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Integration of National Standards & Music Technology

Seamless Classroom Integration of National Standards & Cutting-Edge Music Technology

by John Kuzmich, Jr. Ph.D.

Accountability is the new watchword in education. Music educators are on the front lines of this movement because our work with students is regularly on display for public scrutiny. But things are changing and we can't sit on our laurels. This new era requires more justifications and qualifications for academic accreditation and excellence. Mike Blakeslee, deputy executive director of NAfME stated: "With the increasing emphasis on core standards as drivers for our education system in areas, ranging from curriculum development to teacher assessment, we need music standards that match current and future policy needs. If we don't revise our standards to meet these new challenges, the arts risk being marginalized in American schools, limiting our young people's access and opportunity to a full, balanced education." He went on to say, continued as follows. "It's important for music teachers to get involved in this process because the standards will help professional music educators hone their curricula, and also help administrators and parents deepen their understanding of why music is good for students."

Although standards have been part of education reform in the U.S. since the 1970s, the national standards for arts education were only first introduced in 1994. Now in 2014, the standards have been upgraded with the addition of a technology component that helps upgrade student learning with skills that produce and promote flexibility, initiative, productivity, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, and communication.

Three broad music education areas that standards address are: creating, performing and responding, and connecting to music. Music education has long been primarily performance-oriented with attention focused on public performances and contests. But music education is far more than that. Modern music instruction needs expanding to include creative learning outcomes inherent in music. Technology can be the key to teaching and meeting standards; helping students and teachers achieve and evaluate growing artistic literacy. This should be embedded in teaching and learning from the start resulting in more well-rounded and passionate musicianship.

Administrators and politicians are looking for evidence of best practices throughout education that meets benchmark standards in a fast-changing world. In this and upcoming *SBO* Technology columns, readers will learn about some of the best standards-based lesson ideas and creative projects built on the latest technology.

New technology standards give more focus to creativity rather than just repetitive tasks to master, which can also motivate teachers to think globally beyond solely content-driven methodology. This allows the students to assume more ownership of their music with a deeper understanding than solely focusing on the performance of the music. The skills gained through creating, improvising, and responding to music will add to the body of evidence that music educators are helping students meet and exceed standards.

Language is important and a helpful guide for understanding the basic Core of Music Standards, which can be found at **http://tinyurl.com/ovfp2bz**. It is essential to use the correct vocabulary in helping students meet standards. While the technology standards are similar to the original 1994 language, they are now action-oriented with more flexibility given on how

to teach students to achieve and use them.

At **http://tinyurl.com/ppdc4fx,** you will view in red text, the creativity with which technology goes beyond the traditional 1994 standards. Now let's see how these new standards have affected and changed the way teachers and students excel at meeting standards with pedagogy ideas.

Breezin' Thru® Theory & Composing

Here is an exemplary tool that addresses the new NAfME Common Core standards. Breezin' Thru Theory® & Composing are two robust, innovative online programs cohesively linked together that help students build music literacy while also experiencing the thrill of creative application. As a bonus, students also acquire skill in using notation and audio sequencing software in a progressive fashion. Through its model curriculum and in-depth correlation to national standards, Breezin' Thru is comprehensive, encompassing, and fun for students and teachers alike. It addresses many technology needs and all the common core standards, which is a good introduction in setting the tone for standards for this series of forthcoming articles.

Dr. Terry Eder, AP Music Theory teacher in Plano, Texas, and a member of the music writing team for National Standards in the Arts and the Co-Chair of the AP Music National College Board, clearly supports the premise that technology opens new horizons for teaching and meeting standards in an efficient manner. Dr. Eder affirms that: "Breezin` Thru® Theory & Composing provides excellent technological support and means to help students meet the requirements of the newly developed National standards in composition & theory. Since understanding the fundamentals of music theory and the principles of music composition play a major part in achieving the standards, Breezin' Thru Theory & Composing have all the tools necessary to help students learn and progress in the development of ideas and concepts necessary to address the specific process components of the new standards. The three artistic processes defined in the standards—creating, performing, and responding—provide a conceptual framework in which students develop their knowledge and abilities in the creation of music.

Breezin' Thru Theory is right there to provide a great foundation for understanding the elements of music and also give students excellent opportunities to develop compositional techniques and skills leading to expressive creation in music. The composing program makes it possible for every student to get started in composition, and provides the way for individuals to really begin developing their creative powers in music! Breezin' is a 'must have' program in my classroom and fits right in with the requirements of the new standard."

Sample Lesson:

Music teachers have enough to do between juggling classes, rehearsals and performances, budgets and assessments, to have to come up with a lot of new lesson materials that meet the new national standards and also integrate cool technology that students want to use. Luckily Breezin' Thru takes care of that. The fun auto-assessed drills build theory proficiency while freeing-up valuable class and grading time. And then it's off to composing, giving all the lesson resources you need. Breezin' Thru author, Jean McKen suggests, "Breezin' Thru Composing is more than just a composition lessons app, it broadens a person's perspective on what music is. From building a melody based on your name to creating music for a movie, it offers so many nuggets of information on so many levels."

A key mission of Breezin' Thru is to make learning fun for students and easy for teachers.

As one teacher shared about her experiences Breezin' Thru:

"I don't think they know they're learning.
The air in the room is electric!"

In addition to the Breezin' Thru Theory interactive e-binder, her boys love to compete with the fun interactive games.

Another Fun Story

After using Breezin' Thru Theory to practice, all members of this Instrumental music class at Appleby College could now write out the Circle of Fifths in less than two minutes. The fastest time was achieved by Ashley who could complete it in less than 20 seconds. To celebrate the success of the class two of the students baked the Circle of Fifths in cupcakes!
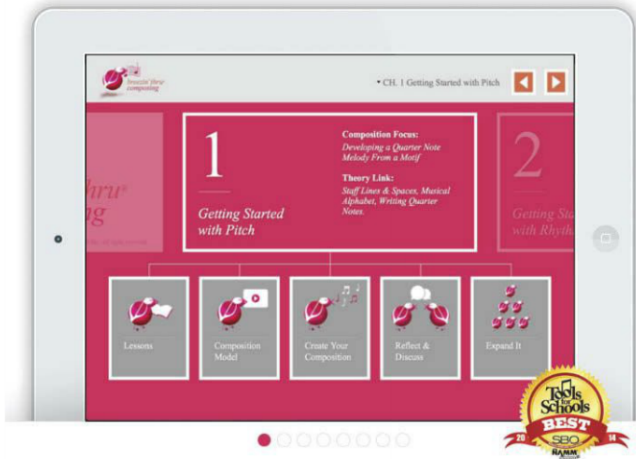
How fun & yummy is this.

But don't let the fun factor fool you. Breezin' Thru supports 5th – 12th grade including AP Music Prep.

Sample Lesson

Let's take a closer look at a sample chapter.

Each chapter is a unit that introduces compositional concepts & historical facts, and allows for application of theory concepts. In addition, it gets students learning to use a choice of creative technology-based tools such as notation software and audio-sequencing software to complete their own compositions.

This middle and high school level sample lesson outline is from Breezin' Thru Composing Chapter 7 titled "Jazz up Your Melody and is appropriate for any general music theory, composition, ensemble, music tech, or piano/guitar class. Students will learn about swing music through an interactive multi-media journey of videos, audio samples and quizzes. Then, students will create their own swing versions of a traditional melody using notation software in a core composition and expand the activity with audio sequencing software. The focus of this activity is melody and rhythm requiring prior knowledge of basic rhythm and major keys and scales (acquired in previous Breezin' Thru Theory & Composing chapters).

The objectives for this sample are to arrange a melody in swing style, incorporate swing feel and syncopation, learn to change key, and apply score editing, drum set rhythms in swing style, and audio recording. Composition, theory and technology skills are all addressed.

The lesson itself flows through 5 steps. First is an interactive step of listening and analysis of swing rhythms and feel; history of swing from Duke Ellington to Glen Mill-er; plus, major keys and swing rhythm theory. Second, a model video demonstrates creating a swing arrangement of a melody in notation software. Third, students create a simple arrangement of Early One Morning, experimenting with the Breezin' interactive Play Pad. Fourth, students submit reflections related to their composition and creative choices. Fifth, students do cool expansions with video models that show how to build a drum track and record vocals and instruments in audio-sequencing software like Garage Band.

Finally, easy assessment takes place with coaching tips and an evaluation rubric provided. Of note, acquired technology skills will include setting a swing feel, notating a drum staff, changing keys, creating with swing style drums, and audio recording skills for vocals and instruments.

Common Core Connections

By progressing through the scaffolded chapters of both Breezin' Thru Theory and Breezin' Thru Composing, students acquire the tools, knowledge, and practical enduring understanding to address the essential questions outlined in each Common Core Anchor. Most importantly, with these new skills students experience the thrill and joy of making music! BreezinThru.com

Closing Comments

Music technology has the power through innovative products and unique methodology to support teachers in this new era of education. Engaging students with cool tools will facilitate the new national standards. Freeing valuable teaching time, tracking student progress, and bringing out the natural musicality in students are advantages gained from integrating music technology. I look forward to bringing you more innovative ideas that feature technology "in action."

	Cr	Pr	Rc
5th-8th Grade	●	●	●
Composing/Theory	●	●	●
Music Tech	●	●	●
Guitar/Keyboard	●	●	●
Ensemble	●	●	●