

5 Ways MAEIA Assessments Can Improve Your Teaching

“Assessment.”

It doesn't have to be such a dirty word. As ARTs teachers, we're often scared off by the idea of assessments. We think they're just hoops to jump through and impossible work for us to do.

However, it doesn't have to be this way. Effective and applicable assessments make a huge difference in teaching. According to [10 Research And Proven Practices of Dr. John Hattie](#), assessment has a potential combined 0.80 effect size.

This means we can improve student learning by almost 2 years over the course of one year!

While this is important, improving your own teaching is important too, and the MAEIA assessments are a big part of what I've been doing to improve myself.

Here are 5 ways I use MAEIA assessments to improve my own teaching.

#1 Accurate Picture of Students

If you're teaching elementary music as I do, you likely have more than hundreds of students (I'm at 650+). I've always thought, as we did small assessment activities, that I had a decent idea of how the whole class and individual students were doing.

When I started doing more intentional assessments with MAEIA, I found something quite different. There were some students I had been assuming could do my tasks easily, but they were faking it with confidence. The assessments showed me that I was leaving them behind.

There's no way you can accurately just “eye-ball” success in your classroom. These tools from MAEIA now help me ensure I'm getting an accurate picture of all my kids.

#2 Pushes Students to Improve

There are times over the years I've gotten stuck in ruts with my students. They learn the things I'm teaching them, but they have a harder time seeing the end-result they're working towards.

This is more of a failure on my part than on theirs. Introducing some MAEIA assessments has actually helped me to push them harder.

It also gives them an idea of where they're heading. My students talk to each other across grade level and share their pride at mastering certain assessment activities (although they don't always realize that "tests" are what they're doing).

They come to me later and ask when they can do what the older kids are doing. I always plan curriculum long-term, but MAEIA helps me to help them see the grand scheme of what they're working on.

#3 Self-reflection

The MAEIA tools also help me to reflect on my plans overall. There are dozens on dozens of examples of assessments to pull from; they show me areas I'm neglecting too.

You could pick assessments you feel your kids will be successful at, or you can look at ones you're not sure about and teach with more of those ideas in mind.

#4 Checks My Assessment Practices

Each assessment also has very specific details on how you may want to teach and administer the assessment. As I went through some of these, I learned something:

I am accidentally doing things which give students the answers!

For example, I've often assessed my Kindergarten students on their ability to keep a steady beat to recorded music. I also knew I shouldn't pat the beat with them, or they would just copy me.

Going through MAEIA's version of the assessment, it mentioned specifically how they need to do the check with their eyes closed.

This may seem obvious to everyone else, but it was something my kids needed. They were subconsciously looking to others to come up with a group answer for the steady beat.

This is just one example of the high-level assessment practices MAEIA can help you with to get the best picture of your students' ability.

They also include [various rubrics](#) to help you see where students could be.

#5 Informs My Teaching

Finally, the act of collecting data with MAEIA assessments informs my own teaching. I can see more specifically where the gaps in my students' knowledge are.

For example:

The rhythm reading assessment for third, fourth, and fifth grades uses different types of rhythms over 10 questions for each grade level. I used this with my fourth graders as a pretest just a few months ago.

In the assessment, I was able to see which types of rhythms in which meters the students struggled with. Then I adapted my pacing to specifically fill those gaps.

Conclusion

Assessments are important and make a big difference in how I reach my students better. It can be hard to know all the assessment best practices, but using the MAEIA assessments streamlines the process and helps me keep up with the current teaching practices.

I strongly encourage all music and ARTs teachers to check out this program for their own classroom and find what works for them. You won't regret it!

Zach VanderGraaff is a K-5 music teacher at Bay City Public Schools and writer for [Dynamic Music Room](#). He also serves as Past-President of Michigan Kodaly Educators and current Executive Secretary of the Midwest Kodaly Music Educators Association.