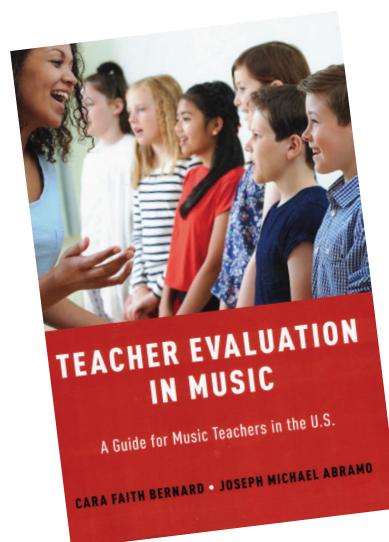


Reviewed by Siwen Xi

Teacher Evaluation in Music: A Guide for Music Teachers in the U.S.

Written by Cara Faith Bernard
and Joseph Michael Abramo
Oxford University Press, 2019



Music teachers in U.S. school settings are regularly evaluated by administrators, many of whom have no music teaching experience and possess little knowledge about the practice of music education. For evaluation purposes, music teachers need to provide evidence not only of music content knowledge, but also must demonstrate effective teaching practices, such as ensuring students are engaged in instruction and evaluated properly. In the seven chapters of *Teacher Evaluation in Music: A Guide for Music Teachers in the U.S.*, authors Cara Bernard and Joseph Abramo offer guidance in navigating appropriate and productive communication with evaluators, explain evaluation areas that can be problematic for music teachers, and share suggestions and guidelines for individuals to implement in their own teaching.

The first two chapters scaffold an appropriate mindset to consider teacher evaluations an opportunity to grow professionally. Chapter 1 walks readers through the history, policy, and current practices of teacher evaluation. Chapter 2 presents two common aims of teacher evaluation: (1) serving as a tool to measure teachers' effectiveness and to diagnose ineffective teachers, and (2) assisting teachers in improving their teaching practices.

Shulman (1986, 1987), quoted by Bernard and Abramo in Chapter 2, suggested that teacher knowledge can be categorized into three parts:

content knowledge (knowledge of what to teach), pedagogical knowledge (knowledge of how to teach), and pedagogical content knowledge (unique pedagogical knowledge of a specific subject area). Music teachers might be well-versed in content knowledge and easily able to incorporate it into their teaching; however, the focus of the teacher evaluation is to assess general pedagogical knowledge. Bernard and Abramo also suggest that teachers should have the right mindset for the evaluation, even if the evaluator does not have music teaching experience, in order to engage positively in the evaluation and to develop professionally.

Chapters 3 through 6 concentrate on questioning strategies, differentiation, literacy, and assessment. The authors identify these four areas as those that music teachers might struggle with during evaluations.

In Chapter 3, Bernard and Abramo introduce the idea that music teachers might experience difficulty in incorporating the instructional strategy of questioning. They cite a number of studies showing that questioning can be effective. They also point out, though, that not all questions are of good quality and that questioning is one of the checkpoints commonly included in teacher evaluation systems such as the Danielson Framework for Teacher Evaluation and the Marzano Focused Teacher Evaluation Model. The chapter concludes with suggestions for conveying questions in an encouraging way and incorporating

and sequencing open, guided, and closed questions to enhance teaching effectiveness.

Chapter 4 stresses the value of differentiation of instruction and its integration in planning and teaching. Differentiation is not simply dividing students by achievement level. Instead, differentiation is an effective approach for providing students with needed support and guidance. It allows teachers to understand students' strengths and weaknesses and then utilize their strengths to improve their weaknesses. For example, teachers could provide additional materials, such as iconic notation, to students who struggle with notation. The authors suggest that music teachers employ differentiation of content, process, and outcomes by examining students' readiness, learner profiles, interests, and cultural backgrounds. With consideration given to these, differentiation may be appropriately incorporated into planning and teaching and within formal teacher evaluations.

Chapter 5 concerns literacy in music classes. Bernard and Abramo discuss the Marzano and Danielson teacher evaluation systems where the term literacy is not explicitly used, yet it shows up in different forms, such as reading and writing. In music education, literacy can be defined in two ways: language and music notation. Apart from reading music notation, the authors point out that students may also engage in music learning experiences involving diverse texts or lyrics.

In Chapter 6, the authors illustrate assessment in teacher evaluation, where evaluators examine teachers' assessment practices in the classroom via formal observation and documented student growth. They also provide guidelines for differentiated assessment. For example, to vary assessments, teachers need to be able to give students at least three different ways to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities.

The final chapter discusses ways to communicate with and approach the evaluator in order to build

mutual understanding of music teaching. Bernard and Abramo also examine balancing advocacy for the uniqueness of music content knowledge with openness to the evaluator's feedback and seeing the evaluation as a pathway to growth and improvement.

I personally found this book very useful. It helped me better understand the evaluation systems and equipped me not only for my future formal evaluations, but also for effective teaching on a daily basis. Evaluation is a part of every school music educator's teaching career. Being able to communicate with the evaluators properly is essential in order to understand their expectations and feedback as well as to share information about the situation, concerns, difficulties, and other unique features of the music classroom. Additionally, each chapter, except the final one, presents a vignette about issues music teachers regularly face. At the end of each chapter, the authors show the vignette again, this time rewritten to integrate the information discussed throughout the chapter. The two versions of each vignette show how the conversations between the evaluator and the music teacher can have a more positive and pleasant outcome by incorporating the chapter content. As a reader, the vignettes enhanced my understanding and amplified the practicality of the chapters. Additionally, the tables and graphs the authors included help readers compare and summarize important concepts and provide a clear, logical, and straightforward view of the content. ■

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