

# Research on the Application of the US Cornerstone Assessment Model proposed by National Core Art Curriculum Standards in 2014 in the Performance Evaluation of Music Literacy

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**Abstract:** The United States issued the latest National Core Art Curriculum Standards in 2014, which address the issues of the overall design and planning of the five art courses of music, dance, drama, and media art. Compared to the 1994 edition of the National Standards for Art Education in the United States, it provides a new content for art courses. Essentially, it proposed cornerstone evaluation model. The American art curriculum has the following characteristics: focusing on artistic literacy and developing students' academic abilities, enabling students to achieve artistic success and achievement through creative practice, and a reverse curriculum design. These have certain enlightening effects on further improving the courses of music in China. This paper mainly discusses the implication of Cornerstone Assessment Model and its application in music teaching and evaluation process.

**Keywords:** Cornerstone Assessment Model; Music; Standards in 2014.

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## 1. Introduction

The cornerstone evaluation model is proposed in the context of the educational concept of "teaching for understanding" and based on reverse instructional design. It is an evaluation paradigm that is fully embedded in the teaching process. It is different from externally imposed standard tests, but rather an alternative evaluation that is determined before teaching. The term "cornerstone" is interpreted as "laying the foundation or foundation", which originally means fixing the cornerstone of a building. Cornerstone assessment is closely related to the course content and continues to be conducted, changing with the rise of the learning stage. The depth and breadth of the assessment content are gradually deepened.

Cornerstone is defined as "laying the foundation". It is different from ordinary "stones" and emphasizes more on being the stone material used as the foundation of buildings. Cornerstone evaluation anchors the curriculum around students' most critical performance. Cornerstone evaluation is closely related to goals (especially key concepts that need to be understood), anchored in the specific goals and content of each course segment, and uses various evaluation methods and tools to collect evidence of achieving expected results in learners' learning process. Cornerstone assessment points to the process and situational nature of the assessment, just like the keel of a ship which can protect the ship from aimless drift. Cornerstone assessment also plays a role in "fixing" the curriculum, preventing it from "drifting" as teaching progresses, and helping educators and learners successfully achieve teaching objectives. This also enables cornerstone assessment to be truly embedded in the curriculum and become a part of the curriculum. Based on the Cornerstone Assessment model, music teaching evaluation plays an important guiding role in the reform of music courses. It is a key factor in the success or failure of music course reform, and is an indispensable and important quality monitoring link

in the entire music teaching work. Scientific evaluation not only has the functions of guiding, identifying, motivating, improving, and regulating music teaching, but also plays a crucial role in the development of students' music quality, the improvement of music teachers' teaching level, and the improvement of school music education and teaching management.

## 2. Theoretical Background of the Cornerstone Evaluation Model

### 2.1. The Educational Philosophy of "Teaching for Understanding"

The teaching evaluation paradigm of "cornerstone evaluation" is not groundless, and there is a profound theoretical foundation behind it. The most important support is the educational concept of "teaching for understanding". The educational philosophy of "teaching for understanding" was proposed by Jay McTighe [1] and Grant Wiggins [2], renowned contemporary American experts in curriculum and teaching theory. They provided a systematic explanation and explanation in their jointly written book "The Understanding by Design" (hereinafter referred to as UBD, patented). Of course, the idea of focusing on "understanding" is not mentioned for the first time in this book. In fact, the term 'understanding' is widely mentioned in education. From the perspective of educational psychology, understanding is a means of completing cognitive processes. In the 2001 publication of "Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Evaluation - Revised Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives" by LW Anderson, "understanding" was divided into dimensions of "cognitive process" and regarded as a goal of cognitive learning for learners. The Graduate School of Education at Harvard University has developed a teaching form called "teaching for understanding", which aims to teach students to engage in understanding based learning, which is a completely different learning method from the mastery of

knowledge and skills. In the development of modern teaching theory in China, understanding is believed to be both a teaching method and a teaching goal. From "dual foundation" to "three-dimensional goal" and then to "core literacy", it reflects the increasing emphasis on achieving learners' understanding based learning.

I believe that UBD has deeply developed the educational concept of "teaching for understanding" based on the experience of predecessors. Teaching for Understanding "focuses on students' understanding, and teaching design that pursues understanding is a more purposeful, complete and detailed way of thinking to achieve students' understanding. As Ausubel (2000) pointed out, understanding is the ability to intelligently and appropriately organize implementation and techniques through effective application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation [3]. Therefore, an important feature of 'understanding' is its transferability. If a learner truly acquires a certain ability through learning process, they must be able to transfer this ability and knowledge to new, even confusing, and difficult situations. Effective transfer lies in the ability to creatively, flexibly, and smoothly apply what one has learned in a new environment. The ability to transfer is influenced by people's understanding of knowledge. The significance of teaching in pursuit of understanding lies in changing the traditional curriculum standards and teaching that only focuses on learners' skills and knowledge, breaking the limitations of traditional teaching that has a wide range of knowledge but lacks depth and knowledge integration, and focusing the focus of teaching on understanding that can truly help learners achieve ability transfer and application [4].

## **2.2. Cornerstone Evaluation Model and US 2014 Standards**

The United States voted in 2010 to revise the national art standards established in 1994 and officially began the revision process in 2011. The revision work is guided by the newly established National Coalition for Core Arts Standards (NCCAS), which is part of the American University Council. The alliance invited American curriculum and teaching theory experts Grant Wiggins and Jay McTeague as consultants for standard revision. The reason is that the 2014 Standard adopted their research on "re-understanding curriculum design" as the theoretical basis for the standard and revolved around the process of "reverse design" they designed. The 2014 Standards are designed to provide learners with the learning outcomes and evaluation evidence needed to achieve core areas of achievement. In the cornerstone evaluation model, the art process is divided into four stages, namely Creation and Exhibition, Presenting, Responding, and Connecting. Among them, it also includes elements such as Anchor Standards, Enduring Understandings, Essential Questions, and Performance Standards.

Anchor Standards are the discipline standards established in the 2014 American Standards, which run through all grades of the visual arts discipline and serve as a concrete representation of visual arts literacy. The term 'anchor' emphasizes the merger of flexibility and stability. In 2014 'Standards', a total of 11 anchoring standards were designed for the artistic process. Anchor standards are also an overview of specific performance standards. Behavioral indicators refer to the expected behavior of learners in the artistic process, and also point to the most important behavior in each artistic process. It corresponds to anchoring standards, which vary in each grade, and from preschool to high school, behavioral

abilities continue to improve. In the 2014 Standard, there are a total of 195 behavioral indicators, 15 Enduring Understandings and 44 Essential Questions. Continuous understanding and basic questions establish a conceptual framework for students in the field of art, and assist educators and students in organizing knowledge, skills, and experiences in the art process.

## **3. The Feasibility of Applying Cornerstone Assessment Model in Music Teaching**

Performance evaluation meets the requirements of music learning that emphasize the characteristics of sensation, appreciation, and understanding. Music is an auditory art, and all practices of music art must rely on hearing. Due to this characteristic of music art, the development of hearing is the most important thing in music education. Therefore, music teaching must be based on listening, with the development of students' music hearing and the cultivation of students' good perception of music as the primary task of music teaching, and as the foundation for learning other skills in music. Music education must follow the principle of putting listening at the center, and establish all teaching activities on the basis of listening. Training and cultivating good auditory perception and developing beneficial musical thinking are not only of great significance for music appreciation, but also a necessary prerequisite for learning music expression skills. Students' understanding and feelings of music cannot be tested solely through written exams or performances. By listening to a piece of music, students can write down their understanding of the music in written form. However, this may be limited by their language expression ability. It is possible that a student's understanding of music is very deep and unique, but due to limited written expression ability, it is not possible for people to fully understand their understanding of music through written words. In such cases, they can choose to express their understanding of music in their own good form, which can be written, dance, poetry, or painting. The examination of music perception and appreciation ability must run through the entire music teaching process, and performance evaluation is to examine students' ability to understand and apply knowledge in real or simulated real situations. Students' perception and appreciation of music are also based on understanding, and students express their understanding of music through different ways. It can be said that implementing performance evaluation is an effective evaluation method to assess students' feelings and appreciation abilities.

Performance evaluation meets the requirements of creative music learning. Music is a non semantic information, and its freedom, ambiguity, and uncertainty provide people with a vast space for imagination and association in their understanding and expression of music. This characteristic of music art has shown great advantages in developing students' creativity in music education, which undoubtedly provides a good psychological foundation for the cultivation of students' divergent thinking and innovative abilities. The creation of music learning mainly includes two aspects. One is specialized creative teaching, which emphasizes music creation as an important content of music teaching independently, so that music teaching can achieve maximum educational benefits. On the other hand, it is to integrate it into other music teaching content or expand it beyond the music

teaching content. Whether it is a specialized examination of creative teaching or an expanded examination of music creation combined with other music teaching methods, it cannot be completed through general evaluation forms or through examination questions. Instead, it should be examined at any time in regular classroom teaching. If students are only allowed to write on paper without performing it, they can simply piece together notes and music theory knowledge on paper without thinking or exerting their creativity, let alone having any intuitive feelings about music. This evaluation cannot truly evaluate students' creativity. Performance evaluation requires students to learn how to apply the knowledge they have learned and express it themselves, so that teachers can directly observe and evaluate it, emphasizing the full utilization of their creativity.

Performance evaluation meets the requirements of multicultural nature in music learning. Music is a language without borders, so the diversity of music culture is even more prominent. The diversity of music not only requires students to understand the music of their own ethnic group and other ethnic groups in their own country, but also the music of different ethnic groups in other countries and regions around the world. It also requires students to learn to analyze the music of various social classes and genres, view them from an open perspective, and accept them with a compatible attitude. To achieve the multicultural nature of music education, in addition to the above points, teachers are also required to provide individualized education for students from different cultural backgrounds in teaching, believe in the cognitive abilities of students from different cultures, analyze their unique cognitive strategies and learning forms, and carry out effective learning[5]. By utilizing diverse teaching activities and selecting representative and effective forms from various cultures for teaching, it not only enriches the classroom but also serves as a powerful practice for multicultural music education. Performance evaluation is the assessment of students' abilities in practice, so understanding and accepting the diversity of music culture is particularly important. It is difficult to demonstrate students' understanding of multiculturalism and acceptance of other cultures solely through paper and pen tests, while performative evaluation allows students to naturally express themselves in simulated real situations. Whether a student has these qualities or not can be easily understood by teachers.

## **4. The Application of Performance Evaluation in Music Teaching**

In traditional music learning evaluation, music teachers often evaluate students' learning outcomes through exams. This evaluation method is too one-sided, and a single quantitative approach cannot fully describe the acquisition of students' abilities and progress in the learning process. Therefore, changing the evaluation method of music teaching has become an urgent problem to be solved, and performance-based evaluation undoubtedly has a great promoting effect on music teaching reform.

### **4.1. Ideological Mobilization.**

The use of any teaching evaluation method requires a process of understanding, adaptation, and the same goes for

performance-based evaluation. We first provide training at the teacher level to focus on understanding of performance evaluation for music teachers, including what performance evaluation is, what to evaluate, how to evaluate, and the function and significance of performance evaluation. At the student level, we also need to break the shackles of traditional music teaching evaluation models on students' learning thinking, so that students can fully understand the limitations of a single examination method as the only standard for evaluating students' music learning level, and provide students with a clear understanding. Thus, students have a clear understanding of the specific performance evaluations and preparations required for the performance evaluation, and enhance their confidence in controlling the entire learning process.

### **4.2. Design Evaluation Tasks.**

Firstly, we aim to provide students with an understanding of the overall and phased objectives of music teaching, in order to gain a deep understanding of the evaluation objectives. At the same time, we provide students with a growth record bag, which includes all evaluation records from the learning process. Then, based on the actual situation of the students, we design personalized phased tasks. While designing music teaching evaluation tasks, teachers should ensure that students have a clear understanding and preparation for the evaluation methods and rules used in music teaching evaluation.

### **4.3. Reasonably Present Students' Grades.**

The use of performative evaluation in music teaching aims to truly promote students' music learning. Usually, it is best not to evaluate students' actual music learning abilities in the form of quantitative scores. In order to present students' grades relatively objectively and fairly, teachers should evaluate them from the following two aspects based on the actual needs of teaching evaluation: first, examine the learning process. Regarding the evaluation of the learning process, the assessment content mainly focuses on the performance of the student's learning process, mainly in the form of a checklist for examination. The performance evaluation is mainly based on language description and grade evaluation; Secondly, examine the learning outcomes. The evaluation of learning outcomes is mainly based on grade evaluation.

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