

smartnotes

the smartmusic e-newsletter



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Spotlight on Band Director, Mark Corey

Mark Corey is the band director of the Addison Trail High School Band in Addison, Illinois. He has provided his insight and personal experience of preparing his own students for contest.

"I value solo repertoire as a means of developing student musicianship. Contest or solo recitals serve as a goal to motivate and inspire my students to further develop their skills. Students who practice often with accompaniment learn more quickly and develop more confidence, so I've come to believe that SmartMusic can be an integral tool in solo preparation.

To monitor their progress, I developed a two-month plan that reflects the learning process of a major solo. Here are my assignments:

- Week 1 – Select a solo from the SmartMusic repertoire. (10 points)
- Week 3 – Submit a recording (18 points)
Any tempo
SmartMusic solo line on or off
Repeats may be off
- Week 5 – Submit a recording (24-30 point assignment rubric)
Any tempo
SmartMusic solo line turned off
With repeats
All notes, rhythms, articulations, and dynamics observed
- Week 7 – Submit final recording (24-30 point assignment rubric)
All markings observed
- Week 8 – Contest or solo recital
Evaluated by a judge

Listening to their own performances is a powerful self-motivator, making students want to improve their performance skills.

Adopting SmartMusic itself wasn't difficult, but implementing the changes into the curriculum was an evolutionary process. Today the result of this evolution is a technology-rich classroom that enhances my teaching and helps motivate my students.

With the recent addition of SmartMusic Impact, the free web-based service for creating and monitoring assignments, this process has become even more efficient and seamless."

Chris Grifa on Using SmartMusic Impact

"Using SmartMusic Impact is a valuable tool both in and out of the classroom. I can create an Impact assignment and send it out to all of my students via the Impact website in just a matter of minutes. I also have complete control over all of the settings and options of the assignment. Some of these settings include the tempo, the date the assignment is due, whether or not to track the amount of time each individual student spends on the assignment, and whether or not a recording must be included when the student submits the assignment. When the student opens the assignment either at home or in my practice rooms, the settings that I have put into place are already set up for the student.



When the student hits the Play button, a whole new level of assessment begins. SmartMusic will assess, grade notes and rhythms, and record the student's performance. Immediately after completing the exercise, the student will receive their grade and they can listen to their recording. The students can then self-evaluate and choose either to submit the assignment or to try it again. When the student hits the Submit button, the assignment is instantly sent to my Impact grade book where I can listen to their recording and grade their quality of sound, articulations, and musicality on any computer connected to the Internet. I can even provide individual feedback to each student that they will see the next time they log in to the Impact website to check their grade.

Since using Impact in my classroom, I have had complete control over what my students are working on at home. I know how long they are practicing and I am able to hear each and every student on an individual basis at least once a week. Gone are the days of taking an entire class period to do a playing test! Now I can spend more time in the classroom teaching my students.

Impact has truly "impacted" my lesson plans and the way that I teach my students. I know what issues each and every one of my students are having at home and I can adjust my lesson plans accordingly. I am confident that after using SmartMusic and Impact on an individual basis, my students are having fun, are better all-around musicians, and are set up for success."

Chris Grifa is a Band Director for Tri-North Middle School in Bloomington, IN.

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Tips and Tricks

How to Create an Impact Assignment from an Audio CD

One of the great new features in SmartMusic 10 is the addition of the "Open Audio Files" feature. Found in the File Menu of the program, this feature allows you to load any .MP3, .WAV, or .AIFF file into SmartMusic. You can change the speed at which it plays back or change the pitch by

interval as well. It's a simple process to take your audio CD and create an Impact assignment!

1. "Rip" the CD track(s) into an audio file. Save the file where you can find it, like a Documents folder or your Desktop. Use your favorite media playing software, such as iTunes, Windows Media Player, or CDex (all of which are free). Make sure to save the file as .MP3, .WAV (Windows,) or .AIFF (Macintosh). We recommend .MP3 to make downloads faster for students, and also so you don't have to worry what kind of computers your students are using.
2. Launch SmartMusic. In the File Menu, choose Open Audio Files. Choose the file you want to assign. The first time you load the file, it will be put into SmartMusic's audio file database. This will make it easier to find your file in the future!
3. Change the tempo, key, or starting point of the file as needed. Click the Assignment button at the top to log in and send this assignment to Impact.
4. In Impact, choose Assignments, SmartMusic Assessment and Recording, then Personal Library. Your audio file and assignment are here, ready to be scheduled as an assignment.

This is a great way to have students practice with choral or other repertoire not yet available in SmartMusic. You can even record your own concerts and rehearsals for students to analyze and practice.

How do Practice Report Assignments Work?

When you make a Practice Report assignment, SmartMusic tracks the amount of time your students spend practicing and the titles of the pieces played. You can customize the assignment to track the accumulated time spent during any desired period of time. With the easy-to-use Practice Report feature, you can clearly communicate the number of minutes you expect students to be practicing as well as the number of points that time is worth. Once your students complete the assignment, they simply click the Submit button and the report appears in the Impact Gradebook for your review.

Students are provided an opportunity to self-report any time spent practicing without SmartMusic. These additional minutes are added to the total time spent practicing.

The time spent is only tracked on the machine that a student is working on. This means that if a student practices at school and at home, the assignment will only be submitted when they fulfill the time requirement at one of the two locations. Time spent at both will not be totaled.

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Starting a Band Program With SmartMusic

Bob Baca is professor of trumpet and director of jazz studies at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. He has performed with the Milwaukee Symphony, and the Minnesota Orchestra, and is a current member of the Plymouth Music Series Orchestra, as well as a past





member of the radio ensemble for Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion." He has toured with Frank Sinatra, Buddy Rich, Tony Bennett, Mel Tormé, and numerous others. As a teacher, Bob works with all levels of students and has served as conductor for many all-state honors jazz ensembles. He has performed as a soloist in China, Costa Rica, and throughout Europe.

SmartMusic: Your son attends a small school that didn't have a beginning band program or the staffing to consider a band program. How did you help bring music into your son's school?

Baca: In Eau Claire, we have a marvelous voucher school of 175 students. Crestview Academy had small classrooms, experienced, passionate teachers and administration, a school philosophy that concentrated on the joy of learning, but no music program!

In May, my son and I went to a beginning band sign-up rally at a local middle school. There were more than 300 people in attendance and my son got totally caught up in the hoopla. He wanted band rehearsal and private lessons to start that evening. It was a wonderful father-son moment. At the conclusion of this meeting, the band director sadly told my son that she had found out that morning that the city would not allow him to participate in her band program. I can't describe what a father feels like when his 10-year-old son cries like that. It was at that moment, I decided to start a band program at Crestview Academy. With full support from the administration and 52 Crestview and home-schooled children and parents, the band program was launched.

SmartMusic: As a busy college music educator, clinician, and performer how did you find time to work with your son's school band?

Baca: A solid band parents organization, instrument specialists, a killer webpage, and SmartMusic.

Through my church I found Kathy Kishaba, whose son was going to be in the band, to be our band president. The band president's job was basically to help me make everything up as we go along and rally parents to follow through with the ideas. She is brilliant, humble, extremely organized, passionate about our band program, and takes phone calls at 11:00 p.m.

The students bought their own music stands and method books, and they rent their instruments. We have an Instrument Specialist on each instrument group, made up of college students majoring in music education and parents of the band students. These specialized teachers consider their instrument group their "musical children." They are responsible to answer all their questions and take ownership in their development as musicians. One of our instrument specialists is a computer guru who designed our webpage, where most of our internal communication takes place.

Starting a band program "from scratch" was exciting and challenging at the same time. While there was no tradition to live up to, it also was the training of a brand-new culture to the world of band. We had only three parents who had ever played in a band when they were younger. I knew the only way our program would be truly successful would be with SmartMusic at its backbone. I first heard about SmartMusic as a faculty member of Conn-Selmer University led by Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser. During the demonstration by SmartMusic specialist, Leigh Kallestad, I was in awe that technology had come this far to have the ability be able to relate to a student on a personal level like a real teacher.

SmartMusic: How did the band students respond to using SmartMusic?

Baca: Once we got past the logistics of parents who did not own a computer and the fatigue of yet another band cost, success was instantaneous. I watched the students' accelerated learning right in front of me as we played several of the SmartMusic exercises together in rehearsal. Along with much sight-reading, we play along together with many of the fun backgrounds accompanying the exercises in the method books. Since our program meets for one hour, two days a week after school, accountability can only be observed through merit. One of the several games we play is the "Tune of the Week," in which a piece from the music on-screen is assigned, and the player who performs the most musical rendition gets a special prize.

With every band program there is a pull in both directions with accelerated students versus below-average students playing the same music. With SmartMusic's inexhaustible library, all students have an endless supply of challenging musical repertoire to choose from.

The Instrument Specialists love this program, for they are only able to see their students in person once every two weeks. SmartMusic assignments keep teacher and student in constant contact with feedback from the assignments given.

SmartMusic: What kind of feedback did you get from the parents of the band students?

Baca: Pleasantly surprised. Remember that most of these parents have never had a band experience themselves, and didn't know what to expect. All but three of my students had two to five years of piano background. Many were very apprehensive on conquering the struggle of daily practice similar to what they experienced while their kids were studying piano. Many gave credit to SmartMusic for getting their kids over the first hump of developing daily practice habits. One missionary on furlough said he is taking SmartMusic back to Chad, Africa, with him and instilling it in the band program for missionary kids. Another band parent in his 40s has picked up the trumpet again after a 20-year hiatus and is practicing two hours a day with SmartMusic and loving every minute of it.

SmartMusic: When we visited about your beginning band you mentioned that there were many things besides the music that came out of your SmartMusic experience with your son. Could you share some of these experiences?

Baca: Sure, like playing catch, or throwing the football, SmartMusic enables my son and I to practice together and enjoy precious time at this incredibly influential age. Our relationship is closer. SmartMusic helps me to convince my son that participating in music is fun and gratifying. To work out the kinks in a piece and perform it with an ensemble right in your living room is one of the greatest feelings in the world. Several of our band parents have picked up an instrument for the first time to learn it with their son or daughter in practice together using SmartMusic.

SmartMusic: What would you say to music teachers who are considering SmartMusic?

Baca: I firmly believe that once the word gets out about the tremendous advantage students have who use SmartMusic, every band program that has an operational computer will be using it. As a result of my experience using SmartMusic as the backbone for the Crestview Band, I have integrated it fully into my trumpet studio and Jazz Studies Area at UW-Eau Claire.

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Just Released

[New Band & Orchestra Titles](#)

More than 50 new concert band, jazz ensemble, and orchestra titles have been released in the last month for a total of over 650 ensemble titles. Search a listing of new titles:

- Click [here](#) and select an ensemble type.
- See a complete listing by clicking [here](#).

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Announcements

2008 Budget Planning

It's not too early to start thinking about budgeting for the 2008-2009 school year. Our volume pricing makes it easy to find room for SmartMusic in your budget. Discounts begin at 100 subscriptions. E-mail smartbuy@makemusic.com for more information.

[SmartMusic on The Today Show](#)

SmartMusic was featured on NBC's The Today Show on December 31, 2007. Click [here](#) to view the segment: "Music class goes hi-tech."

[Upcoming Events](#)

Come see SmartMusic at the Texas MEA Clinic/Convention, Minnesota MEA Midwinter In-Service Clinic, ASTA 2008 National Conference, 63rd ASCD Annual Conference, and [more](#).

[BOA Honor Band Audition for the Rose Parade](#)

Students now use SmartMusic to prepare and submit their recordings for Music for All auditions including the BOA Honor Band that participates in the 2009 Tournament of Roses Parade. Click [here](#) for more about Music for All and the Rose Parade.

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Meet the Team

Phil Stangel is our new SmartMusic Impact Assignment Coordinator.

"I came from Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, and taught in the Wisconsin public school system for the past 27 years. I am a woodwind player with my main focus being the saxophone. The first sax I played on was a 1936 Revelation by Holton. It was my dad's tenor sax and I still have it. I also sing tenor in the church choir.



I taught in five different school districts, teaching everything from beginning band to high school band and music technology. I was a

member of a nine-piece dance band in Green Bay where I played lead alto sax, clarinet, and sang. I was a member of a saxophone quartet "Sax duJour" where I played soprano and alto sax, and was the clarinetist in a Dixieland band called "The Sturgeons of Swing."

When computers first came into schools, I thought "who needs this?" and figured I would never have to use one. Now, I'm using a computer all day long and can't imagine what life would be like without one.

In school, I encouraged my students to use SmartMusic in their practice sessions. As a private teacher, I used SmartMusic with my students both in lessons and in solo and ensemble competitions. It's so great to have the computer accompany you in a performance or a practice session. I wish I had this when I was in school! Finale® and I go way back to the 3.0 days. I still do a bit of arranging and transcribing with Finale 2008.

My current job as Impact Assignment Coordinator has me very busy. I coordinate several developers who create assignments for SmartMusic Impact. It is my job to proof the finished lessons and then send them off for production. Along with that, I am in constant contact with our developers to solve problems and answer questions. A lot of co-workers are responsible for getting these titles out to the public. We work as a team, sharing ideas and helping each other out. I work with wonderful people who are very knowledgeable and passionate about music, making a friendly and productive environment. I love my job because it allows me to help thousands of students and teachers."

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