

# EVOLUTION OF PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT FOR NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY'S MUSIC-IN-EDUCATION CONCENTRATION

by

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*This article was commissioned by the NEC Research Center to evaluate the content of its portfolio system for the Music-in-Education Concentration and to provide a preliminary analysis of its digital portfolio system for preparing Performance majors to contribute to a wide range of educational contexts.*

## INTRODUCTION

While serving as a research assistant at New England Conservatory, I was part of a team of student interns, coordinators and assistants faced with the challenges of portfolio assessment as it emerged in the Music-in-Education (MIE) Program<sup>1</sup>. Because the goal of the MIE Concentration is to prepare critical entry points into the field of education for Performance majors, the MIE team felt it was necessary to investigate rigorously the effectiveness of the program as a whole. Data had to be rigorously collected and analyzed so that assumptions could be examined empirically. For example, we all assumed that the Concentration was well-designed for conservatory students, and that it was not likely to match the comprehensiveness, depth or predictability of a conventional four- or two-year degree program in Music Education. However, through a series of inquiry questions we began to see how rich documentation and assessment methods could yield valid alternative pathways toward effective preparation as an artist-teacher. We asked:

- How can documentation of student work be organized to capture significant learning experiences occurring in the MIE courses and internships for performance majors?
- What evidence can be gathered to show that MIE courses and guided internship experiences can be linked to professional teaching standards?
- How can technology further support the portfolio process in terms of efficacy and ownership of the learning process by students?
- And finally, how can we assess evidence of teacher preparation in terms of the Artist-Teacher-Scholar framework—that is, the capability of MIE Concentration students to demonstrate the emerging abilities to understand the synthesis of the ‘artistry of teaching’ with, for example, the ‘scholarship of teaching?’

After considerable discussion about the challenges of program evaluation among faculty and student assistants, one conclusion immediately surfaced: a record of courses taken with grades attached seemed inadequate to serve this purpose. Therefore, the discussion among faculty and students about assessment focused on a critique of assessment methods. In some conventional methods of teaching, the word “assessment” often connotes the archaic idea of fill-in-the-blank worksheets, true/false and multiple choice



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STUDENTS DESERVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF ISSUES AND PRACTICES IN MUSIC-IN-EDUCATION VIA REFLECTIVE WRITING, SELF-ASSESSMENT, CRITICAL THINKING, AND QUESTIONING.

questions—methods of assessment that measure not how much the student understands, but only if s/he can write the correct answer at that particular moment on the paper. Singularly focused methods of assessment are education's version of single-use microwaveable dinners: they're quick and easy to serve, but shouldn't be considered part of one's balanced diet. Multiple measures of assessment are needed to measure comprehensively what and how students are learning.

After researching more contemporary methods of assessing student learning in the arts, such as Arts PROPEL<sup>2</sup> and those methods used in NEC's Learning Through Music programs<sup>3</sup>, we committed ourselves to the variety of ways and means for students to demonstrate and express their learning. Students deserve the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of issues and practices in Music-in-Education via reflective writing, self-assessment, critical thinking, and questioning. They also need a way to document learning through multiple media and must be able to link evidence of learning to standards of teacher preparation. It was decided that a Music-in-Education *process portfolio assessment system* linked with principles and issues of teacher professional development supported by the National Board of

Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) would become the lens for evaluating the effectiveness of the Concentration.

The faculty and students clearly also felt that portfolio assessment would fail if it did not capture the essence of the Artist-Teacher-Scholar framework and its implications for the success of the Music-in-Education Concentration for performance majors. That is, fundamental processes of artistry—creativity, entrepreneurship, deep inquiry and reflective thinking, application of a high degree of musical perceptiveness, skill and knowledge—must be cultivated and documented throughout the Concentration experience. Furthermore, artistic processes need to be grounded in the scholarship of teaching that includes both evidence of a basic understanding of the cognitive-developmental psychology of music, neurology, and learning theory, and the diversity of teaching and learning in cross-cultural and community-situated contexts.

The final issue revolved around the questions of ownership of the learning process and the role of technology in portfolio assessment systems. We asked the following questions:

- To what extent can students take charge of the documentation and assessment of their own learning?
- In what ways can the assessment of students' learning highlight different types of application of musical knowledge to teaching experiences?

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE MUSIC-IN-EDUCATION PROGRAM IN A CONSERVATORY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

New England Conservatory is one of the most prestigious and exclusive training institutions for professional musicians in the United States. With a combined (undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral) student body of under a thousand students, an average class size of ten students per classroom teacher, and a tradition of private studio instruction and small and large ensemble training,

students have the unique opportunity to demonstrating their learning to each other and their teachers at close range.

New England Conservatory's primary mission is to prepare students as performers; however, an alumni survey in 1996 revealed that although fewer than 5% of students are enrolled in education courses, approximately 90% of NEC graduates reported that they were involved with teaching in a wide variety of contexts. Only a tiny minority of those surveyed reported full-time employment in performance, and many of these professionals also taught on the side. Since intensive professional training in music for NEC graduates invariably provides an entry point into careers in education, the MIE Concentration was created in 1998 to prepare students to apply their skills and knowledge of music to a wide range of education contexts prior to graduation. Furthermore, the Artist-Teacher-Scholar framework supports the idea that professional training in music benefits also from coursework and guided internship experiences that challenge NEC students to produce documented evidence of serious inquiry, rigorous observation, diverse teaching experiences, and reflective thinking about the role of music in education. Thus, the MIE Concentration supports opportunities for students to develop as Artist-Teacher-Scholars by taking core courses in musical development, models of teaching and learning, digital technologies, cross-cultural and interdisciplinary aspects of music learning, and guided internships in community and school contexts. Pedagogy, teaching assistantships, arts organization internships and other cross-listed courses at NEC, Tufts University, and Northeastern University also count toward the completion of the Concentration.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

From a research perspective, we were also interested in seeing how our portfolio methods influenced MIE guided interns as teacher-scholars. That is, we asked, *Do portfolio documentation and assessment methods contribute to the education of our guided interns (student or artist-teachers in training) preparing to teach in the context of music classrooms, interdisciplinary classrooms, or artist-in-residencies?*

## The Development of the MIE Portfolio System

The process of developing the MIE Portfolio System began with a careful analysis of student work samples, exit interviews with Conservatory students who have completed guided internships in public schools with partner arts organizations, and analyses of Music-in-Education student course portfolios in relation to national standards for teacher preparation.

The table below suggests a framework for linking entry level experience in the MIE Concentration to standards linked to the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards or training standards in nationally recognized arts organizations.<sup>4</sup>

ADAPTATION OF NBPTS STANDARDS FOR NEC MUSIC-IN-EDUCATION CONCENTRATION COURSE/EXIT PORTFOLIOS	ORIGINAL NBPTS MUSIC STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL MUSIC TEACHER CERTIFICATION
<p><b>1. Knowledge of Students</b> MIE students understand the importance of considering (A) students' cognitive, physical, social development, and musical background, and (B) how this knowledge can be used to foster productive relationships with students while providing music instruction to meet their needs.</p>	<p><b>1. Knowledge of Students</b> Accomplished music teachers understand the cognitive, physical, and social development of students and know their musical background; they use this knowledge to foster productive relationships with students and to provide music instruction that meets their needs.</p>
<p><b>2. Knowledge of and Skills in Music</b> MIE students understand the importance of consistently demonstrating (A) outstanding performance and musicianship skills; (B) comprehensive knowledge of music theory and history; and (C) highly specialized knowledge in general, choral, or instrumental music as they provide students with high-quality, sequential instruction in music.</p>	<p><b>2. Knowledge of and Skills in Music</b> Accomplished music teachers consistently demonstrate outstanding performance and musicianship skills; comprehensive knowledge of music theory and history; and highly specialized knowledge in general, choral, or instrumental music as they provide students with high-quality, sequential instruction in music.</p>
<p><b>3. Planning and Implementing Assessment</b> MIE students understand the importance of and how to (A) plan and implement assessments; (B) use assessment data in planning subsequent instruction; and (C) employ a variety of methods to evaluate and report student progress.</p>	<p><b>3. Planning and Implementing Assessment</b> Accomplished music teachers plan and implement assessments, use assessment data in planning subsequent instruction, and employ a variety of methods to evaluate and report student progress.</p>
<p><b>4. Facilitating Music Learning</b> MIE students understand the importance of (A) employing a variety of materials, methods and strategies that engage students' interest and facilitate music learning, and (B) acquiring highly specialized knowledge in choral, instrumental, and general music in order to provide students with high-quality, sequential instruction in music.</p>	<p><b>4. Facilitating Music Learning</b> Accomplished music teachers employ materials, methods, and strategies that engage students' interest and facilitate music learning. They have highly specialized knowledge in choral, instrumental, or general music as they provide students with high-quality, sequential instruction in music.</p>
<p><b>5. Learning Environments</b> MIE students understand the importance of creating and fostering dynamic learning environments that are characterized by trust, risk-taking, independence, collaboration, and high expectations for all students.</p>	<p><b>5. Learning Environments</b> Accomplished music teachers create and foster dynamic learning environments that are characterized by trust, risk taking, independence, collaboration, and high expectations for all students.</p>
<p><b>6. Valuing Diversity</b> MIE students understand the value of recognizing students' diverse backgrounds, abilities, and perspectives in order to provide a music curriculum that is inclusive and rich in musical diversity.</p>	<p><b>6. Valuing Diversity</b> Accomplished music teachers value the diverse backgrounds, abilities, and perspectives of their students and provide a music curriculum that is inclusive of all students and rich in musical diversity.</p>
<p><b>7. Outside Collaboration</b> MIE students (A) understand and value the distinctive roles of their colleagues, students' families, the community, and others involved in the music education process, and (B) continually seek opportunities to build partnerships with them.</p>	<p><b>7. Collaboration</b> Accomplished music teachers understand and value the distinctive roles of families, colleagues, the community, and others in the music education process and continually seek opportunities to build partnerships with them.</p>
<p><b>8. Reflection, Professional Growth and Contribution</b> MIE students understand the value of (A) reflecting on teaching practices &amp; students' learning; (B) keeping abreast of developments in their field to expand their knowledge; and (C) improving their teaching and refining their philosophy of music education as they contribute to their personal growth and the growth of their colleagues, their schools, and their field.</p>	<p><b>8. Reflection, Professional Growth, and Professional Contribution</b> Accomplished music teachers reflect on their teaching, students' performances, and developments in their field to extend their knowledge steadily, improve their teaching, and refine their philosophy of music education; they contribute to the growth of their colleagues, their schools, and their field.</p>

To answer this question, we recently undertook a program-wide evaluation. First, we found already-established music standards written by NBPTS for practicing teachers, and then we adapted these standards so that they would fit our context: Conservatory students in guided internship/field experience programs learning to teach. Next, we made a program-wide call to our MIE faculty, asking for their courses' student portfolios. What we received was a sampling representative of more than forty students, twelve courses, six faculty members, and three years. We then crafted scoring rubrics based on our adaptations of the NBPTS music standards and evaluated the portfolios according to how well they demonstrated evidence of corresponding to these standards.

Our next step was to assess the student portfolios with the foreseeable goal to organize, categorize, and refine the MIE courses based on the 'goodness of fit' with our adaptations of the NBPTS music standards.

### GUIDE TO SCORING MIE COURSE PORTFOLIOS

We scored MIE Course Portfolios according to rubrics designed by our research team to reflect our adaptations of the NBPTS Music Standards and Five Strands of Evidence. When appropriate, such as if the Standard contained more than one clause, we broke standards into separate dimensions.

In order to calibrate our scoring methods, we first scored one portfolio as a team. We read it through carefully, discussed each standard and its dimensions, and worked until we could come up with reliable scores within one point. The first portfolio we scored this way took us nearly six hours to complete.

In follow-up preliminary scoring sessions, we established reliability in scoring on three portfolios by agreeing on indicators of quality, consistency, and sophistication of evidence of understanding NBPTS standards for teacher professional development. In addition, increments of 0.5 points were allowed to resolve disputes in scoring, thereby increasing inter-rater reliability.

MIE Portfolio Content Ratings - MIE 221 Into to Music-in-Education Fall 02

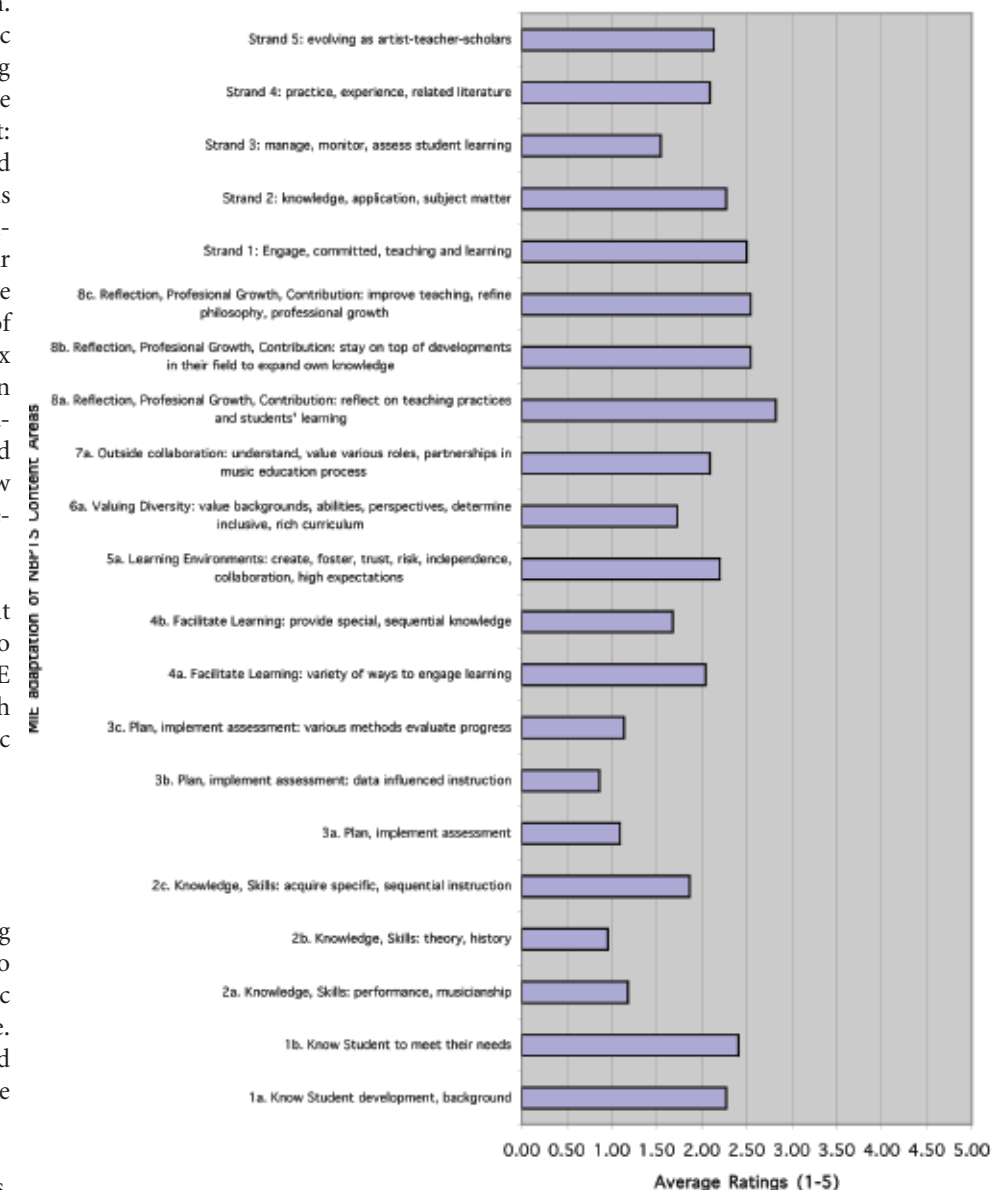


Figure 2

On the next day of our portfolio scoring session, we broke up into two teams of two scorers each. Each team contained one "conservative" scorer and one "liberal" scorer. Since we had five people total, the extra person was designated a "floater." This "floater" listened to each team's scoring process, stepping in (when necessary) in case of a dispute. Eventually, as time grew short, we scored portfolios individually; the "floater" acted as a reference—if any one scorer was unsure about a particular dimension or entire portfolio, the "floater"

would step in as the tie-breaker.

### RESULTS FROM ANALYSES OF COURSE PORTFOLIOS

The results for the evaluation of MIE student course portfolios indicate that the longer musicians are involved in the MIE Concentration program, the better chance they have of meeting national standards for teacher preparation.

For example, of the forty portfolios we

## Evolution of Scoring Dimensions for the MIE Portfolio

### FIVE LEARNING STRANDS

The MIE Portfolios are assessed through Five Learning Strands that reveal evidence of:

1. Engagement in and commitment to the field of Music-in-Education, as indicated by reflective writing and artifacts documented in MIE portfolios.
2. Knowledge of the subject matter and an understanding of how to apply that knowledge to personal teaching and learning experiences.
3. Competency in managing, monitoring, and assessing student learning.
4. Systematic and reflective thinking about practice, experience, and literature related to Music-in-Education practices.
5. Understanding of the evolving role and skills as an Artist-Teacher-Scholar within one or more learning communities or contexts.

### MIE PORTFOLIO CONTENT AREAS

As each course and guided internship portfolio documentation becomes a chapter in the Cumulative MIE Portfolio, the Cumulative Portfolio will be expected to reveal evidence of learning distributed over the following dimensions:

#### 1. Evidence of Reflection, Growth, Contribution

- Aspects of teaching and lesson planning undergo revision, become polished, and are improved upon.
- The philosophy of teaching is discussed, improved upon, and evident in lesson planning and personal reflections.
- Portfolio shows evidence of growth of understanding of the field of Music-in-Education.
- Portfolio author shows interest in scholarship and developments in the field to expand his/her own knowledge.
- Documentation includes reflective writing on teaching practices and students' learning.

#### 2. Evidence of Outside Collaboration

- Portfolio shows clear understanding of various roles, collaboration, and partnerships in the music education process.

#### 3. Evidence of Diversity Appreciation and Evaluation

- Lesson plans are geared towards valuing student backgrounds, abilities, and perspectives.
- Lesson planning and evaluation shows implementation of inclusive curriculum.

#### 4. Evidence of Awareness of Learning Environments

- Observation and description of different learning environments reveal awareness of the importance of trust, risk-taking, independence, collaboration, and high expectations with students, other teachers, and supervisors.

#### 5. Evidence of Facilitation of Learning as Individual and in Groups

- Portfolio demonstrates knowledge and competence in musical instruction from different models, styles, and learning strategies.
- Author employs a variety of ways to engage learning processes in curriculum design and assessment models (through the five processes).
- Portfolio demonstrates ability to design and implement rigorous music-integrated instruction.

#### 6. Evidence of Planning and Application of Assessment

- Various methods are used to evaluate and assess progress.
- Instruction and lesson planning is data-influenced.

#### 7. Evidence of Knowledge and Skills

- Author demonstrates knowledge of specific, sequential instruction, and project-based guidance and coaching techniques.
- Creative and flexible lesson planning includes theory, history, performance, listening, and cultural understanding and encourages comprehensive musicianship that includes listening, composition, improvisation, performance, and technology-assisted music-making processes.
- Author demonstrates knowledge and principles of music-integrated curriculum design and implementation.

#### 8. Evidence of Individual Differences in Student Knowledge and Learning Strategies

- Portfolio author demonstrates knowledge of his/her individual students and uses that development and background to meet learning needs in a flexible and strategic fashion.

For the Five Strands of Evidence, we scored on a scale of 4:

[1] No Evidence; [2] Some ; [3] Solid; [4] Exemplary.

For our adaptations of the NBPTS Music Standards [see Appendix II for description of assessment dimensions], we scored on a scale of 5 as follows:

[1] No Evidence; [2] Slight; [3] Some; [4] Solid; [5] Exemplary. ¶

MIE Portfolio Content Ratings - MIE 290 Guided Internship Seminary-Spring 02

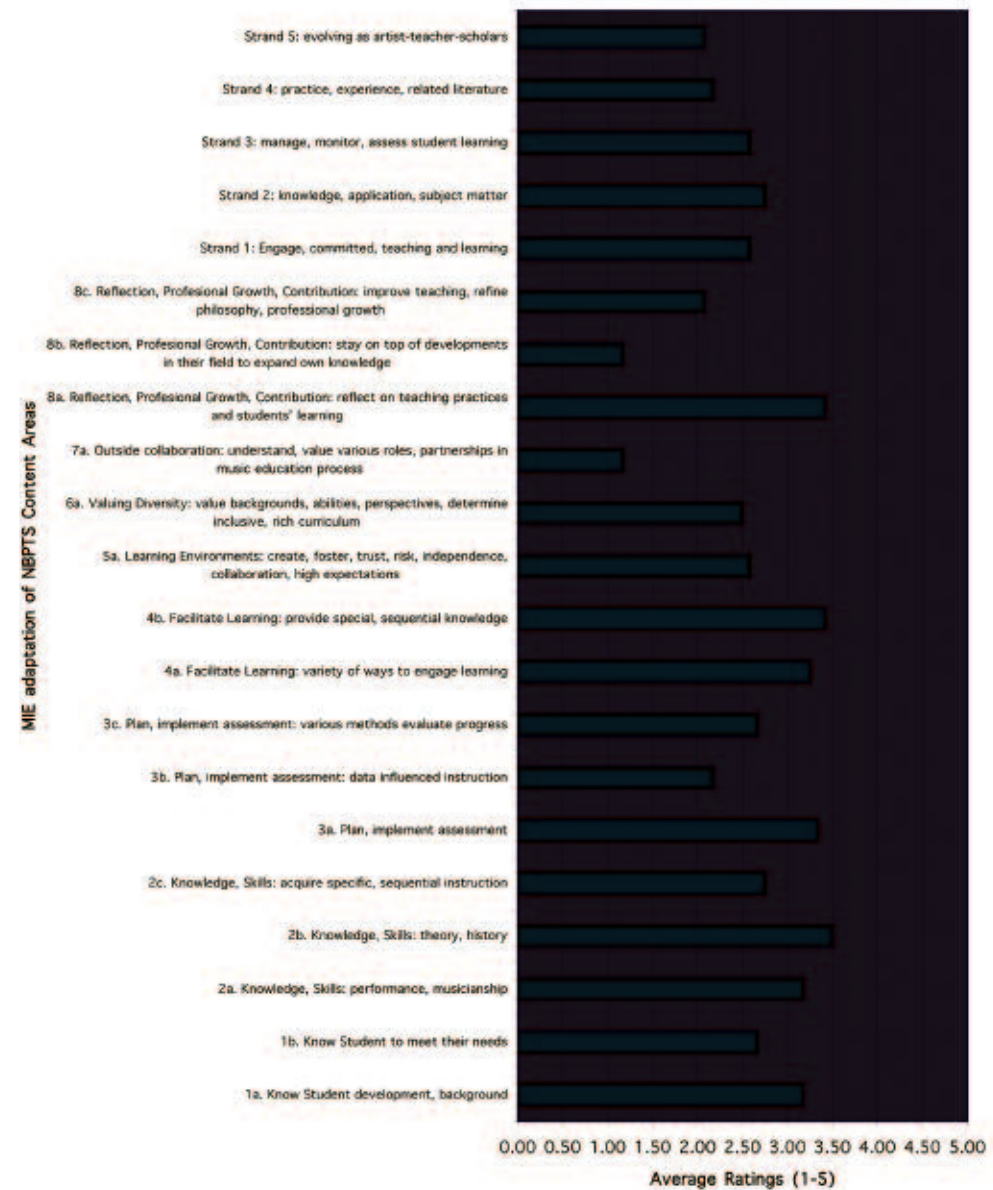


Figure 3

**THE RESULTS...INDICATE THAT THE LONGER MUSICIANS ARE INVOLVED IN THE MIE CONCENTRATION PROGRAM, THE BETTER CHANCE THEY HAVE OF MEETING NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR TEACHER PREPARATION.**

scored, twelve came from the “Introduction to Music-In-Education” (MIE 221) course. If students only took this MIE course they would most likely have a diverse array of documentation in place, but they would need other courses over time to meet the adapted MIE standards of evidence approaching “solid” or “exemplary” (see Figure 2).

Although introductory course portfolios had the most consistency in terms of breadth of documentation (i.e., almost all had a table of contents, weekly reflective writings, learning narratives, statements of self-assessment, etc.) of any course offered, they also tended to score the lowest when we rated them for showing relative levels of professional teaching certification standards.

In contrast, portfolios submitted by students involved in Guided Internships had a higher likelihood of demonstrating teaching and showing evidence of higher level standards (see Figure 3).

The sampling of portfolios we analyzed tended to suggest that our MIE students are not as strong in planning and implementing assessment strategies (MIE adaptation of NBPTS Content Area #4) as they are in helping establish learning environments to “create and foster trust, risk, independence, collaboration, and high expectations” (MIE adaptation of NBPTS Content Area #5). These trends are supported by anecdotal evidence from student exit interviews. In his exit interview, one MIE student remarks that:

One of the strongest attributes of the MIE curriculum is that it allows students to find their own ways into the learning process. The teachers ensure that their college seminar environments are supportive and insightful—the same way they feel that classrooms should be run by their students as they intern in public schools. The only downfall to this is that, unless the student is currently involved as a teacher, much of this ends up being just talk. Consequently, much of the seminar discussion focuses around teaching and learning styles, rather than with practical matters like classroom management or how-to plans for implementing assessment.

This statement also reinforces the essential role of the Guided Internship aspect in the Music-In-Education program. The data suggest that rich internship experiences enhance the understanding and productivity of the MIE Concentration program. When comparing data from two separate offerings of our Extended Internship Seminar, we saw that the offering which connected a higher percentage of our students with rich teaching and mentoring internships yielded better portfolio documentation and assessment results than the offering in which students had less teaching opportunities.

### RESULTS FROM ANALYSES OF MIE CUMULATIVE (EXIT INTERVIEW) PORTFOLIOS

The MIE Concentration requires students to bring a cumulative portfolio to their exit interviews before receiving the Concentration. In this analysis we were only able to collect a small sampling of “exit” portfolios. Based on the strength of the data from these special portfolios in the past (see Figure 4), we see the validity of having all Concentration students building on their cumulative portfolio work from the beginning.

When looking at the course-by-course breakdown of how portfolios reflect the MIE adaptations of NBPTS Content Areas, it is easy to see how the profile of a particular course matches with its course description (for example, the chart for MIE 525, Comprehensive Assessment, reveals that its portfolios have the strongest trend towards planning and implementing assessment out of all the MIE courses that we offer). Consequently, because exit portfolios tend to be documents in which students try to make connections between the various courses visible, exit portfolio scores tend to be overall stronger and more well-rounded than portfolios created for a specific course.

We also found trends that suggest that our MIE students who also intern at our Research Center for Learning Through Music create portfolios that include a wide range of integration of assessment and evaluation methods associated with music



Figure 4

education. These trends suggest that research-based internships are important and fulfilling alternatives to traditional teaching-based internships or practica; these research opportunities also help students to fulfill the scholarly aspect of the Artist-Teacher-Scholar framework through guided research projects and teaching practices. This paper developed first as a result of working with the portfolio evaluation team at New England Conservatory and having to learn to implement rigorous methods of evalu-

ation for the Research Center and was included in my exit portfolio work.

### NEC'S EVOLVING MIE DIGITAL PORTFOLIO SYSTEM: AN INITIAL REPORT

After reviewing the results of the portfolio assessment system, our next step was to incorporate digital technology to enhance the organization and impact of MIE Concentration portfolio work. To test the

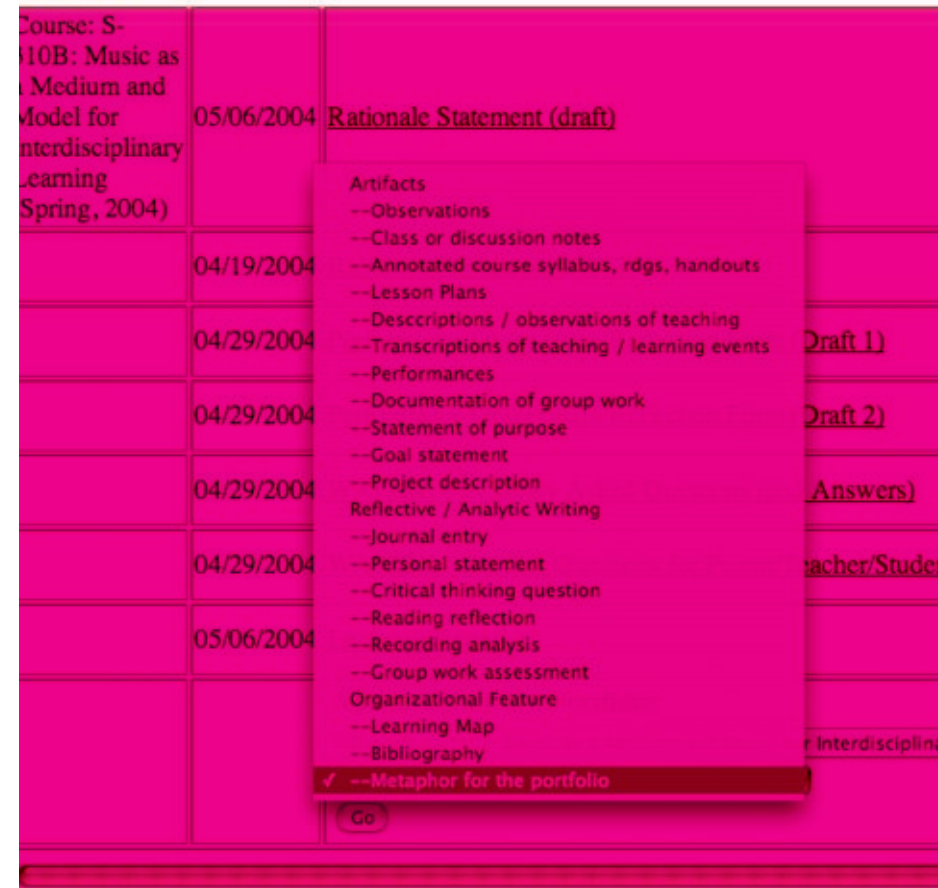


Figure 5: The MIE Digital Portfolio System encourages students to include a wide variety of artifacts in their portfolios, from learning narratives and statements of self-assessment to transcripts of teaching and multimedia displays of work.

system, NEC's Music-in-Education program selected a small sample of students designed to reflect the variety and diversity of students within the program. They were chosen according to the following criteria: the MIE courses the students were taking; how long they had been in the education program; their age and gender; and their own comfort levels with technology use. The MIE Digital Portfolio System itself was programmed and developed by the educational technology firm Ideas Consulting, Inc., which has a proven track record of expertise in the creation of assessment systems for online learning environments, but was designed in accordance with research conducted by NEC's Music-in-Education program.

### The Structure of NEC's MIE Digital Portfolio System

NEC's MIE Digital Portfolio System allows

for the creation and dissemination of both best-practice and process portfolios. This is an important feature because students must complete at least four classes offered by the Music-in-Education Department in order to receive a Concentration in Education on their degree. Portfolios must be created to document students' learning in each of these four classes, and upon completion of the fourth class, students must create a “cumulative” or “exit” portfolio that highlights salient learning experiences from the past four classes. So when students use the system to create portfolios to document their learning from one particular class, they are making process portfolios, but when they need to extract documents from previous portfolios and assemble them into an overarching, cumulative portfolio, they are making a best-practice portfolio.

Within the MIE Digital Portfolio System,

**BECAUSE THESE GOALS PRECEDE THE REFLECTIVE WRITING SECTION FOR EACH ARTIFACT, STUDENTS CAN EASILY KEEP TRACK OF, AND STAY FOCUSED ON, SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES.**

students can create artifacts by uploading documents at any time. They can also edit any document from any portfolio (course process portfolios and cumulative best-practice portfolios) at any time, and can choose which artifacts can be viewed by their teachers by designating these artifacts as “completed.” Once created, each artifact is given its own summary page, on which students can: make captions (to match with uploaded photos, video clips, etc.), write reflections, and declare learning goals.

### A LEARNER-CENTERED MIE DIGITAL PORTFOLIO SYSTEM

The Digital Portfolio System gives students opportunities to: (1) create artifacts that properly demonstrate their learning and understanding; (2) make and choose specific goals to help focus their learning processes; and (3) engage in ongoing assessment of their learning processes from start to finish.

*Students can create artifacts that demonstrate learning.*

The design of the MIE Digital Portfolio System requires students to upload documents of their learning. As a result, the design of our Digital Portfolio System ensures that students can easily see what

What goals does this activity meet?	
<b>Personal Goal (Daily Goals)</b>	
• Make connections from activities to the Teaching For Understanding Framework	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Actively participate in the activity	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Create open-ended research questions that will help me to frame future assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Second Goal (Self-Reflecting on work)</b>	
• Engagement in and commitment to the field of MIE, as indicated by reflective writing and artifacts documented in MIE portfolios	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Knowledge of the subject matter and an understanding of how to apply that knowledge in personal teaching and learning experiences	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Competency in managing, monitoring, and assessing student learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Systematic and reflective thinking about practice, experience, and literature related to Music in Education practices	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Understanding of the evolving role and skills as an Artist/Teacher/Scholar within one or more learning communities or contexts	<input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 6: One of the MIE Digital Portfolio System's key features is the ability for students to identify specific goals that relate to the Five Learning Strands or the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards.

kinds of documents are important to have in an MIE portfolio: for example, a Learning Narrative that tells the story of what challenges a student met and how those challenges were dealt with; a Statement of Self-Assessment that asks students to decide for themselves what grade they think they deserve for their class work; a series of Reflective Journal Entries that document students' day-to-day experiences with the class; photos that document class experiences; video clips from teaching experiences in the field, etc. The wide variety of the types of documents we suggest that students use in their portfolios is reminiscent of the idea of Generative Topics from the *Teaching For Understanding* framework—that teaching and learning should be organized around topics which facilitate exploration via multiple entry points, and around activities that encourage students to make connections between in-school and out-of-school experiences (Blythe, 1996, p. 18). By allowing for the presence of multimedia (audio clips, movies, slide shows, photos, etc.), students are empowered to express and *perform* their understandings (another key *TFU* concept) in ways that ensure accessibility to themselves (ibid.). However, this idea that student work should be authentic to a student's own experiences is also supported by research that claims that a

“task [should be] so rooted in the course work or the student's context and experience that no one else could write it” (Mason, 2003, p. 69).

Once the MIE Digital Portfolio System was put in place, we thought it important to interview MIE students on their experiences using the system. “Helen,” a graduate student studying violin performance at NEC, shared insights with us that particularly favored the use of electronic portfolios over paper ones. For example, Helen appreciated the opportunity to upload so many different kinds of artifacts; this kind of encouragement really helped her to think of her portfolio as a tool that could illustrate the breadth and depth of learning

**“A LOT OF STUDENTS TAKE THE BACK SEAT AND SAY ‘TEACH ME’—THEY DON’T FEEL THAT THEY SHOULD BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR OWN LEARNING, PARTLY BECAUSE THEY DON’T KNOW WHAT TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR.”**

—INTERVIEW QUOTE, NEC MIE STAFF MEMBER

that took place for her over the course of the semester. Helen said, “I like how it's easy to add whatever I need to showcase my learning . . . I even included a video clip of myself teaching a violin lesson to a friend.” When Helen gave me a guided tour of her portfolio, I could see how important this type of media was to her portfolio. To describe an experience in writing is one thing, but to be able to present it so that one can see it with one's own eyes helps validate the learning that took place.

*Students engage in the creation of goals to help focus their learning.*

One key aspect of NEC's MIE Digital Portfolio System is that it fosters the creation and identification of students' goals. As part of the Artist-Teacher-Scholar persona that the NEC Music-in-Education program is hoping to instill in its students, NEC has adapted standards proposed by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards to fit its courses for pre-professional musicians training for artist residencies in public schools. These adapted standards have been renamed “Learning Goals” and are attached in checklist form to each artifact summary page. Students can then check off which Learning Goals are met/represented by the artifact and can do reflective writing on how these Learning Goals were met. By giving students the opportunity to reflect on which goals they met and how, students can later “revisit those understandings” over the course of the class (Blythe, 1996, p. 21). Additionally, students can create their own goal sets, called “Personal Goals,” and use them in the same way. Because these goals precede the

## Entry Overview

<b>Title:</b>	Boston Arts Academy Concert Ensemble Rubric
<b>Portfolio:</b>	MIE 290: Extended Internship Seminar (Spring, 2002)
<b>Summary:</b>	This is a rubric given to me by the instructors at Boston Arts Academy. It is used for the choral ensembles, grades 9–11. Each student receives a copy of the rubric. Also, the rubric was developed via in-class communications between teachers and students. Students receive the rubric at the beginning of the semester so they know what to expect as participants in the class.
<b>Date:</b>	April 20 2002
<b>Completed -- available for faculty to view</b>	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Completed
<b>In Progress -- only available in my portfolio</b>	<input type="radio"/> In Progress
<b>Save and Navigate:</b>	Save / Stay on this Page Save / Return to activity list Save / Next-->

## Reflection on Activity

<b>Activity:</b>	<b>Boston Arts Academy Concert Ensemble Rubric</b>
<b>Goals Demonstrated:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Strands: Engagement in and commitment to the field of MIE, as indicated by reflective writing and artifacts documented in MIE portfolios</li> <li>• Learning Strands: Competency in managing, monitoring, and assessing student learning.</li> <li>• Learning Strands: Systematic and reflective thinking about practice, experience, and literature related to Music-in-Education practices.</li> <li>• Fundamental Processes: Reflect: Make connections, self assess, establish goals, revise work</li> <li>• Reflection, Growth, Contribution: Aspects of teaching and lesson planning undergo revision, become polished, and are improved upon.</li> <li>• Outside Collaboration: Portfolio shows clear understanding of various roles, collaboration and partnerships in the music education process</li> <li>• Knowledge and Skills: Author demonstrates knowledge of specific, sequential instruction and project-based guidance and coaching techniques</li> </ul>
<b>Reflection:</b> How does this activity demonstrate the above goals?	Rubrics are important assessment tools used to help students and teachers collaborate in teaching and learning. It's nice that the students and teachers came up with this rubric together, but I'd be interested in knowing to what extent teachers find that the rubric informs their teaching methods and practices; and to what extent students find that the rubric informs their approach to classroom learning.
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Figure 7a & 7b: MIE students write objectively about artifacts from their Guided Internship experiences and connect them to stated goals as a matter of course.

reflective writing section for each artifact, students can easily keep track of, and stay focused on, specific learning outcomes. This is the distinct advantage of electronic assessment—that “procedures” like these maintain a sense of “clarity and objectivity” based on the architecture of the digital portfolio system (Mason, 1996, p. 64).

My research on this project has shown me that students, administrators, and teachers alike benefit from the Learning Goals

component of the MIE Digital Portfolio System. Helen praised the Learning Goals component:

Having goals to meet and having them be included with my documents helps me focus on what I'm learning . . . it's easy to stay organized and plan what to do next.

“Paula,” an NEC Music-in-Education staff member whom I interviewed, had a

similar perspective on why making Learning Goals clear and visible are an important component of the MIE Digital Portfolio System:

Usually here [at NEC], a lot of students take the back seat and say “teach me”—they don't feel that they should be accountable for their own learning, partly because they don't know what to be responsible for.

*Students should engage in ongoing assessment.*

The fact that the NEC MIE Digital Portfolio System is online makes the idea of engaging students in ongoing assessment both easy and possible. Interacting with the MIE Digital Portfolio System, however, is not the only way of engaging students in assessment; in fact, interaction with the MIE Digital Portfolio System is only the beginning of a conversation. "Assessment" is a broad term that can refer to all sorts of activities in which students and teachers evaluate learning artifacts. As described above, these artifacts can include all sorts of reflective writings, statements of self-assessment, journal entries, and learning webs. However, it is important not to overlook the varied modes of writing that students must complete when creating their learning artifacts within the MIE Digital Portfolio System. As mentioned in the previous section on Learning Goals, students must be involved in reflective writing on the goals they've chosen each artifact to meet. In this way, students are actually using the Learning Goals as a rubric that defines the extent to which they are learning. Actively involving students in the creation of evaluation rubrics is one method that Robin Mason argues is a "best practice [approach]" towards assessment, and is also a way that teachers can help to reduce the risk of academic dishonesty (Mason, 2003, p. 68). Also, when creating artifacts, students are asked to summarize their documents in an objective fashion, thus allowing them to give multiple perspectives on the same document and validating their varied learning experiences. The finished product gives students the unique opportunity to really showcase their understandings in ways that are rich, meaningful, and authentic to them. Paula validated this in her interview: "These portfolios are a lot more efficient than tests and other types of assessment ... They concentrate on meaning, what you know, and how you understand what you've learned."

#### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE REVISIONS OF NEC'S MIE DIGITAL PORTFOLIO SYSTEM**

## **THE ANALYTIC DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN MUSIC EDUCATION MAJORS AND MIE STUDENTS ARE INTERESTING TO ASSESS AND THEN PROFILE ACCORDING TO THE ARTIST-TEACHER-SCHOLAR FRAMEWORK. EDUCATION MAJORS OFTEN EMPHASIZE PEDAGOGY AND TEACHING FIRST, SOMETIME DE-EMPHASIZING ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT OR DELAYING RESEARCH AND ASSESSMENT ISSUES. MIE STUDENTS TEND TO FOCUS ON ARTIST RESIDENCIES, COLLABORATION WITH TEACHERS, AND RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES FROM THE START.**

Overall, my analysis of the NEC MIE Digital Portfolio System suggests that it demonstrates significant educational potential, but would benefit from embracing organizational methods that are less linear (e.g., not as chronological) and more visual or spatial, along the lines of learning maps like those that are already suggested to students as potential learning artifacts. These varied types of artifact organization could assist students in making connections between generative topics and thus in truly engaging in interdisciplinary learning, given the "hyper-textual" nature of an online learning environment (Mason, 2003, p. 62).

Another way the portfolio system could evolve includes placing greater emphasis on varied types of ongoing assessment. So far, most of the emphasis has been placed on the setting of Learning Goals and on reflective writing. While these are both key features of the MIE Digital Portfolio System, it would be helpful to incorporate components that encourage peer interaction, such as through the use of asynchronous discussion boards or synchronous chat rooms. Such "multi-way

communication among learners and between learners and experts" would provide new opportunities for interactive teaching and learning. Teachers and peers could offer feedback and critiques that could be displayed/juxtaposed directly onto students' artifacts in a color-coded manner that allows students to receive feedback from multiple perspectives.

#### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

While preliminary analysis suggests the value of aligning pre-service MIE Concentration courses with national standards for in-service teaching, further collaboration will be possible through shared digital portfolio networks across institutions. David Myers and David Beauchesne's work at Georgia State University suggests that the Digital Portfolio System piloted at NEC can be structured for use by both Music Education majors and Music-in-Education Performance majors. The analytic distinctions between Music Education majors and MIE students are interesting to assess and then profile according to the Artist-Teacher-Scholar framework. Education

majors often emphasize pedagogy and teaching first, sometime de-emphasizing artistic development or delaying research and assessment issues. MIE students tend to focus on artist residencies, collaboration with teachers, and research perspectives from the start. A shared Digital Portfolio System across the schools of music in the

Music-in-Education National Consortium will allow one system to integrate these two perspectives.

If in the future the capacity of digital portfolio systems also can include integrated database systems such as those suggested by the RUBRICS CUBE System

in this *Journal*, we will learn much more about the efficacy of assessing the impact of teacher preparation of music majors in public school communities that are in need of highly qualified musicians to take leadership roles in their school curricular and assessment practices. ¶

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<sup>2</sup> Gardner, H. (1989a). Project Zero: an Introduction to Arts PROPEL. *Journal of Art and Design Education*, 8, 2, 167-182.; Winner E., Davidson L., & Scripp, L. (Eds.), (1992). *Arts PROPEL: A Handbook for Music*. Cambridge: Harvard Project Zero Publication.; Wolf, D. & Pistone, N. (1991). *Taking Full Measure: Rethinking Assessment Through the Arts*. New York: College Entrance Examination Board..

<sup>3</sup> Davidson, L., Crouch, S., & Norton, A., *Assessment, Accountability And Learning Through Music Practices: Learning Through Music Portfolios In Elementary Schools* in Scripp & Keppel, Eds., *Journal for Learning Through Music* (New England Conservatory), Boston, MA (pp. 56-67); Gardiner, M. (2000). *Music, Learning, and Behavior: A Case for Mental Stretching*. *Journal for Learning Through Music*, 1, 72-93. Boston: New England Conservatory; Scripp, L., (2003). *Critical Links, Next Steps: An Evolving Conception of Music and Learning in Public School Education* in Scripp & Keppel, Eds., *Journal for Learning Through Music* (New England Conservatory), Boston, MA (pp. 28-31).

<sup>4</sup> Some of the standards adapted by the MIE program are already-existing standards set forth by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. Others have been created in response to questions posed by our Music-In-Education National Consortium. Note that the adaptations to the MIE Concentration do not assume in-service evidence of meeting the standards, but rather evidence of a pre-service, entry point understanding of these standards through course work and short-term guided internships. Thus, the measure of understanding is distributed among the perspectives of (a) artistic understanding through self-reflection and observation; (b) understanding through teaching experience and peer critique; and (c) understanding through scholarly investigation through readings, research, and guided experimental or action research work.

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