

The Internet, iPhones, iPads, Laptops and A Choral Ensemble's Quarterly Assessment

Our high school has restructured its cumulative testing by removing final exams from the schedule. In place of exams, we have been asked to administer quarterly assessments. The bell schedule for our nine-period day is disrupted for five days, every marking period, (four times a year), to create sixty-two minute assessment periods. These assessments are not to exceed fifteen per cent of a grade and are cumulative up to the date of the assessment. This change came about as a result of a survey that stated our students were under considerable stress as a result of having to take final exams and midterms.

While I have an extensive list of none-too-favorable opinions about this restructuring, this article will focus on the process by which I administered the marking period one quarterly to my SATB Concert Choir (100 singers) and my SSA Chorale (65 singers).

In October, each student was asked to complete a video assessment of the Region II Chorus audition material. Students were graded using a rubric where I could add individual comments regarding personal growth and potential. As the end-of-marking-period assessments were to be "pencil to paper", I decided I would create an assessment of twenty-five multiple choice questions for each ensemble. Questions would include references to the literature each ensemble was preparing for the Winter Choral Concert.

Rather than administer these assessments on actual printed paper, I decided to incorporate technology by creating a multiple choice test using Google Docs. All questions had four possible answers and all questions required a response before submitting.

Once the assessment was designed, I created a tinyurl from which each ensemble would retrieve the assessment online. I then asked both classes how many singers had devices from which they could access the internet. Approximately 85-90% of my singers had internet enabled devices. I had already used a tinyurl during the first few days of school to gather their personal information, so I ran a mock assessment by asking them to log onto the tinyurl from the first day of school. With the exception of a small handful with browser issues, everyone was able to access the day one Google Doc with ease. Once the browser issues were fixed, we had 100% success with the internet access.

When the assessment day arrived, I assembled all my singers in my choir room with their internet-enabled devices. I had hard copies of the assessment printed for those without access. The students took their choir folders to a spot in the room, logged onto the tinyurl and began their assessment.

As the students finished and submitted their work, I was able to refresh the browser on my iPad at the response site of the Google Doc to confirm their submissions. Once all assessments were completed, I ran the responses through Flubaroo which immediately provided a grade for each assessment. From here, I could transfer grades into our Home Access Grading Center and into my grade book. If the Google Doc is created requesting the student's email address, Flubaroo will email results directly back to the student.

While it is unquestionably time-consuming to create a multiple choice assessment for a performance ensemble, the time spent on the front end was a solid investment, compared to the minimal amount of time it took to administer the assessment and retrieve and document the results from Flubaroo.

I'm hooked!

Barbararetzko@hotmail.com