Effects of Practice Record Format on Beginning Orchestra Mastery of Concepts and Attitude Toward Practicing.

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**Effects of Practice Record Format on Beginning Orchestra Mastery of Concepts and Attitude Toward Practicing**

Author: Jamie Algood

**Introduction and Background**

I began my career with Mesquite Independent School District in the Fall of 2006 teaching orchestra at Berry Middle School. Previous to that I taught orchestra for a year in the Grand Prairie Independent School District.

Mesquite ISD is located in the eastern area of Dallas County. The district serves 37, 653 students through thirty-two elementary schools, eight middle schools, five high schools, and one alternative campus. 65.5% of the district is considered economically disadvantaged. The ethnic distribution of Mesquite ISD is displayed in table 1.

Table 1. The ethnicity of students in Mesquite ISD

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ethnicity | Percent of Total |
| African American | 24.5% |
| Hispanic | 48% |
| Caucasian | 22.3% |
| American Indian | .07% |
| Asian | 2.2% |
| Pacific Islander | .01% |
| Two or More Races | 2.1% |
| Total | 100% |

Berry Middle School is located on the southeastern edge of the district. In 2011, there were 799 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students at Berry served by a total of 51 teachers. The building houses 46 classrooms and there are additional portables on campus to accommodate classes. 54.7% of the Berry population is economically disadvantaged. The following table displays the ethnic distribution of my campus.

Table 2. Ethnic distribution of Berry Middle School

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ethnicity | Percent of Total |
| African American | 26.7% |
| Hispanic | 39.2% |
| Caucasian | 29.4% |
| American Indian | 0.4% |
| Asian | 2.0% |
| Pacific Islander | 0.4% |
| Two or More Races | 2.0% |
| Total | 100% |

All students in my class choose to take my class; no one is forced to take orchestra. My classes are mixed grade levels, but most beginners are sixth grade, intermediate students are seventh grade, and advanced students are eighth grade. I have a total of 105 students in five classes ranging from 15 to 30 students, with an average of 21 students per class. The academic levels range from students in basic math and English classes to students in GT and pre-AP classes. The chart below shows gender distribution in my classes.

Chart 1. Gender distribution in my classes

For my study, I will use my 51 beginning orchestra students who have no pre-conceived notions of practice records or practicing an instrument at home.

**The Problem**

Because my students have never had to practice an instrument before, they lack the skills to practice for success. Many students put in the time playing their instrument at home, but do not focus on playing their music correctly. They do not seem to understand that playing is not necessarily practicing. This is particularly true for beginner students. In the past, the practice record set a minimum number of minutes each week to practice. Students would just fill the time playing parts they already knew and repeating mistakes made in class instead of working for improvement. This has resulted in high practice record grades, but low mastery of the concepts presented.

I plan on changing the practice record from a minimum number of minutes practiced to a minimum number of repetitions. Each line I assign needs to be played perfectly ten times. To receive credit for a line, all ten repetitions must be completed. The general source of this idea comes from Denise Odegaard’s method book, *Simply Strings*. Each page has a line of check boxes at the bottom to keep track of perfect repetitions. It is important to only count perfect repetitions so that the line of music is learned correctly. The standard saying, “practice makes perfect” is misleading. “Perfect practice makes perfect,” according to the percussion teacher at Berry. It requires self-monitoring and self-evaluation by the students in order to be successful.

As previously stated, logging the amount of time practiced has not been very helpful. By requiring students to complete perfect repetitions, I hope to increase reading fluency, rhythmic accuracy, and playing test grades for my beginner students. A positive outcome would encourage me to expand the new practice record format to all orchestra levels. If the new format did not work I believe it would show that the issue is not *what* or *how much* to practice, but the basis of *how* to practice.

**Subjects Involved in the Study**

My study will include all of the beginning orchestra students in my first, second, and seventh periods. From these classes there are a total of five eighth graders, one seventh grader, and forty five sixth graders. These students represent a cross-section of academic achievement (resource to high-achieving), socio-economic status, and ethnic backgrounds. I selected my beginner classes for this research based on three criteria: these students are new to playing instruments, the book used in class has short lines to teach new concepts, and they have no experience with the old practice record format.

Research Questions

## In order to address my topic and provide direction to the study, it is important to generate research questions. What follows is the main research question for the study and several sub-questions aligned to the main question.

## **Main Question**

The main research question tends to drive the research design. The main question in this study is: What effect would a new practice record format have on practicing for mastery of a concept instead of filling time on Beginning Orchestra students? This section of the proposal will include a description of the method itself as well as the plan for implementation.

## **Sub-questions.**

1. What impact would a new practice record format have on note-reading fluency?
2. What impact would a new practice record format have on playing test scores?
3. What impact would a new practice record format have on attitude towards practicing?

**Research Design**

###### Method or Strategy

The main research question tends to drive the research design. The main question in this study is: What effect would a new practice record format have on practicing for mastery of a concept instead of filling time on Beginning Orchestra students? This section of the proposal will include a description of the method itself as well as the plan for implementation.

My strategy will be called “The Perfect Ten” because it requires students to repeat a line perfectly ten times. The main idea for this strategy came from Denis Odegaard’s method book *Simply Strings*. I am applying the concept of perfect practice repetitions to individual lines on a weekly practice record. The Perfect Ten is designed to impact note reading fluency, rhythmic accuracy, attitude towards practicing, and playing test grades. As previously stated, logging the amount of time practiced has not been very helpful. Students completed their required number of practice minutes, but still had trouble recognizing notes and rhythms in new contexts. Attitudes toward practice at home have been less than positive using the timed method, especially for those students who could play the music and did not need that much practice. Also, playing test grades have been significantly lower than practice record grades because students were not aiming for perfection; they were just filling time with no set goal. The Perfect Ten works towards getting students to correctly repeat their learning at home, similar to flash cards, but on a larger scale.

**Implementation Strategies**

My study will include all of the beginning orchestra students in my first, second, and seventh periods. From these classes there are a total of five eighth graders, one seventh grader, and forty five sixth graders. These students represent a cross-section of academic achievement (resource to high-achieving), socio-economic status, and ethnic backgrounds. I selected my beginner classes for this research based on three criteria: these students are new to playing instruments, the book used in class has short lines to teach new concepts, and they have no experience with the old practice record format.

My method will track changes in note reading fluency, attitude towards practicing, and playing test grades over an eight week period (four weeks of The Perfect Ten format and four weeks of the 60 minute format). During the first four weeks, the teacher must create weekly practice records with specified lines for students to practice. The student will complete assigned line repetitions or practice time at home and get a parent signature. Note reading fluency will be assessed biweekly by written tests. The note reading fluency test will be twenty randomly generated notes that students must correctly name within two minutes. Playing tests will be given weekly, live in class. Grades will be based on a standard rubric that includes position, bow hold, bow direction, rhythmic accuracy, tone, and intonation. A survey will be used to gauge attitude towards practice. This survey will be given after four weeks of using The Perfect Ten formatted practice record and again after four weeks of using the 60 minute formatted practice record.

The students will be exposed to each practice record format for four consecutive weeks, starting with The Perfect Ten format. The first round of practice records was given out on September 19, 2012 and will be given each Wednesday through October 10, 2012. The following week, October 17, 2012 will begin the 60 minute format practice records. These will continue through November 7, 2012. The note reading fluency assessments will be given to students on October 4th, October 18th, November 1st, and November 15th. Playing tests are given weekly on Thursdays based on lines completed in class. Grades will be based on a standard rubric that includes position, bow hold, bow direction, rhythmic accuracy, tone, and intonation. Surveys will be completed twice by students to gauge attitude towards practicing. The survey will be Likert scale questions, and the teacher will make comparisons based on survey responses.

**Review of the Professional Literature.**

Practice is important to learning and eventually mastering any instrument. Kostka sys that “long-held beliefs state that effective practicing includes keeping track of practice time,” (24) and that is reflected on most public school music practice records. Many students struggle with practice, and the generally accepted timed format does little to help students improve. Through my research I am hoping to find a new way to address the practice conundrum.

Johnson was inspired to create a new practice record after a conversation with a colleague who was considering not requiring practice records because they seemed like a waste of time. Kids who are going to practice will and those who won’t just won’t do it. “If we want our students to develop good practice habits, practicing must be about more than grades,” (64). I completely agree with this statement. Students must see progress to avoid boredom and discouragement. I have students who tell me they practice over 200 minutes a week, but show no improvement. Many teachers “assume their students are following a practice routine and know how to use their practice time efficiently,” (Kostka, 24). As demonstrated by my student who practices without improvement each week, this is obviously not true. “If students practice with the clock as the measure of when they’ve done enough, chances are they’re either wasting time or practicing ineffectively,” (Wilson, 31). Duke, Simmons, and Cash (2009) say that the most appropriate goal for students is “not that they play their instruments for 30 minutes a day but that they skillfully identify and systematically address the mistakes that are an inevitable part of learning,” (319). It does not matter how long a student practices if they are not correcting mistakes as they go. Contrary to the saying, practice does not make perfect unless you practice perfectly. “If you’re practicing thoughtfully, you’ll retain what you learned last week,” says Wilson (31).

There are several key points that a timed practice record leaves out – the basics of how to practice efficiently. Barbara Prentice suggests five environmental controls for students: “Set aside a place for practice, schedule a regular time, control the TV, participate in the practice session (parents), and…be encouraging,” (103). This allows students to focus and be more reflective on their practice session. Johnson includes in his practice record concept different categories of practice. It does not include a parent signature, but does require students to reflect on their practice session. He says, “Students should select specific measurable goals that represent incremental progress,” (Johnson, 64) and that “simple repetition without a purpose does not result in better performance,” (66). I agree, but getting students to recognize this and set their own goals is a challenge. The first step toward this is to “take time during lessons to *practice practicing*” with students (Kostka, 25). As teachers we must show them how to break the music down in the minimum amount of time to learn it with maximum efficiency. Miksza says “the quality of practicing that takes place may be more crucial to improvement than the quantity of time spent playing.” He goes on to say that teachers should demonstrate both effective and ineffective practicing so that students understand the difference (372). For middle school students, I believe that modeling effective practice sessions is the best way to help them practice.

The largest hurdle is getting students to recognize their own mistakes as they practice. “Teaching problem-solving skills involves an initial heavy investment of lesson or rehearsal time,” (Byo, 37). This investment in problem-solving skills is often skimped or skipped because of perceived lack of time or the assumption that our students already know how to do it. Teachers must structure lessons that include how to practice, and focus on student decision-making within that practice (37). Once students understand how to practice, each practice session will be much more effective.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

In order to address the sub-questions of the study, it is important to identify the data required to address the questions, ways that data were analyzed. In this section, data collection and analysis procedures are presented for each sub-question.

My first sub-question states: “What impact would a new practice record have on note reading fluency?” I administered the timed note-reading test on a biweekly basis over 8 weeks. The test was given every other Thursday, beginning October 4, 2012.

The test was administered all students at the same time. Students had two minutes to name twenty notes presented in random order each time. There was a mix of line, space, and ledger line notes. After each administration, I graded the number of correct answers. Each correct answer was worth five points with a maximum score of 100.

My second sub-question states: “What impact would a new practice record format have on playing test grades?” Playing tests were given weekly on Tuesdays, live in class. Grades were based on a standard rubric that includes position, bow hold, bow direction, rhythmic accuracy, tone, and intonation.

My final sub-question states: “What impact would a new practice record format have on attitude towards practicing?” To measure attitude, a survey was used to gauge the students’ attitude towards practice. The survey consisted of Likert scale questions. This survey was given after four weeks of using The Perfect Ten practice record and again after four weeks of using the 60 minute practice record.

**Research Findings**

In this section I will report on the findings of my investigation. The findings of the study are presented here according to each sub-question in the study.

Sub-question #1 states: What impact would a new practice record format have on note-reading fluency? The data I used to answer this sub-question was a bi-weekly note-reading test.

My first analysis was to look at the class average for each administration. The average for each class is illustrated in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Note-Reading Test Average by Period.**

The average test scores for 1st period were 78, 79, 82, and 81 respectively. 2nd period scores were 85, 88, 88, and 92. 7th period scores were 76, 83, 84, and 89. All classes gained between the first and last test administration. First period made the least amount of gain.

I also wanted to look at the percentage increase for each gender. Figure 2 shows the observed percentage change.

**Figure 2. Percentage Change in Note-Reading by Gender**

The percentage change for females during the use of the “Perfect Ten” practice record was 3.66%, while males changed 6.76%. During the use of the timed practice record, females changed 7.06%, while males changed -4.82%. The overall change from first administration to last administration was 9.89% for females and 6.76% for males.

Third, I wanted to look at scores grouped by instrument. Figure 3 illustrates the results.

**Figure 3. Note-Naming Test Score Averages Divided by Instrument**

The violin group consistently scored the highest when scores were broken down the by instrument played. Their test averages were 86, 89, 90, and 91. The viola score averages were 76, 82, 82, and 86. The cello score averages were 69, 73, 78, and 84. The bass score averages were 75, 65, 80, and 80.

The final way I looked at the test averages compared students who owned their own instrument and those who borrowed from the school. Figure 4 illustrates the difference between the two groups.

**Figure 4. Comparison of Test Averages: Student-Owned Instruments vs. School-Owned Instruments**

The students who owned their instrument scored higher on each test than those who were borrowing an instrument from the school. The averages were 84, 88, 88, and 90 for the students who owned their instrument. For students who borrowed an instrument from the school, the averages were 74, 77, 81, and 85.

Sub-question #2 states: What impact would a new practice record format have on playing test grades? I collected weekly test grades for my data to answer this sub-question.

I first analyzed this data by looking at whole class averages. Table 1 below shows the results.

**Table 1. Class Averages of Playing Test Grades**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1st Period | 2nd Period | 7th Period |
| Test 1 | 88 | 89 | 84 |
| Test 2 | 91 | 89 | 86 |
| Test 3 | 89 | 91 | 87 |
| Test 4 | 90 | 91 | 89 |
| Test 5 | 91 | 91 | 90 |
| Test 6 | 88 | 91 | 90 |
| Test 7 | 89 | 92 | 90 |

The test score averages remained in the upper 80’s and low 90’s during both practice record formats, with a range of 84 to 92.

The second way I wanted to analyze the playing test scores was to look at the scores of three struggling students.

**Figure 5. Individual Test Scores of Three Struggling Students**

All students began with failing test scores. Student A showed a gain of 20 points from the first test to the last, but the gains were not consistently upward trending. Student B ended with passing scores after a large dip on test four. Student C made modest gains, ending up with passing scores for the last four tests.

My final sub-question states: What impact would a new practice record format have on attitude towards practicing? I used a survey with seven Likert-scale questions at the end of each practice record format. I also included three open-ended questions comparing the two practice records on the second survey.

First I tallied the results from all 48 beginners to the Likert-scale questions. Table 2 below shows the results.

**Table 2. Tallied Results from Likert-scale survey.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Survey 1 – After Perfect 10 Practice Record | | | | |  | Survey 2 – After Timed Practice Record | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | **Agree** | **Neutral** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** |  | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree** | **Neutral** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** |
| Practicing my instrument is important. | | | | |  | **Practicing my instrument is important.** | | | | |
| 14 | 28 | 4 | 2 | 0 |  | 19 | 25 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| My parents make me practice | | | | |  | **My parents make me practice** | | | | |
| 22 | 9 | 3 | 8 | 6 |  | 18 | 13 | 2 | 7 | 8 |
| My practice goals are clear | | | | |  | **My practice goals are clear** | | | | |
| 27 | 12 | 8 | 1 | 0 |  | 5 | 6 | 11 | 14 | 12 |
| I know what to practice | | | | |  | **I know what to practice** | | | | |
| 44 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |  | 1 | 5 | 7 | 10 | 25 |
| Practicing takes too long | | | | |  | **Practicing takes too long** | | | | |
| 9 | 8 | 11 | 10 | 10 |  | 7 | 13 | 13 | 10 | 5 |
| Practice is hard | | | | |  | **Practice is hard** | | | | |
| 10 | 7 | 6 | 20 | 5 |  | 8 | 12 | 7 | 10 | 11 |
| I like to play my instrument at home | | | | |  | **I like to play my instrument at home** | | | | |
| 24 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 2 |  | 23 | 13 | 5 | 5 | 2 |

As the table shows, after the first practice record type 88% of students think practicing is important, compared with 90% after the second practice record type. There was a large difference in students who thought their practice goals were clear – 81% with the Perfect Ten compared to 23% with the timed practice record. Student confidence in knowing what to practice also had a large gap. The Perfect Ten practice record made 100% of students feel that they knew what to practice. With the timed practice record, only 13% of students agreed that they knew what to practice.

My second level of analysis compares the responses by class period. Tables 3 through 5 show the student responses.

**Table 3. 1st Period Results from Likert-Scale Questions**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Survey 1 - After Perfect 10 Practice Record | | | | |  | Survey 2 - After Timed Practice Record | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |  | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | | Disagree | | Strongly Disagree |
| Practicing my instrument is important. | | | |  |  | Practicing my instrument is important. | | | | | |  |
| 5 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 |  | 6 | 8 | | 2 | | 0 | 0 |
| My parents make me practice | | |  |  |  | My parents make me practice | | | | |  |  |
| 5 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 2 |  | 5 | 1 | | 0 | | 4 | 5 |
| My practice goals are clear | | |  |  |  | My practice goals are clear | | | | |  |  |
| 10 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 |  | 0 | 3 | | 3 | | 3 | 6 |
| I know what to practice | | |  |  |  | I know what to practice | | | | |  |  |
| 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |  | 0 | 1 | | 2 | | 2 | 10 |
| Practicing takes too long | | |  |  |  | Practicing takes too long | | | | |  |  |
| 1 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 3 |  | 2 | 2 | | 6 | | 4 | 1 |
| Practice is hard | |  |  |  |  | Practice is hard | | |  | |  |  |
| 2 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 2 |  | 3 | 5 | | 0 | | 6 | 1 |
| I like to play my instrument at home | | | |  |  | I like to play my instrument at home | | | | | |  |
| 9 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 |  | 8 | 4 | | 1 | | 2 | 0 |

**Table 4. 2nd Period Results for Likert-Scale Questions**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Survey 1 - After Perfect 10 Practice Record | | | | |  | Survey 2 - After Timed Practice Record | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |  | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| Practicing my instrument is important. | | | |  |  | Practicing my instrument is important. | | | |  |
| 7 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 |  | 10 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| My parents make me practice | | |  |  |  | My parents make me practice | | |  |  |
| 9 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 |  | 6 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| My practice goals are clear | | |  |  |  | My practice goals are clear | | |  |  |
| 10 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 |  | 3 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 1 |
| I know what to practice | | |  |  |  | I know what to practice | | |  |  |
| 14 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |  | 0 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 8 |
| Practicing takes too long | | |  |  |  | Practicing takes too long | | |  |  |
| 3 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 1 |  | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Practice is hard | |  |  |  |  | Practice is hard | |  |  |  |
| 4 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 1 |  | 3 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| I like to play my instrument at home | | | |  |  | I like to play my instrument at home | | | |  |
| 8 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 |  | 6 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 |

**Table 5. 7th Period Results for Likert-Scale Questions**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Survey 1 - After Perfect 10 Practice Record | | | | | | | |  | Survey 2 - After Timed Practice Record | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Neutral | | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |  | Strongly Agree | Agree | | Neutral | | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
| Practicing my instrument is important. | | | | | | |  |  | Practicing my instrument is important. | | | | | |  |
| 2 | 11 | | 3 | | | 2 | 0 |  | 3 | | 13 | | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| My parents make me practice | | | | | |  |  |  | My parents make me practice | | | | |  |  |
| 8 | 3 | | 3 | | | 1 | 3 |  | 7 | | 4 | | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| My practice goals are clear | | | | | |  |  |  | My practice goals are clear | | | | |  |  |
| 7 | 8 | | 2 | | | 1 | 0 |  | 2 | | 2 | | 3 | 6 | 5 |
| I know what to practice | | | | | |  |  |  | I know what to practice | | | | |  |  |
| 15 | 3 | | 0 | | | 0 | 0 |  | 1 | | 2 | | 4 | 4 | 7 |
| Practicing takes too long | | | | | |  |  |  | Practicing takes too long | | | | |  |  |
| 5 | 1 | | 5 | | | 1 | 6 |  | 2 | | 7 | | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| Practice is hard | | |  | | |  |  |  | Practice is hard | | | |  |  |  |
| 4 | 3 | | 1 | | | 8 | 2 |  | 2 | | 4 | | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| I like to play my instrument at home | | | | | | |  |  | I like to play my instrument at home | | | | | |  |
| 7 | 3 | | 4 | | 3 | | 1 |  | 9 | | 4 | | 2 | 2 | 1 |

My first period students felt practicing was important, no matter which practice record they used. The biggest change wais that students agreed the practice goals were clear and they knew what to practice when they used the Perfect Ten practice record, but not when they used the timed practice record. Students were also more likely to agree that practice was hard when they used the timed practice record. 2nd and 7th periods followed the trends set by first period. An interesting difference is that more students from 2nd period felt that practicing took too long with the Perfect Ten practice record, but not with the timed practice record.

The second survey also included three open-ended questions. The first question was: Do you like the Perfect Ten practice record or the timed practice record better? Why? Most students responded that they liked the Perfect Ten practice record better. One student responded “I like it better because I knew exactly what to spend my time working on.” Another student said it “allowed me to focus.” The second question was: Which type of practice record took longer to complete? Many students responded that they were not keeping track of time when using the Perfect Ten practice record, so they did not know which form took the longest. The third question was: Did you know what to practice on the timed practice record? “Only when I asked you what to work on,” responded one student. Most students said they knew to practice what we had done in class, but not specific lines from the book.

**Conclusions**

On note reading test scores, the difference when using the Perfect 10 practice record was not significantly higher than when using the timed practice record. In fact, scores made a steady upward climb during the entire study. I believe this was due to daily repetition in class more than being a reflection of using a particular type of practice record. The second variable I looked at was playing test scores. Again, the difference in scores was not remarkable as the class averages remained in the upper 80’s to low 90’s. The third part of my study examined students’ attitude towards practicing. This is the one area that had a significant difference. Students felt more prepared when using the Perfect 10 practice record and reported they had a better attitude towards practicing when using it.

I have concluded that neither practice record is perfect, but I am making progress in the right direction. My students need more structure in their practice time and need specific guidance about what to practice. Students understand what level they need to be at and that practice is how to get there, but they do not understand what to do when practicing to get there. Instead of asking for a certain amount of practice, I need to guide students to focusing on the quality of their practice. It may take making a couple lessons that focus on how to practice and reinforcing that throughout the year for students to begin practicing correctly, but in the long run it will be incredibly beneficial to the orchestra program.

**Action Plan**

I have switched back to the Perfect 10 practice record for the now since it offers additional structure to my students. I am developing another practice record type based on what I read in my literature review and will try it next semester with all my students. It focuses even more on goals than the Perfect 10 practice record. It also breaks down your practice into various sections such as warm-up, technique, individual pieces, etc. It will be more tailored to each level. At the start of next year, I plan to include lessons on *how* to practice at home. It will be a recurring topic throughout the year.

I would like to share my results with the other middle school orchestra directors in the district. Currently everyone uses the timed practice record format. The results are mixed and I believe that we can improve our ensembles if we can find a practice record that focuses students on specific skills to reinforce. I would also like to have a parent meeting about how they can help their child practice, even if the parent knows nothing about music. Having a supportive environment and routine at home can go a long way.

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**APPENDIX A**

**COPY OF STUDENT SURVEY**

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Practice Record Survey

Do **NOT** write your name on this survey!

Period \_\_\_

Are you male or female? (circle one)

1. Practicing my instrument is important.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

2. My parents make me practice.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

3. My practice goals are clear.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

4. I know what to practice.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

5. Practicing takes too long.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

6. Practice is hard.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

7. I like to play my instrument at home.

Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

Do you like the Perfect 10 practice record or the timed practice record better? Why?

Which type of practice record took longer to complete?

Did you know what to practice on the timed practice record?