

# smartnotes

the smartmusic e-newsletter



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## Documenting Every Student's Individual Progress

Math, science, and teachers of most other disciplines find it easy to document individual student progress throughout the year. They have a series of assignments and exams with grades that give evidence to what every student learned or did not learn. How does a music teacher provide similar evidence for their large number of students? How do concerts, musicals, and other large ensemble performances translate into individual student assessment and documentation? The curriculum, after all, is primarily the music rehearsed for public performance. Having each student come in and perform their parts for you is time prohibitive. In a fraction of that time, however, you can spot check the SmartMusic recordings of specific passages that you had the students make. Or, you can have their SmartMusic assessment grades export automatically into your student records database for calculation of semester grades. SmartMusic makes it practical for you to document each student's progress. This documentation provides important benefits:

- Students practice more when they are held accountable and know that you are tracking their practice time.
- Showing parents their child's progress or why a grade was appropriate is simply a matter of playing a SmartMusic recording for them or showing them their child's SmartMusic calculated grades.

Justification of your music program to the school administration is much more persuasive when you can prove the progress you have made with each student.

### Types of Assignments

The assignments you can make with SmartMusic support are wide and varied. Here are some examples:

**1. Tuner Assignment.** In rehearsal, show the students how to use the SmartMusic Tuner with the Play Reference Pitch on. They will hear that, whenever they produce a note, SmartMusic plays the same note but perfectly in tune. Now show them how to adjust their pitch to correct their intonation beats so that they are in tune with SmartMusic. Then show them how to record themselves playing an exercise of whole notes with the solo line turned on and the accompaniment turned off so they can focus on playing in tune with SmartMusic. The assignment, then, is for every student to post a SmartMusic recording playing a scale in tune with SmartMusic.

**2. Exercises.** SmartMusic has a rich set of skill-development exercises with multiple accompaniments. The music is shown on-screen: Scales, Arpeggios, Twisters, etc. Simply assign an exercise in a concert key with a particular articulation and tell the students to post their SmartMusic grade and/or recording of the assignment by a certain date. There are even exercises on the Blues Scale and Play By Ear.

**3. Large Ensemble Works Supported by SmartMusic.** If the work is supported by SmartMusic, then students can practice with recording of the work so that they quickly learn how it sounds and how all the parts work together. As they practice the work, they hear all the dynamics, expressiveness, and drama of the music. They can hear their part performed correctly so that tricky rhythms and other performance aspects are made clear for them. They can put difficult passages into practice loops and then practice them slowly, gradually building up speed. In addition, all large ensemble works included with SmartMusic have educator-approved, pre-authored assignments for all parts. Use SmartMusic Impact to assign these to your students.

**4. Large Ensemble Works Not Supported by SmartMusic.** If the work you are rehearsing is not yet supported by SmartMusic, your band, orchestra and choir students can still practice their part with accompaniment in SmartMusic. Simply upload an audio file of the work to SmartMusic and distribute the sheet music.

**5. SmartMusic Impact™** is an effective and efficient way for teachers to guide and document the individual development for every student.

- Students are “enrolled” into the Impact Gradebook™ so that they are organized by music class.
- When you assign an assignment for some or all of the students in a class, they are each notified automatically with the definition of the assignment, when it is due, and how much it is weighted in terms of their semester grade.
- As time passes, the students are sent automatic assignment reminders according to a schedule you specified.
- When a student is ready to submit a SmartMusic recording or grade, the student simply clicks on Submit and the recording and/or grade is automatically sent to that student’s record in the appropriate class. Students do not bother with e-mails and neither do you!
- The Impact Gradebook automatically tracks student grades on assignments and weights them according to your specifications. Current grade averages are always available for you and, if you so allow, your students.
- The Impact Gradebook simplifies the making, tracking, and grading of assignments. Your time is important. Let SmartMusic automate as much as possible for you.

**SmartMusic in the band room of Fire Prairie Middle School**

Being a band director has changed a great deal over time. Directors now must be as savvy with technology as they are knowledgeable about the different instruments and talented musically.



Nearly all of our assessments are done using SmartMusic. This past June, our Summer Academy Band students began receiving their assignments directly through SmartMusic using Impact Gradebook™. I compare playing assessments at home to an open book test which can be taken over and over until a score is achieved that the band member can be proud of. The band members (and their parents!) love the convenience of getting assignments this way. I love being able to track assessments, assignments, recording, and even practice time using Impact.

As a director of young bands, I use SmartMusic and the new Impact Gradebook™ in many facets of my teaching. I am a long-time user of Essential Elements 2000 and it has been extremely easy to incorporate SmartMusic as an invaluable learning and assessment tool. For example, a common strategy is to finger through each line or clap the rhythms while just the solo line is playing (with the accompaniment off). The students then play through the line with the accompaniment. This not only reinforces the correct fingerings and rhythms before they play but also allows me to circulate among the students to check for comprehension.

With our Timberwinds Honor Band, I have selected literature for them straight from version 10. I am able to preview both an audio recording and each instrument's part directly from SmartMusic. It is exciting to hear how much faster the students improve as they practice right along with the sound of a real band (not just MIDI files) on these full band arrangements and compositions. They become addicted to that "correct sound" and strive to hear it in rehearsals.

Our building utilizes student-led conferences and using Impact Gradebook™ makes that a breeze. Last year (before Impact was released) I kept a screenshot and an audio file of the students performing an assessment in class. I made a big push through my weekly parent e-mail updates for the parents to come in to see and hear how their child was doing in band. I enjoyed a record turnout of parents and was able to clearly show them the progress of their child.

SmartMusic and Impact have streamlined much of my work as an educator. It makes teaching easier and has made an incredible difference in the performance of my students. There is more individual accountability than there has ever been and that provides me with data to improve what I do in the classroom.

Don Long will celebrate his 20th year in teaching this year. He is currently the District Coordinator of Music Education, Director of Beginning Bands for Fire Prairie Middle School in Independence, Missouri.

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**Tips and Tricks**

**What is enrollment?**

Every student must enroll in your class(es) to receive assignments. To enroll, students will click the Assignment button in SmartMusic and follow the on-screen instructions. During enrollment, your students will enter their name and address and select their instrument/voice. A student does not need to have their own subscription to enroll into a class, they can use a practice room computer instead. Each student will need to provide an e-mail address they will use as their login. After a student has enrolled in your class, you will confirm their enrollment into your class(es) by clicking on the Confirm tab then press the confirm button next to your pending students name. If you have imported your class information, the closest match is automatically selected for you.

### **I've set up my classes in SmartMusic Impact™ and I'd like to supervise the student enrollment process. How can I do this?**

You can easily enroll a group of students by using your school computer lab. The computers will need an Internet connection, but they don't have to have SmartMusic installed on them. Just have your students go to [www.smartmusic.com/enroll](http://www.smartmusic.com/enroll) and then follow the on-screen instructions to enroll in your class. After your students have enrolled, you can confirm their enrollment into your classes by logging into your Impact account at [www.smartmusic.com/impact](http://www.smartmusic.com/impact). Once enrolled and confirmed, your students will be ready to receive assignments in SmartMusic.

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### **SmartMusic Review by Robert Grifa**

There is an expectation in education that teachers need to expand their use of technology in their classrooms. Fortunately for music teachers, there are programs like SmartMusic® and Finale® that aid teachers in the development of their students as well as keep track of their progress. Read the full review of SmartMusic 10 and Impact by band director, Robert Grifa, including direct quotes from his band students.



*"SmartMusic has helped me improve because it teaches and gives me practice on rhythms and also helps me learn my fingerings quickly. It also helps me tune my notes so that they sound good all the time."* SmartMusic is a powerful teaching tool. There are thousands of exercises for the development of technical, aural, and improvisation skills as well as accompaniments for solo literature. SmartMusic 10 includes full arrangements for concert band, string orchestra, and jazz ensemble, with more titles continuously added

*"I can download music from the (concert band) library and real bands are playing it."* User-created Finale files can be made into SmartMusic accompaniments, which allow the teacher to have full access to the powerful tools in SmartMusic. Since there is no other notation program that can create SmartMusic files, educators can certainly get much more out of the notation files they create for their classes.

*"SmartMusic helps me recognize errors and helps me correct them quickly! It makes practicing fun!"* Another powerful aspect of SmartMusic is its assessment capabilities. Students and teachers can instantly see and hear the progress that is being made. Suggestions for improvement can be more easily understood by students at all levels with the feedback that

SmartMusic provides.

*"I think it is really cool that we can take tests from home. Tests in class can take up a lot of time and now we can do other things."* Included with SmartMusic 10 is SmartMusic Impact™. This is an amazing tool that allows the teacher and student to monitor progress remotely. Using Impact, the teacher can assign any SmartMusic file (including user-created Finale files) with specific criteria that the student has to follow. After a student logs into their SmartMusic account at home, an assignment window opens. With a click, the assignment opens for the student in SmartMusic.

*"I can record something many times and compare each one."* The student can play as many takes as he wants. After reviewing his attempts and selecting his best take, he can send it through SmartMusic to the school's Impact website which is provided free by SmartMusic! (An active Internet connection is necessary.) After logging into the secure Impact site, the teacher then can check the student's progress by reviewing a screenshot of the assignment along with the recording provided in the Impact Gradebook™. Parents, too, can access their child's progress through Impact, which allows for more meaningful communication regarding a student's progress!

*"I thought it was really cool that learning music could even be more fun."* SmartMusic is a wonderful teaching tool and with the new features it offers, teachers can be more efficient and productive in their teaching with great results. Students are using state of the art technology to assess themselves and become more independent learners. Does this all really work? Yes, this article is based on my own experiences with SmartMusic! By using SmartMusic, I can teach the way I want. Is technology is here to stay? I hope so!

Robert Grifa has taught band for 29 years in public schools at the high school and middle school levels. He is currently the band director at Greenbrier Middle School in Chesapeake, VA.

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## Just Released

### [Volume Pricing now available](#)

Discounts begin at 100 subscriptions. E-mail [smartbuy@makemusic.com](mailto:smartbuy@makemusic.com) for more information.

### [More New Band Titles](#)

Over 120 new band, jazz band, and orchestra titles, plus *Rubank Advanced Method, Volume 1*.

### [Have you updated to SmartMusic 10.1?](#)

SmartMusic Impact and more titles for band, jazz band, and orchestra are included with SmartMusic 10.1 as well as support for accompaniments created in Finale 2008 and Vista compatibility. Updates are free to current subscribers so click [here](#) to download yours now.

## Announcements

### [SmartMusic Impact Demo](#)

Preview Impact before you set up your own account and classes. Just go to

[www.smartmusic.com/impact](http://www.smartmusic.com/impact) and login with "demo" as your e-mail address and password.

[Upcoming Events](#)

[Educator Resources](#)

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## Meet the Team

Dave Hawley says that what he likes most about his job is, "Meeting potential users of SmartMusic. When they realize how much it will help them in the band room and what a difference it will make for their students, that's what my job is all about. And I continue to be energized to hear the stories from teachers and students when potential users become enthusiastic advocates for the software."



You'll recognize Dave from his travels around the country on behalf of SmartMusic as a Product Specialist. He was first hired in 1993, and was very much involved in the original Vivace® product, working on the testing and development of every new version over the past 14 years. He continues to test each new version of SmartMusic and uses it for his own practicing, trying to keep in shape on his flute and clarinet skills, in addition to his talents on the alto sax.

Dave says, "I had always wanted to be a music educator and a performer, and I've been lucky enough to do both." He taught in the Edina and Wayzata, MN, Public Schools, the Blake Schools, the University of Minnesota, and was Director of Bands at Augsburg College. In addition, Dave played professionally for 20 years at the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre, as well as gigging for traveling Broadway shows at the Orpheum and Ordway Theatres and at performances at Orchestra Hall with the Minnesota Orchestra during pops or jazz concerts.

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