
n = 1	6%	I <b>disagree</b> with the above statement
n = 2	13%	I have <b>no opinion</b> about the above statement

**4. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement:**

**“Educators must increasingly justify their programs through concrete measurements. Music, like any other academic subject, has to produce “results,” and those results are measured in terms of student achievement” (Walker, 1998, p. 178).**

N = 16

n = 13	81%	I <b>agree</b> with the above statement
n = 3	19%	I <b>disagree</b> with the above statement
n = 0	0%	I have <b>no opinion</b> about the above statement

5. **Please indicate your agreement with the following statement:**  
**“Music as a subject loses respectability in the eyes of school administrators when there is a lack of viable grading criteria”** (Walker, 1998, p. 186).  
**N = 16**
- |       |     |  |
|-------|-----|--|
| n = 4 | 25% | I <b>agree</b> with the above statement            |
| n = 8 | 50% | I <b>disagree</b> with the above statement         |
| n = 4 | 25% | I have <b>no opinion</b> about the above statement |
6. **Please indicate your agreement with the following statement:**  
**“Teachers, parents, administrators, and others will recognize and respect the value of the music program ONLY if music teachers can demonstrate each student’s achievement of a sequential curriculum of musical skills and knowledge based on state and national standards”** (Chiodo, 2001, p. 18).  
**N = 17**
- |        |     |  |
|--------|-----|--|
| n = 5  | 29% | I <b>agree</b> with the above statement            |
| n = 12 | 71% | I <b>disagree</b> with the above statement         |
| n = 0  | 0%  | I have <b>no opinion</b> about the above statement |
7. **Who was involved in the development of the music section of the elementary report card?**  
**N = 17** (More than one response may be checked.)
- |        |     |                       |
|--------|-----|-----------------------|
| n = 13 | 76% | Music teachers        |
| n = 4  | 24% | Special area teachers |
| n = 7  | 41% | Building principals   |
| n = 13 | 76% | Curriculum director   |
| n = 1  | 6%  | Parents               |
| n = 3  | 18% | Not known             |
| n = 1  | 6%  | Other                 |
8. **Do you use the music report card as a tool to find out about what students are learning?**  
**N = 17**
- |        |     |     |
|--------|-----|-----|
| n = 4  | 24% | Yes |
| n = 13 | 76% | No  |
9. **Do you use information from the report cards to reflect on the effectiveness of your building’s music teacher?**  
**N = 17**
- |        |      |     |
|--------|------|-----|
| n = 0  | 0%   | Yes |
| n = 17 | 100% | No  |

**10. Do you believe that the music section of your current report card conveys an adequate amount of information about students' musical progress?**

**N = 17**

n = 10	59%	Yes – The report card conveys an <b>adequate</b> amount of information about musical progress.
n = 7	41%	No – The report card <b>does not</b> convey <b>enough</b> information about musical progress.
n = 0	0%	No – The report card conveys <b>too much</b> information about musical progress.

**11. How do you educate parents about your district's music report card?**

**N = 17** (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 8	47%	Letters sent home
n = 2	12%	Information shared at open house or other nonmusical gatherings
n = 4	24%	Information shared at student musical performances
n = 4	24%	Information included in student handbook
n = 2	12%	I do not educate parents about the report card
n = 2	12%	Other

**12. Have you received questions or comments from parents about the music section of your elementary report card?**

**N = 17**

n = 0	0%	Yes
n = 17	100%	No

**13. How much feedback do you receive from parents about the music section of your elementary report card?**

**N = 17**

n = 0	0%	Frequent feedback – every time a report card is sent home
n = 0	0%	Infrequent feedback – once or twice a year
n = 17	100%	Little or no feedback
n = 0	0%	Other

**14. How long have you been a principal in this school district?**

**N = 17**

n = 3	18%	1–2 years
n = 4	24%	3–5 years
n = 7	41%	6–10 years
n = 3	18%	11–20 years
n = 0	0%	More than 21 years



**15. I would be interested in receiving a summary of the results of this study.**  
**N = 17**

n = 12	71%	Yes
n = 5	29%	No

## Appendix N: Parent Data

<b>Parent Questionnaire Data</b>
----------------------------------

**1. My child (or children) attends:****N = 54**

n = 13	24%	District E Area Schools
n = 6	11%	District C Community Schools
n = 13	24%	District D Consolidated Schools
n = 8	15%	District B Public Schools
n = 14	26%	District A Community Schools

**2. I have a child (or children) in the following grade(s):****N = 54** Please check all that apply.

n = 3	6%	Kindergarten
n = 7	13%	1 <sup>st</sup> grade
n = 21	39%	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade
n = 18	33%	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade
n = 21	39%	4 <sup>th</sup> grade
n = 8	15%	5 <sup>th</sup> grade

**3. How do you learn about your district's elementary music report card?****N = 52** (More than one response may be checked.)

n = 24	46%	Letters sent home
n = 13	25%	Information shared at open house or other nonmusical gatherings
n = 7	13%	Information shared at student musical performances
n = 4	8%	Information included in student handbook
n = 22	42%	Other:

**4. Please rate the FORMAT (physical characteristics such as the layout of information, size of paper, number of pages, handwritten or computer generated, etc) of your child's music report card:****N = 52**

n = 43	81%	The format of the music report card is <b>easy</b> to understand.
n = 7	15%	The format of the music report card is <b>moderately easy</b> to understand.
n = 0	0%	The format of the music report card is <b>moderately difficult</b> to understand.
n = 2	4%	The format of the music report card is <b>difficult</b> to understand.

5. **Please rate the GRADING SYSTEM** (ie: Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory or Meets expectations/Does not meet expectations, etc) **of your child's music report card:**  
N = 53

n = 44	83%	The grading system is <b>easy</b> to understand.
n = 7	13%	The grading system is <b>moderately easy</b> to understand.
n = 1	2%	The grading system is <b>moderately difficult</b> to understand.
n = 1	2%	The grading system is <b>difficult</b> to understand.

6. **Would you be more satisfied with your child's report card if it included a traditional letter grade (A, B, C, etc)?**  
N = 53

n = 24	46%	Yes
n = 29	54%	No

7. **Do you believe that the music section of your child's report card conveys an adequate amount of information about students' MUSICAL PROGRESS?**  
N = 53

n = 27	51%	Yes – The report card conveys an <b>adequate</b> amount of information about musical progress.
n = 26	49%	No – The report card <b>does not</b> convey <b>enough</b> information about musical progress.
n = 0	0%	No – The report card conveys <b>too much</b> information about musical progress.

8. **Which is more important in regards to your child's music report card?**  
N = 52

n = 10	19%	The <b>AMOUNT</b> of information about my child's musical progress
n = 36	69%	The <b>SPECIFICITY</b> of the information about my child's musical progress
n = 6	12%	Neither is important to me

9. **Is it important to receive information about nonmusical factors such as participation, behavior, attitude, effort, etc in the MUSIC section of the report card?**  
N = 54

n = 52	96%	Yes
n = 2	4%	No

10. Please rate your satisfaction with the **FREQUENCY** you receive a report card that includes music.

N = 54

n = 0	0%	I receive <b>too many</b> music report cards during the school year.
n = 40	74%	I receive an <b>adequate</b> amount of music report cards during the school year.
n = 14	26%	I <b>do not receive enough</b> music report cards during the school year.

11. Has your school district asked for your input concerning the **FORMAT** of the elementary music report card?

N = 40

n = 0	0%	Yes
n = 40	100%	No

12. Has your school district asked for your input concerning the **CONTENT** of the elementary music report card?

N = 38

n = 0	0%	Yes
n = 38	100%	No

13. Has your school district asked for your input concerning the **GRADING SYSTEM** of the elementary music report card?

N = 39

n = 1	3%	Yes
n = 38	97%	No

14. Please rate your overall satisfaction with your child's music report card.

N = 53

n = 22	42%	Very Satisfied
n = 22	42%	Somewhat Satisfied
n = 5	9%	Somewhat Unsatisfied
n = 4	8%	Very Unsatisfied

15. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement  
 "Teachers, parents, administrators, and others will recognize and respect the value of the music program **ONLY** if music teachers can demonstrate each student's achievement of a sequential curriculum of musical skills and knowledge based on state and national standards" (Chiodo, 2001, p. 18).

N = 52

n = 28	54%	I <b>agree</b> with the above statement
n = 16	31%	I <b>disagree</b> with the above statement

n = 8      15%      I have **no opinion** about the above statement

**16. Please use the remaining lines for any additional comments or questions you have about your child's music report card.**

- I would like to know specifics with regards to my child's music class ie: learning about activities, certain songs, tempo understanding, note recognition, etc. All I get is Outstanding, Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory which doesn't tell me what she is learning, just about her behavior and her participation.
- I feel that the music report card is too vague. I have no idea what the children are learning and if they teacher actually knows who my children are. We value music, as we do art, in our family, and I'm consistently in a quandary about their music classes. Are they learning scales, tones, notes or playing games which incorporate musical strategies? I understand the music teachers have many students but I would appreciate knowing what they have accomplished each marking period and also if they feel my children have achieved the class/period goals.
- The music report card seems quite generic to me. Because of this the subject seems less important. Although I feel behavior in a classroom is important, I don't feel like it should impact the score or grade of a student as far as their musical ability. My son does not enjoy music class although he is very strong musically. Why??
- It's the same used for gym and art (I believe). It only lists 4 items being graded. I think a better system could be used for each and tailor made for each.
- I would like to see a report 4 times a year versus 2 times a year. They receive report 4 times a year in most other subjects except music, gym and art.
- Write grades on master report card. I did not learn to read music in school, they teach the basics now, so kids can do it! Make it all more challenging (and fun) and they can do it.
- I would have to say that the music education at ... is non-existent. First, the students only get music instruction a few times a month. Second, they watch movies like "The Sound of Music" during class instruction time. Third, there has never been any concerts, performances, etc for me, as a parent, to attend that would showcase of promote music education. As far as I know, my children have learned nothing about music.(I only get some check marks on a sheet of paper 2x a year).
- I do not receive a music report card. If I did I don't remember getting one, or didn't know that is what it was.
- I feel music is very important and that the music could be given more attention along with other arts. I've never found the information on the report card of any use other than my child attended and was disruptive.
- As a parent, I would like more feedback in the elementary stage of my child's music abilities then we receive now - which is none. I have two older

children in junior high and high school band and was given more info in middle school, but would like more info in the elementary stage.

- Honestly, a music report card means little to me. It makes no difference to me whether or not my son can hold a tune or play the recorder correctly. I think grading them on the ability to sing in the right voice is a waste of the music teachers time!
- Simple and to the point, of the students progress, within the music class.
- What we enjoyed in the past is when our child or even our older children came home sing songs that they learned while in class. One Christmas was a song and dance night at our house where they sang "Spin a Little Dreidel" while showing us the dance routine with the song. Or another time they sang, "In the Jungle, the mighty jungle, the lion sleeps tonight," with hand movements! So cute!
- I don't think it gives an adequate snapshot of my child's true musical skills. My child has taken guitar lessons for 2 years and is very good. He loves music—all music from classical to rock to country. He is also a straight A student. However, his marks in music have not been good this year because he is bored with playing the recorder—he is way past the instrument. Now he doesn't wish to continue music class in school because of this negative experience. I find it sad because I know there are many things that could be done in the music curriculum to make it a fun, exciting and enjoyable experience for these young children.
- I think that a kindergarten–4th grade student should be exposed to music, but not rated on how well they perform. I agree that we should know if they participate in class and try, but feel that letter grades—if based on performance could hinder musical progress—some start later in years.
- I wish we had the opportunity to have more musical and/or singing programs with/for the children. I would love to observe what they've learned first hand.
- I do not think music should have a letter grade. For example, my son hates music and my daughter loves music. My son still participates and does what he has to—but, because he doesn't enjoy it doesn't mean he should get a lower grade than my daughter would. I feel music is more of an enrichment class than a required class. I agree he needs to be exposed at this age—but a letter grade would only upset him.
- Only get regular marking period report cards - basic grading for unified arts (O,S, NI) plus efforts (1-6) and skill levels (7-12). I feel that there could be more info.
- My daughter is 7 years old and loves music and has started playing the guitar. She loves singing although somewhat shy yet to sing in front of others by herself. I guess it would be nice if there was a little more feedback on participation and behavior in class.
- My kids take music lessons outside of school so I get information that is useful from those teachers, and because I help my kids practice, I know what they understand and can do well and know what they need to improve on. Consequently, my kids' music report cards have very little useful

information, but that is okay for me because of their music lessons. Also, to expect a school music teacher (who probably works at 4-5+ schools and who has 600+ students) to grade them on any meaningful scale is not realistic. The parents who care about their kids' musicality probably already have them in lessons.

- The grading system used in our district's report card only specifies if a child is "not meeting," "developing towards," or "meeting" expectations for traditional subject areas. The music report card includes an "exceeding" expectation which the traditional subject areas should adopt.
- I like it.
- In elementary school, music class is to teach students to enjoy music. I would not want a report card to come home and say "Your son can't keep a beat." Behavior is important, so that could be on the report card—but details on whether or not they can sing in tune or keep a beat are not necessary—those "labels" could turn them "off" to music for the rest of their lives.
- On question #10 for frequency, I would like to see report cards (including music) quarterly.
- The students don't get marks for music. We may call the music teacher and ask how our child is doing.
- I want to know can my child read music and sing or play an instrument independently. Some of the words on the report card I don't know what it is. "Aurally? Recognizes—step?, skip?, leap?, etc. I think there are more music stuff they learn than what is reflected on the card. Does my child actually sing along ever in class? March pitch while singing along. I have always been impressed with the music shows the class has done - I like seeing a variety in shows from year to year. I know nothing about music therefore may have a different level of expectation from a musical family.

## Appendix O: Report Card Review Data

<b>Report Card Review Data</b>
--------------------------------

**1. Size of paper****N = 5**

n = 1	20%	8.5 x 14
n = 3	60%	8.5 x 11
n = 0	0%	8.5 x 5.5
n = 1	20%	Other: _____

**2. Number of pages****N = 5**

n = 0	0%	Half-sheet
n = 0	0%	1 page
n = 5	100%	2 pages
n = 0	0%	3 pages
n = 0	0%	More than 3 pages

**3. Format of pages****N = 5**

n = 1	20%	Hand-written
n = 4	80%	Computer generated

**4. The music report card is a:****N = 5**

n = 0	0%	Separate document
n = 2	40%	Document that includes other special area subjects (Art, PE, etc) only
n = 3	60%	Document that includes academic report card and other special area subjects
n = 0	0%	Other

**5. Is the format of the report card easy to read?****N = 5**

n = 5	100%	Yes
n = 0	0%	No



**6. Which of the following administrative policy items are included on the music report card?**

**N = 5**

n = 3	60%	Attendance
n = 0	0%	District mission statement
n = 0	0%	District grading philosophy
n = 0	0%	District grading policy
n = 0	0%	Parent signature
n = 1	20%	Other
n = 2	40%	No administrative policy items are listed

**7. Does the musical section of the report card list only the name of the subject or specific instructional or behavioral goals?**

**N = 5**

n = 2	40%	Name of subject only
n = 0	0%	Specific behavioral goals
n = 1	20%	Specific instructional goals
n = 2	40%	Both behavioral and instructional goals
n = 0	0%	Other

**8. List any specific behavioral goals stated on the report card:**

**N = 5**

n = 3	60%	None
n = 2	40%	Listed the following behavioral goals:

**District A:**

- Works cooperatively and participates fully in musical activities

**District E:**

- Participates in classroom activities
- Social Behaviors:
- Demonstrates self-control
- Demonstrates willingness and ability to work with others
- Handles materials and equipment responsibly
- Demonstrates positive attitude and conduct

**9. List any specific instructional goals stated on the report card:**

**N = 5**

n = 2	40%	None
n = 3	60%	Listed the following instructional goals:

**District A:***1<sup>st</sup> grade*

- Matches pitch while singing alone
- Demonstrates steady beat
- Demonstrates quarter notes, quarter rests, and eighth notes

*2<sup>nd</sup> grade*

- Visually and aurally recognizes step, skip, leap, repeat, upward, and downward.
- Distinguishes between the rhythm of the text and steady beat
- Recognized and identifies the beginning and ending of a musical phrase
- Matches pitch while singing alone

*3<sup>rd</sup> grade*

- Demonstrates rhythmic values of half notes, half rest, whole notes and whole rests
- Recognizes 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 meters and identifies the strong and weak beats in each meter
- Matches pitch when singing alone
- Performs B, A, G on soprano recorder

*4<sup>th</sup> grade*

- Identifies the instruments and families in the orchestra
- Demonstrates rhythmic independence
- Composes simple rhythms and melodies
- Performs D,C,B,A,G,E on soprano recorder
- Matches pitch when singing alone

**District B New:***All standards same for all grades*

- Content Standards from Michigan Department of Education website:  
All students will apply skills and knowledge to perform in the arts  
All students will apply skills and knowledge to create in the arts  
All students will analyze, describe, and evaluate works of art  
All students will understand, analyze, and describe the arts in their historical, social, and cultural contexts  
All students will recognize, analyze, and describe connections among the arts; between the arts and other disciplines; between the arts and everyday life

**District D:**

- Singing: Consistently/accurately performs selected melodies in tune with appropriate singing voice
- Rhythm Skills: Consistently/accurately performs rhythm patterns on instruments or using body percussion
- Movement: Consistently/accurately demonstrates the ability to predict phrase beginnings/endings through coordinated movements
- Recorder: Consistently/accurately performs selected recorder melodies

**District E:***Front of card:*

- Music Skills: Singing and playing instruments
- Music Literacy: Reading, writing, and creating music

*Back of card:*

- Music Skills: K–2  
Sings a variety of simple songs, becoming increasingly accurate in rhythm and pitch  
Explores a variety of instruments and other sound sources
- Music Skills: 3–5  
Sings a varied repertoire of songs, becoming increasingly accurate in rhythm and pitch  
Sings music in parts. For example: rounds and partner songs  
Performs rhythms and melodic patterns accurately on classroom instruments
- Music Literacy: K–2  
Uses own vocabulary to describe music  
Understands that music can be written down and read by others  
Has opportunities to develop creatively
- Music Literacy: 3–5  
Uses standard music terminology to describe music  
Reads and writes standard music notation  
Has opportunities to develop creativity

**10. Does the music report card include information about students' musical skills?****N = 5**

n = 3	60%	Yes
n = 2	40%	No

**11. Does the music report card include information about students' musical knowledge?****N = 5**

n = 3	60%	Yes
n = 2	40%	No

**12. Does the music section of the report card include any information about the nonmusical factors listed below?**

**N = 5**

n = 1	20%	Attitude
n = 2	40%	Behavior
n = 1	20%	Citizenship
n = 2	40%	Effort
n = 2	40%	Participation
n = 2	40%	Other
n = 3	60%	No nonmusical factors

**13. Is there space for the music teacher to add comments about musical progress?**

**N = 5**

n = 5	100%	Yes
n = 0	0%	No

**14. If yes, are the comments from a standardized menu or open-ended?**

**N = 5**

n = 0	0%	Standardized
n = 1	20%	Open-ended
n = 4	80%	Both
n = 0	100%	Information not available

**15. What type of grading system is used?**

**N = 5**

n = 0	0%	Letter Grades – A, B, C, D, E, F
n = 2	40%	Categorical Labels – Novice, Apprentice or 1, 2, 3, 4
n = 0	0%	Percentage Grading – 87%
n = 3	60%	Standards-Based Grades – 1, 2, 3, 4 or Beginning, Progressing
n = 0	0%	Pass/Fail Grading – Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory
n = 0	0%	Mastery Grades – Mastery/Non-mastery
n = 0	0%	Narratives – Written comments from standardized menu or open-ended comments
n = 0	0%	Other

- 16. List the specific labels, numbers or letters used in the above grading system.  
N = 5**

**District A:**

- 1 = Not Meeting Expectations
- 2 = Developing Toward Expectations
- 3 = Meets Expectations
- S = Meets Expectations with Accommodations

**District B Current:**

- NY = Not Yet
- Dev = Developing
- AC = Achieved
- O = Outstanding
- S = Satisfactory
- NI = Needs to Improve

**District B New:**

Standards/Proficiency Key:

- S = Satisfactory
- P = Making Progress
- N = Needs Improvement

Effort Key:

- 1 = Excellent
- 2 = Satisfactory
- 3 = Inconsistent
- 4 = Lacks Effort

**District C:**

- E = Exceeds Expectations
- S = Satisfactory
- P = Progressing
- N = Not meeting Grade Level Expectations
- Blank = Does not apply at this time

**District D:**

- 1 = Meeting grade level expectations
- 2 = Developing/Progressing
- 3 = Area of Concern
- NA = Not assessed at this time

**District E:**

- 1. Consistently** applies concepts/skills; demonstrates a strength
- 2. Usually** applies concepts/skills; developmentally appropriate
- 3. Sometimes** applies concepts/skills; inconsistent use
- 4. Rarely** applies concepts/skills; requires additional support
- 5. Skill** introduced; not yet evaluated

**17. Is a key to the grading system provided?  
N = 5**

n = 5	100%	Yes
n = 0	0%	No

## Appendix P: Bibliography

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