

SINGING FOR A GRADE?

What Happens When Middle School Students are
Individually Assessed on Their Sightsinging Skills?

Submitted by Shaune Rebilas

Fact: The new formula for teacher evaluation in Kentucky requires tracking and documenting individual student growth.



This presents many challenges for the choral educator:

- ▶ In my situation, chorus is an ensemble performance class with more than 75 students in each of six classes.
- ▶ A paper and pencil test on music theory would be easy to administer, score and track, but does not authentically measure the skills that are the backbone of the choral curriculum.
- ▶ What aspect of the curriculum would be an authentic assessment?
- ▶ It makes sense to evaluate each student on their individual singing skills.....but how?

Why track sight-singing skills?

- ❖ This type of assessment lets the students demonstrate application of their knowledge and skills.
- ❖ This type of assessment helps the teacher to know the capabilities of each student, thereby guiding subsequent instruction
- ❖ A study by Demorest (1998) found that individual testing was an effective means to improve individual sight-singing in group performance situations.
- ❖ Keenan-Takagi (2000) “by evaluating individual success, you will be making a strong commitment to each student.

Sounds like a great idea! So what's the big deal?

CHOIR IS A GROUP EXPERIENCE!

- At the middle school level, choir is for anyone who would like to try it, regardless of perceived singing ability - no audition required.
- Many students try it because they can sing with their friends.
- Many students try it because they think they will have no homework and they will never have to sing alone.
- Many students try it because they love to sing....in a crowd!

I chose to implement this project with my first year choir students (7th grade girls) as they are very agreeable and sweet. I thought they might offer the path of least resistance!



WHAT WILL HAPPEN?



- ❖ Will students be stressed?
- ❖ Will students refuse to sing individually?
- ❖ Will students ask to be removed from chorus?
- ❖ Will students be afraid to sign up for chorus next year?

OR...

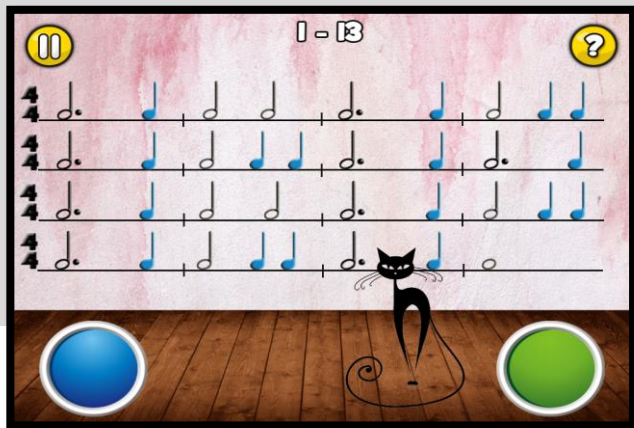
- ❖ Will students embrace the opportunity show off their skills?
- ❖ Will students practice their singing at home?
- ❖ Will the choir improve as a result of this intervention?

The Assessments....

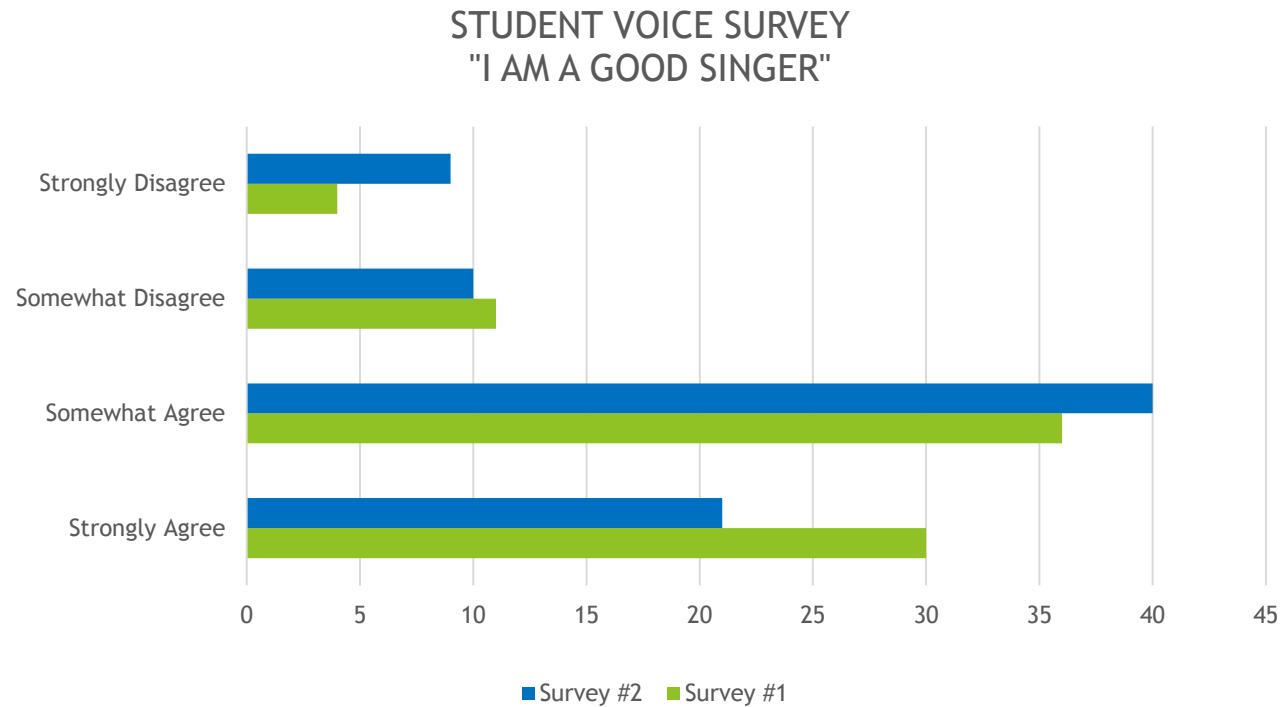
- ❖ Individual sightsinging performances assessed by pre/post test submitted via audio recordings and scored on a rubric.
- ❖ Individual student attitudes toward the assessments recorded through observation and the administration of a pre/post student voice survey.
- ❖ Audio recordings of whole group sightsinging and performance of repertoire examined to determine growth.

The Plan

- ❖ Whole group practice of sightsinging examples from previous Kentucky Music Educators Association assessment events.
- ❖ Individual practice of rhythm utilizing the Rhythm Cat ipad app. Enhances rhythm skills in a game format at student individual pace.
- ❖ Whole group practice of sightsinging using Smartmusic Computer program which provided instant feedback and was adaptable to games.
- ❖ Opportunities were provided for students to voluntarily demonstrate their skills as part of a small group, with a partner, or even as a soloist.

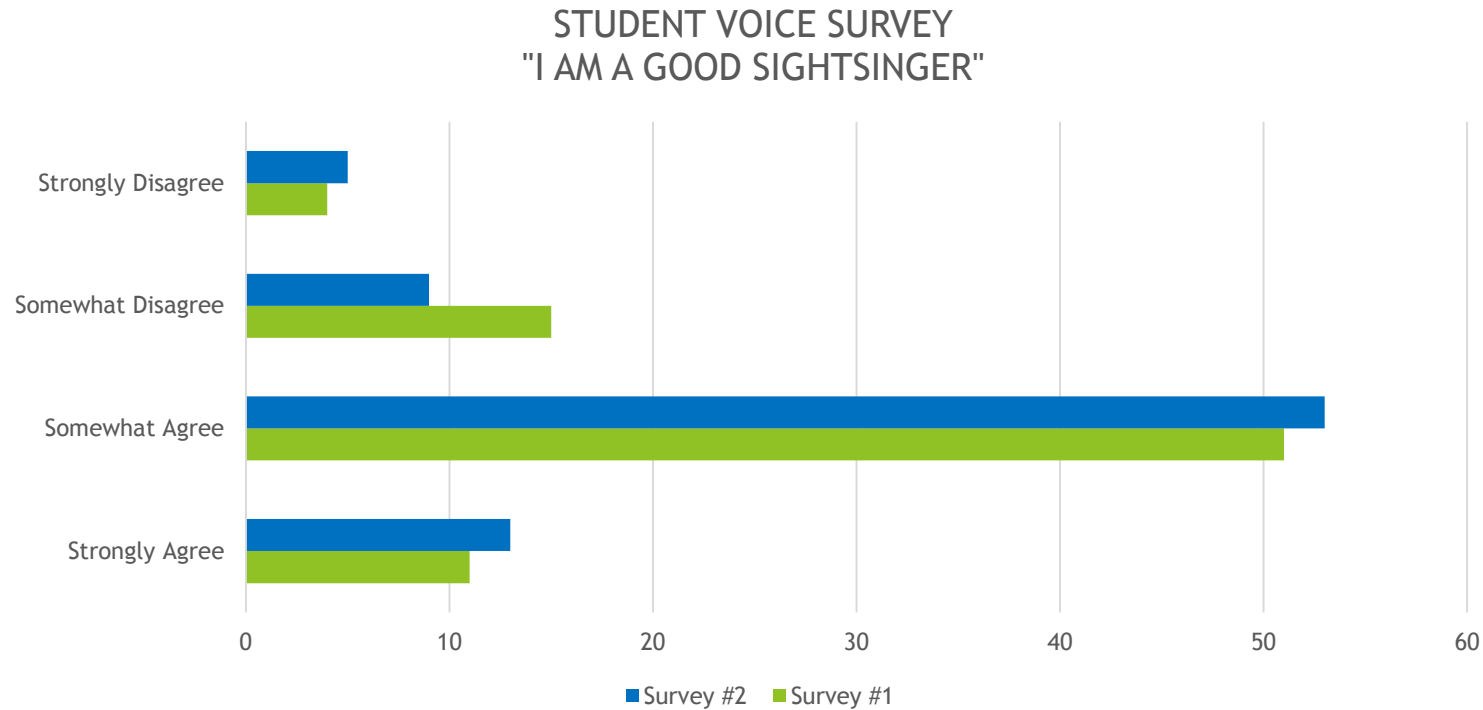


THE RESULTS...



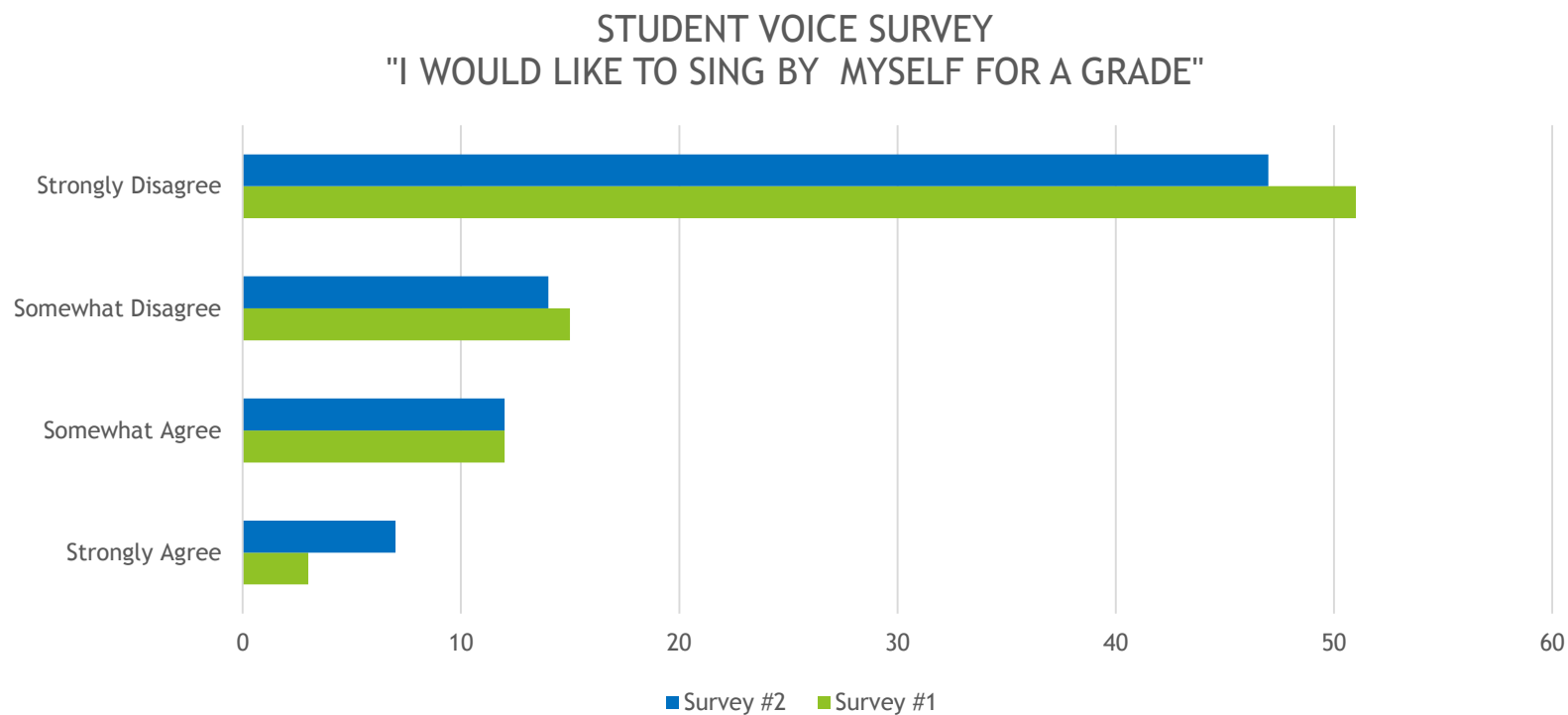
The anonymous student voice survey taken via ipad revealed that after the intervention, not as many students rated themselves as a good singer....I like to think they realized that there are skills they still need to develop on their way to "good singer" status!

RESULTS Continued...



More students now think they are good sightsingers. Bravo!

AND MORE RESULTS

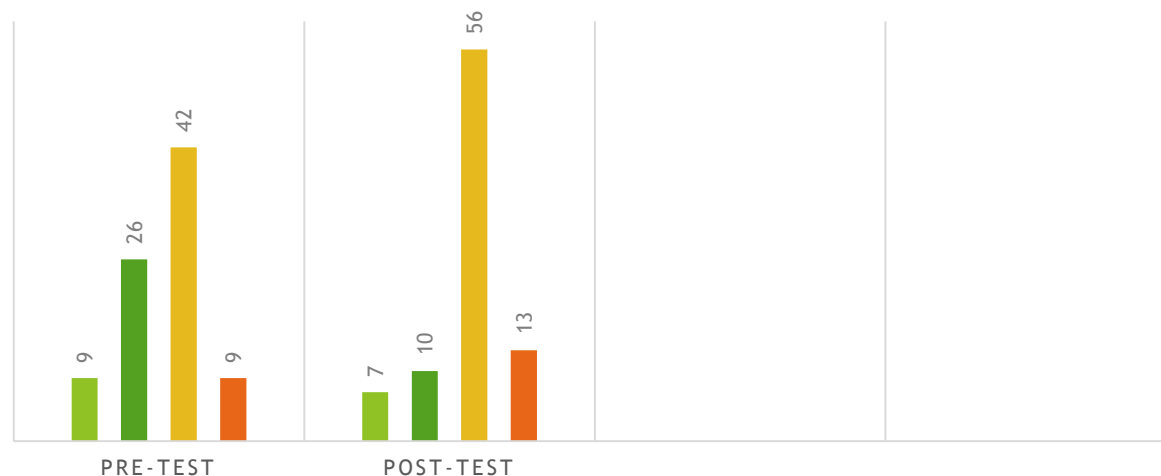


More students indicated that they would like to sing alone for a grade!

Data - Individual Singing Assessments

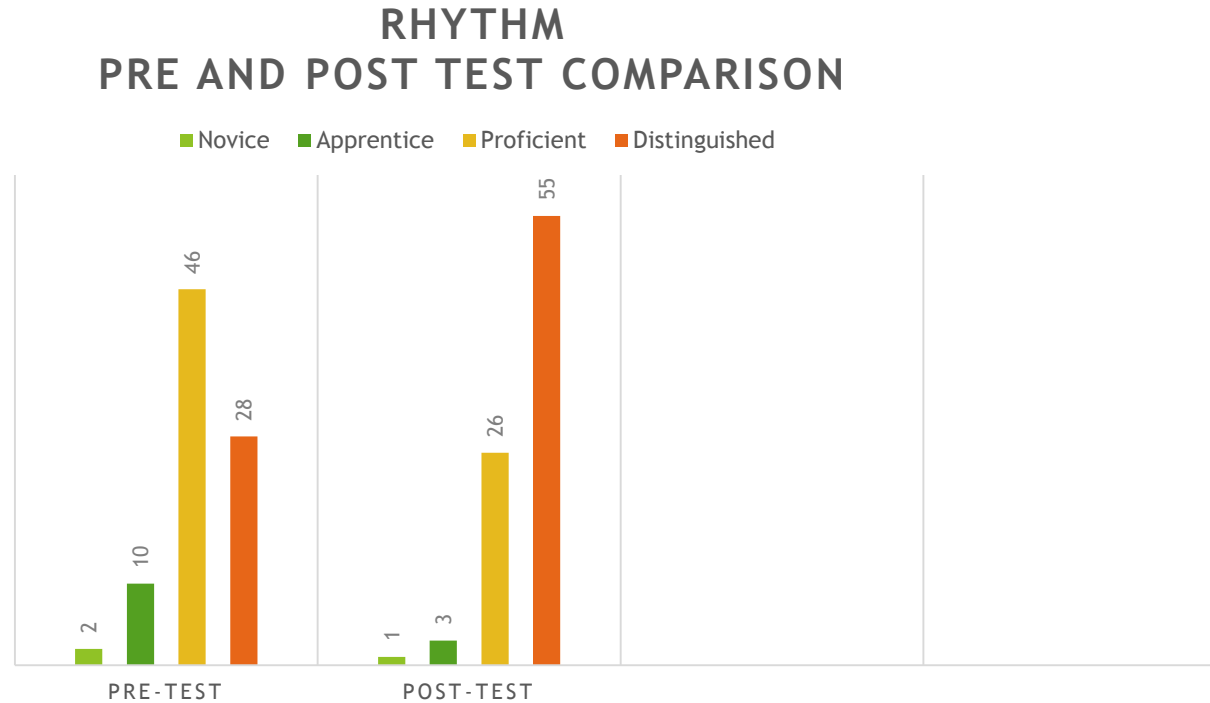
PITCH
PRE AND POST TEST COMPARISON

■ Novice ■ Apprentice ■ Proficient ■ Distinguished



Students recorded themselves on ipad and submitted recordings electronically. Recordings were scored on a rubric for skill level in pitch, rhythm and fluidity. The levels of achievement were novice, apprentice, proficient and distinguished. This is the same language that is used at KMEA sanctioned assessment events.

More Data....



There was tremendous growth in the area of rhythm. I attribute this to the practice with the Rhythm Cat ipad application.

OVERALL GROWTH

NUMBER OF STUDENTS SCORING AT EACH LEVEL

	Novice	Apprentice	Proficient	Distinguished	
Pre-test	11	24	45	6	
Post-test	3	16	55	12	

- ▶ An examination of overall scores for pre and post test revealed that sixteen students moved from novice/apprentice levels to proficient/distinguished

Did it make a difference in the choir's performance?

On April 2nd, this choir (Treble I) went to KMEA Assessment in Elizabethtown, Kentucky. The score they received for sightsinging was a 38 out of a possible 40 points, on the first reading of the sightsinging passage! Choirs are allowed two readings and are scored on the second attempt. The judge said there was no need for a second attempt and her written comments included “Wow. Excellent focus and musicianship today ladies. You are ready for the next level.”

Congratulations Girls!



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