

The Fear of Failure: The Impact of Allowing and Encouraging Risk Taking in the Classroom

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**THE FEAR OF FAILURE: THE IMPACT OF ALLOWING AND ENCOURAGING
RISK TAKING IN THE CLASSROOM**

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TOPIC

The Fear of Failure: The Impact of Allowing and Encouraging Risk Taking in the Classroom

(June 2018)

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this empirical study is to explore the impact of establishing a creative culture for learning and personal growth by allowing and encouraging risk taking in a safe environment. This will be explored within a high school string orchestra classroom from the beginning of the school year to the end of the winter concert. Student generated classroom standards and expectations, pre and post study student surveys, and a post study questionnaire will be used to document and collect data. The information gathered will reveal process, structure and creative development of risk taking behavior. The data collected will be used to reinforce and evaluate teaching strategies as well as a student's ability to learn, reflect, grow and collaborate with peers.

RATIONALE

In contemporary society, the ability to take risks in and out of the classroom is more important than ever (Barney and Maughan 50). The world is complex and ever changing. A teacher's learning and personal growth is essential for assisting in preparing students for current and future experiences in the classroom, workplace, and life. In order to promote risk taking in the classroom, teachers need to take risks and create opportunities for their students to take risks

themselves (Hawkins, “When Risks in the Classroom”). Before any of this can begin, creating a safe environment in the classroom is essential. If students are being asked to take risks, they need to feel like they are in an environment where that is supported. As the Georgia Center of Assessment from the University of Georgia College of Education states, “If we want our students to take risks in their learning, we need to create classrooms in which academic risk taking is encouraged and is a part of the learning process” (“Are Your Students Taking Risks”).

With the complexities of the world in which we live, the ability to take risks, not only in the classroom, is essential for getting students ready to be responsible and contributing citizens. To further support this, the description of 21st Century Skills specifies:

Learning and innovation skills are what separate students who are prepared for increasingly complex life and work environments in today’s world and those who are not.

They include:

- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Communication and Collaboration (Teaching 21st Century Skills)

Students who are able to problem solve in creative ways can become more resilient and learn to evolve their thinking and approach to their learning. Students enter the classroom with a variety of levels in confidence, empowerment, experience in problem solving itself and their personal perceptions on what the ramifications are when they fail or make a mistake. It is important that educators create an environment where students feel safe to explore different ways of learning and personal growth so each student has time and space to discover and develop their

metacognition.

Survey and observation collection will be used to reinforce and evaluate teaching strategies as well as a student's ability to learn, reflect, grow and collaborate with peers. The goal is to share the results of this survey with colleagues and to collaborate across disciplines. This will enable further connections of risk taking in the classroom and continuing fostering creativity in our students and classrooms.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Topic	
Statement of Purpose	
Rationale	
Expected Findings	
Chapter 2: The Approaches and Benefits of Risk Taking In the Classroom	4
21st Century Learning	
Approaches and Benefits to Risk Taking in the Classroom	
Student Factors Involved in Risk Taking	
Chapter 3: Establishing a Safe Environment to Cultivate Risk Taking	8
Establishing the Safe Environment	
Preliminary Survey Findings	
Activities and Methods Utilized to Encourage and Establish Risk Taking	
Post Survey Findings	
Comparison of Preliminary Survey and Post Survey Findings	
Chapter 4: Conclusion	26
Study Affirmations and Findings	
Future Development with Study	
Appendices	28
Appendix A	
Appendix B	
Appendix C	
Appendix D	
Appendix E	
Appendix F	
Appendix G	
Appendix H	
Appendix I	
Appendix J	
Appendix K	
Appendix L	
Appendix M	
Appendix N	
Appendix O	
Works Cited	41

Chapter One: Introduction

TOPIC

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In contemporary society, the ability to take risks in and out of the classroom is more important than ever (Barney and Maughan 50). The world is complex and ever changing. A teacher's learning and personal growth is essential for assisting in preparing students for current and future experiences in the classroom, workplace, and life. In order to promote risk taking in the classroom, teachers need to take risks and create opportunities for their students to take risks themselves (Hawkins, "When Risks in the Classroom"). Before this can begin, creating a safe environment in the classroom is essential. If students are being asked to take risks, they need to feel like they are in an environment where that is supported. As the Georgia Center of Assessment from the University of Georgia College of Education states, "If we want our students

to take risks in their learning, we need to create classrooms in which academic risk taking is encouraged and is a part of the learning process” (“Are Your Students Taking Risks”).

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Survey and observation collection will be used to reinforce and evaluate teaching strategies as well as a student’s ability to learn, reflect, grow and collaborate with peers. The goal is to share the results of this survey with colleagues and to collaborate across disciplines. This will enable further connections of risk taking in the classroom and continuing fostering creativity in our students and classrooms.

EXPECTED FINDINGS

The survey and observation collection will be used to reinforce and evaluate teaching strategies as well as a student's ability to learn, reflect, grow and collaborate with peers. I expect to have a variety of outcomes as each individual student enters a classroom with a different set of experiences and personal expectations. I anticipate some students will increase their awareness of their metacognition, helping create a safe environment for learning and their risk taking in classroom, while others may stay the same, and others might even feel like they have become less comfortable in taking risks but maybe more comfortable in other areas. There are a variety of factors that can determine the outcome of their personal progress and sometimes even more importantly, their perception of that progress. My overarching goal is to help bridge these factors with students, and myself as an educator, to help create a more safe and rigorous classroom where awareness of self and each other and risk taking is encouraged from everyone, not just a select few.

Chapter Two: The Approaches and Benefits of Risk Taking in the Classroom

The Framework for 21st Century Learning lists creativity and innovation as an integral part of a successful educational framework. Within this creativity and innovation category contains the need for relationship skills, risk taking skills, and the ability to be aware of one's self and others:

Work Creatively with Others

- Develop, implement and communicate new ideas to others effectively
- Be open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives; incorporate group input and feedback into the work
- Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work and understand the real world limits to adopting new ideas
- View failure as an opportunity to learn; understand that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes

(Teaching 21st Century Skills)

Knowing the psychology of risk behavior is an advantageous lens to look through to understand risk-taking in an educational setting (Ponticell 6). Loss and uncertainty are foundational to risk (Ponticell 18). With this loss and uncertainty, some students battle with fear of failure which can prevent them exploring their potential and capabilities they may not believe they possess.

Students who are able to take risks and problem solve in creative ways can become more resilient and learn to evolve their thinking and approach to their learning. Educators need to help create opportunities for their students to practice taking risks in their thinking and behavior.

Risk is the possibility of loss and risk-taking is how humans behave during the possibility of loss and uncertainty (Assailly). There are students that have a natural desire and drive to

collaborate, be challenged, put themselves in situations where the outcome is unknown, make mistakes and know that it is just a part of the process. There are also students who do not think they have that desire, drive, or the ability to do so. As former teacher and principal Mark Jacobson's states, "As long as students are driven by what others think of them, they're focused on the external. We teachers need to turn them inward, to refocus their attention on their own effort and abilities." (40).

There are many ways to help encourage students to have a more positive the perception of their personal ability and skill sets. Having students evaluate themselves and how they perceive themselves in and out of the classroom offers insight on a very individual level. Inquiring about students' mindsets can help the educator have a better understanding of where the students' perceptions of themselves are to better inform the educators' instruction. At times, educators use their perception to guide instruction where there is a wealth of knowledge from their students that they are unaware of due to simply not asking. As an educator, it is important to seek out information and data from the students themselves, not just their test scores.

Other ways of motivating students is offering feedback that is specific, concise and motivates the continued process of learning can assist in building students' metacognition that avoids the finite and opens up the students to possibilities and exploration.

Risk-taking and humble learning were essential components of the process. From personal experience and observation, students respect and work hardest for teachers who take such risks and are willing to learn aside them. Jim Henson nailed it when he remarked, "Students don't remember what you teach them. They remember what you are." For students to develop essential 21st century skills like critical thinking and

problem solving, teachers must be critical thinkers and problem solvers (Hawkins, “When Risks in the Classroom”).

Educators should create questions, discussions, and assignments that do not have a right or wrong answer but are instead asking students to think on deeper level to encourage collaboration and exploration of thought and action. This can help focus the student’s attention and mind set on their own metacognition rather than searching for the answer they think their teacher is looking for.

In addition to feedback, creating opportunities for class discussions and collaboration are a valuable activity in the classroom. Dr. Dean R. Spitzer, an authority on performance measurement and management, investigated the effect of group discussions on elementary and secondary school teachers’ attitudes towards risky actions. The study assists in explaining the nature of risky actions and applies it to the rigid and conservative American school system. Group discussions increased positive attitudes towards the concept of taking risks (Spitzer 372). Students today have more distractions that can take them away from face to face conversations. Creating opportunities in the classroom where students can engage, collaborate, and discuss in a comfortable environment is a key element to helping students feel safe to take risks without fear of judgement from others or themselves.

Fear is a significant element that plays into a student’s ability to take risks in and out of the classroom. The greatest influence on fear is the interactive relation between the perceptions of self-efficacy and self-judgement (Bandura 262). If a student does not believe they can achieve a task and/or are extremely hard on themselves when an outcome is not reached that they are happy with, fear will push the opportunity for risk taking behavior away. The fear of failure is the most significant negative emotion expressed because this emotion leads to more cautious

behavior patterns (Ponticell 20). Allowing students to experiment with their learning and their thinking gives them opportunities to see what they can accomplish if they allow themselves to fail. In a learning environment, experiential learning can adjust fear of failure and provide results of action (March 311). Instead of fearing failure, students can learn to use their failures to explore what works and does not work. Learning can therefore become more of an evolution of discovery with different paths for each learner rather than feeling like there is only one path to one answer.

Researchers agree that risk-taking behavior is an area that requires further exploration. The areas that have risk-taking research are psychology, leadership, business, and risk management. In the educational literature on risk-taking, the terms of academic and intellectual risk-taking are interchangeable. It is imperative for educators to strive to create a classroom that is as safe for students to explore the possibilities of their thinking, meta-cognition, failures and successes. One can assume experience is important to learning how to take risks. Therefore, one can learn how to take risks by being in an environment that is continuing and experimental.

Chapter Three: Establishing a Safe Environment to Cultivate Risk Taking In the Classroom

Creating a safe environment in the rehearsal space as well as among peers was the first approach applied in developing and facilitating risk taking in the classroom within this study. There were a variety methods utilized to facilitate a safe environment for the students. A few methods were utilized at strategic times during the study. These approaches were either reutilized later as a need was seen, heard, or felt. If the same approach was not used again, a different method was utilized to reinforce the safe environment to assist in developing the desired collaborative and risk taking culture in the classroom. This was a high school classroom that consisted of string players ranging from ninth to twelfth grade. The ability of the string players ranged from beginner to advanced.

At the beginning of the school year, the students were divided into groups of five to six students. This was done by students counting off by fours. There was a total of ten groups. Students were then asked to introduce themselves to each other by sharing their name and grade level. A handout (see Appendix A) with interview questions was given where students had to ask each other questions about each other and write down each other's names and responses on the sheet. On the back of the sheet was a list of pieces. Students were asked to choose one piece to determine the final piece the orchestra would play for the winter concert. Under that was an area students could write down pieces that they would like to play in orchestra. Once the students were done with the worksheet, they were asked to share out answers that seemed interesting, similar or different about the people in their group. Some students were tentative while others were confident and seemingly very interested in getting know each other more. This same exercise was done about a month later with different assigned groups. Through observation, it

seemed there was much more comfort from more students the second time around, than when the activity was first done at the beginning of the year. The answers had much more substance and students explained their answers more without being prompted to explain.

To supplement the first activity just described, another handout was given out the first week of school but this time it was done individually rather than in a group activity (see Appendix B). The majority of questions on this questionnaire were different than the first activity. Students were asked about their favorite types of music, what they were hoping to learn this year in orchestra, as well as if there was any interest in taking private lessons.

In addition to these two activities at the beginning of the year, rehearsal and class protocol was discussed at length. These points were stated as well as discussed as a class (see Appendix C). There are nine pillars that were discussed as expected behavior during rehearsals:

1. Respect yourself, others, the teachers, instruments and all equipment. Disrespectful and non-professional behavior will not be tolerated.
2. Follow directions quickly and quietly.
3. Actively and positively participate in class.
4. Allow other students to learn at their own pace.
5. Always bring your music folder and PENCIL to class.
6. Stay in your seat or at your stand unless give permission to leave.
7. Cell phones must be turned off and out of sight, unless being used for rehearsal purposes.
8. No food or drink while playing instruments.
9. Raise your hand if you have a comment, question, or need help. Please do not call out.

In addition to these nine pillars, the class determined a shorter version of these nine and created them into “Be” statements: Be punctual. Be prepared. Be positive. Be persistent. Be perceptive.

These are all reflected in the syllabus. The syllabus was updated after the discussion of the nine pillars and shortened versions of the nine. Students were able to put their voice into the protocol and rules of the rehearsals. This allowed for more specific student monitoring of behavior and effort throughout the research. In total, three class periods were utilized specifically for laying the groundwork for a safe and respectful environment. Using these activities helped the students learn about each other and also helped the teacher learn about the students. It is crucial that both the students and teacher learn and get to know each other. Having an understanding of each other as well as establishing common ideals and goals, helped create a safer environment for risk-taking to take place.

The second week of school, the orchestra was introduced to the surveys that were requested for completion. The students were given two surveys. The preliminary survey was given the second week of school (see Appendix D). The students completed it as a non-graded assignment. At that time the students were told that there would be a post survey given a week after the winter concert to reevaluate their thoughts and ideas (see Appendix E). Out of 50 students in the orchestra, 41 took the preliminary survey and 28 took the post survey.

The purpose of the preliminary survey was collect data from students about their perception on their risk taking behaviors (see Appendix F, G, H). There were many thoughtful responses to the open-ended questions in the survey. For the first question, “How can we create a safe environment for learning in our classroom?”, here are some of the students’ responses:

“We need to interact and get to know each other so we are comfortable with the people in the classroom. We need to make sure that there is a friendly/welcoming atmosphere so even the shyest people aren't afraid to play out.”

“In the classroom, we can encourage everyone to push themselves to go further than they think they can go. By not condemning mistakes and helping individual students feel comfortable around everyone, we can create a safe learning environment.”

“We can create a safe environment for learning by helping each other when we need it, by asking the teacher for help, and by never making fun of other people.”

“We can listen to everyone's ideas equally and promote working together instead of competing.”

“I think that the best way to create a safe environment in the classroom is to encourage learning through mistakes. Students should not be afraid that they are going to be penalized for making a mistake. Instead, teachers should ensure that their system of grading or teaching is one that acknowledges mistakes and encourages student growth based off of such growth.”

Here are responses from the second survey question, “How can we support each other during our learning process?”:

“We need to give encouragement and praise the people around us. If someone does something wrong, there should only be constructive/positive criticism.”

“We can first acknowledge that everyone makes mistakes in the learning process. Everyone moves at different paces and has different ways of learning material. We can encourage our peers and try to help each other by sharing helpful strategies and techniques.”

“We can support each other by helping each other if it looks like we need it and by trying to work out what to do among ourselves.”

“Help each other learn instead of all being on our own.”

“By helping each other when people make mistakes and not making fun of people who make mistakes.”

“Provide constructive criticism and practice the task together.”

“Stand partners actually have a great bond. Understanding is established and they are the first ones to be asked if you have a quick question.”

The third open-ended questions, “How do you take risks as a musician?” had a variety of responses:

“I tend to play more pieces with higher octaves because my intonation is not a strong suit and I need to make more mistakes before I become better at a higher position.”

“I take risks by agreeing to play different pieces that may be challenging or if I don't know how to play [the pieces] I practice [them] to be able to play them.”

“By just going for it when playing, understanding that I may make mistakes but it's better to just go for the section of 16th notes rather than avoid it.”

“Music is a very interpretive form of art, and there are many ways that we can approach it as musicians. As musicians, we can experiment with different techniques of playing and ways of expressing ourselves. Be open to new ways of playing and do not be afraid of something not working out [is a way I take risks as a musician].”

“Sometimes I feel like just being in orchestra is a risk. I have anxiety and knowing that I will be on the stage for the concert in four months makes me sick to my stomach. Playing in small sections is very intimidating because you feel like all eyes are on you. Sight

reading and trying new pieces is a risk because you are very likely to mess up. However, that is how you develop as a musician and a learner.”

“I don't think I take many at all, but sometimes I shift even when I can stay in the same position, and I'm trying to use my fourth finger more often instead of using open strings for notes like A or D.”

“I take risks as a musician simply by learning a new piece, and trying to play it correctly and skillfully by the time the concert comes along. Every time I make a mistake is an opportunity to learn and grow.”

These responses, in addition to the other student responses given, as well as the data collected from the last three questions in the preliminary survey, helped determine and guide the activities that followed before the final survey was given after the winter concert.

According to the Metri Rubric, the preliminary survey concluded that 46.3% of students felt as though they had basic risk taking ability, 43.9% saw themselves as proficient with 7.3% said they were novices and only 2.4% said they were advanced in their risk taking ability. The survey also concluded that students were much more comfortable taking risks during their personal practice (36.6% perceived themselves as being extremely comfortable, 34.1% very comfortable, and 22% moderately comfortable). Not one student perceived themselves as being extremely comfortable in taking risks during rehearsals. Nearly half of the students found themselves to be moderately comfortable with 48.8%, 26.8% as very comfortable, 22% as slightly comfortable and 2.4% not being comfortable at all with risk taking during rehearsals. These numbers are very telling on how the outward perception of others, students and teachers both, can have direct effect on the ability and lack of ability to take risks in a classroom setting. This reinforces the importance of cultivating a safe environment at the beginning of the year but

also points out the importance of consistently evaluating, discussing, and further refining one's approach to a safe environment to promote the best possible learning environment for everyone in the classroom.

The activities that took place in the following months were designed and implemented to create opportunities for students' voices, performance and practice techniques, and sense of purpose in the ensemble to improve and/or be positively validated with the overarching goal being an increase in risk taking behavior in the classroom. Students consistently worked together in small and large group settings to improve performance technique as well as social skills within these settings.

During every small group work session, students collaboratively documented their initial goals (either presented by the teacher or self-created by students), what was accomplished, what still needs work, and finally what the next steps are in attaining those goals (see Appendix I). The technique developed by the students was not just physical performance technique but also mental performance technique. Musicality was discussed and explored extensively as well as delivering the musicality successfully as individuals as well as an ensemble. *Confluence* by Seah O'Laughlin was one of the pieces worked on for the winter concert. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary definition of confluence is a coming or flowing together, meeting, or gathering at one point. As a class and individually, using the dictionary definition as well as the overall sound of the piece, students personally determined the meaning of the piece (see Appendix I). There were many discussions on how to put the meaning of the into our physical playing. The ideas discussed and created by the class was then made into a wordle so the most common words used by students were the largest (see Appendix J). This wordle gave a visual to the similarities and

differences in the students' perception of the piece's purpose and meaning. It was later used in the program notes to illustrate this to the audience the evening of the concert.

In addition to small and large group work, recognizing and encouraging risk taking behavior as it was observed during rehearsals and small group work was also done on a regular basis. Students noticeably began to take more risks in the classroom as they saw others take risks. It was even more apparent when it was reinforced and encouraged by both the teacher and classmates. Risk-taking behaviors that were observed were asking questions in front of the class, using more bow than ever used before, playing louder in rehearsals, making a mistake and recognizing it out loud for more people to hear, etc. Students who were already confident and comfortable in risk taking behavior began to encourage fellow classmates to take risks themselves. The moral support by classmates had a large impact on making it a safer place for all students to take bigger risks in the classroom.

Assessments were also used as a tool for risk taking growth. In addition to reflecting on their exams, students created their own performance assessment rubric (see Appendix K) which was used for their graded evaluation. Their thoughts and ideas on how they should be assessed became their own challenge and risk. Collaboratively, students determined the categories, maximum and minimum amount of points for each category, as well as the descriptors for each category.

Students also participated in ensemble performance critiques (see Appendix L). Everyone was given the critique form the day before to read through and understand what they needed to be listening for as well as working on as a member of the ensemble. There were two columns as the critique took place over a few rehearsals. The performance critiques were either based on a working rehearsal or run-throughs of pieces leading into performances. The critiques asked

students to write down their thoughts on how things were progressing or not progressing. Then, a few weeks later, the same piece or sections were rehearsed again. Using the same critique form, students would write down if anything had been accomplished since the last critique. Both columns of information were then discussed and compared and contrasted. This led conversations about taking risk and how we can all become better musicians by taking certain risks in rehearsals. These risks include but were not limited to, trying and developing a new technique never done before, asking your stand partner or stand neighbor a clarifying question, and asking the teacher a clarifying question in front of the entire ensemble.

Repertoire selection was also a significant factor in planning for growth in risk taking. If students are being asked to take risks for the first time or take even more risks than before, ensuring there was a balance in the repertoire was crucial. The winter concert had pieces from a variety of genres but also a variety of skill/grade levels. This allowed not only for differentiated instruction to occur but also helped encourage all students to feel confident and challenged at the same time. There were pieces selected that were much easier to put together so a specific technique or skill could be worked on with less stress while there were other pieces that demanded much more from all the players to increase their skill level and performance level to a higher standard, taking risks all along the way. As a student mentioned in the preliminary survey, “Sometimes I feel like just being in orchestra is a risk. I have anxiety and knowing that I will be on the stage for the concert in four months makes me sick to my stomach. Playing in small sections is very intimidating because you feel like all eyes are on you. Sight reading and trying new pieces is a risk because you are very likely to mess up. However, that is how you develop as a musician and a learner.”

A week after the winter concert the students were asked to complete the post survey. As mentioned earlier, 28 students of the 41 who took the preliminary survey took the post survey (see Appendix E). The post survey had a total of nine questions compared to just six on the preliminary survey. The first six questions were the same as the preliminary survey however there were three more open-ended response questions to get a better understanding of each student's metacognition. Students continued to give very thoughtful responses for how to create a safe environment in the classroom. The responses were much more cohesive from response to response in the post survey:

"Be very supporting and accepting."

"By making it a comfortable environment where nobody would feel judged or stupid by making a mistake."

"Encourage others to do their best."

"By listening to everyone and being open to their ideas without putting them down."

"Through emphasizing unity as a shared idea of commitment to bettering ourselves as musicians we can create a safe and healthy learning environment."

The responses continued to be cohesive in with question two and question three as well. Students were very specific on how to support each other in the classroom:

"We can support each other by not laughing at each other, being polite, and getting to know each other."

"Help answer each other's questions, Be supportive if someone else is struggling, make sure everyone understands what is going on before moving forward with rehearsal in smaller groups."

“We can support each other during our learning process by helping each other when one of us doesn't understand something and by giving each other the information one of us needs it, especially if he or she is absent and missed techniques discussed in class.”

“Support is shown when we encourage others to work hard and do our best. Nice comments on improvement always make an instrumentalist feel like they have achieved something.”

The details of specific students' responses were detailed, like the preliminary survey, however there were a few responses that were much specific compared to responses given on the preliminary survey. A few of them even begun speaking about new risks they are now taking:

“I take risks by trying new pieces, learning and practicing challenging music, and making mistakes when I play.”

“I try and force myself to play new parts of different pieces that I might have skipped over before because they were more difficult, I also make sure I ask others or Mrs. Umile questions if I am confused.”

“I take risks by asking questions, by playing at a volume at which I can hear my cello, and by asking the teacher or my fellow musicians if I need help.”

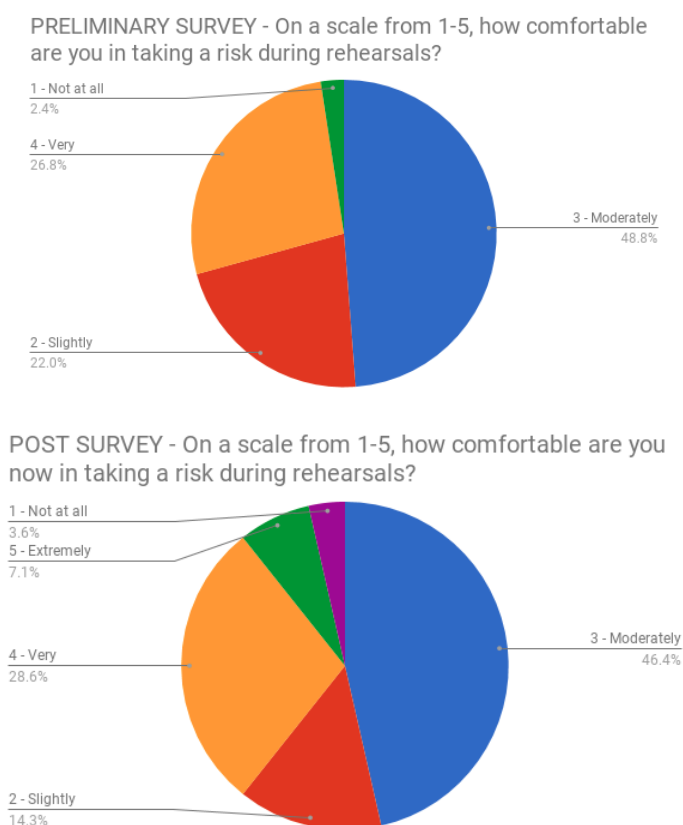
“I absolutely take risks as a musician. I have horrible anxiety and when I step on a stage I have to overcome it so that I can even play.”

“By trying new sections and phrases in music that I may not be comfortable with playing and that will definitely not go well the first few times. By trying more advanced techniques and trying to improve.”

“Sometimes I use a fourth finger extension instead of an open string, and sometimes I shift to a different position so that I can vibrate better.”

The responses given were overwhelmingly positive. Students wanted the challenge to take risks but need the right environment and support to help create those challenges into accomplishments. Not only were students taking more risks, they were increasing their creativity in problem solving their skill and technique development.

Questions four through six in post survey offered insight to the complexity of one’s perception of themselves and others. There was a variety of responses in comparison to their initial self-evaluation of taking risks in rehearsals, taking risks in personal practice and evaluating their risk taking ability according to the Metri Rubric (see Appendices M, N, O). Here are side by side results from the preliminary survey and the post survey, Question #4:

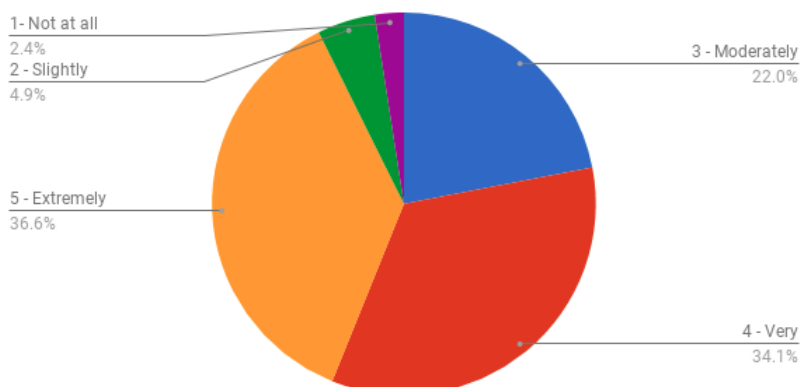


The numbers indicate that there was an increase of students who said they do not feel comfortable taking risks during rehearsals (from 2.4% to 3.5%). However there was an increase in students who felt extremely confident taking risks in the classroom (from 0% to 7.1%).

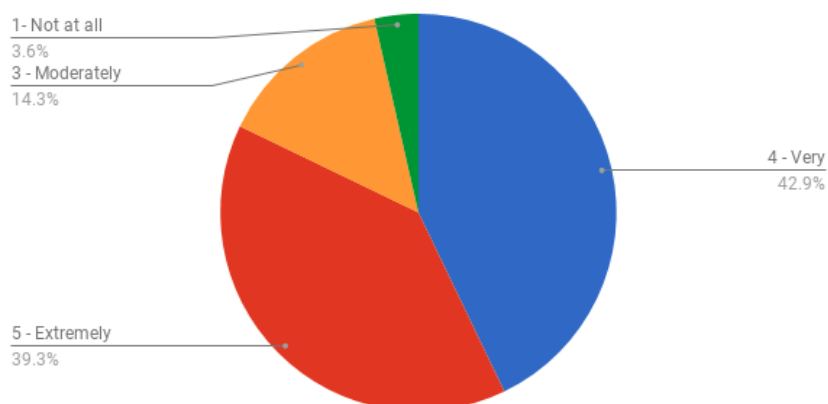
Students written responses and their Likert Scale evaluations offer insight into how students are open to taking risks and understand their importance but may not feel comfortable with them.

Does taking a risk mean you're comfortable with it? According to the data in this study, it would be concluded that that is not the case. The data from taking risks during personal practice is another piece to support this claim:

PRELIMINARY SURVEY - On a scale from 1-5, how comfortable are you in taking a risk during personal practice?



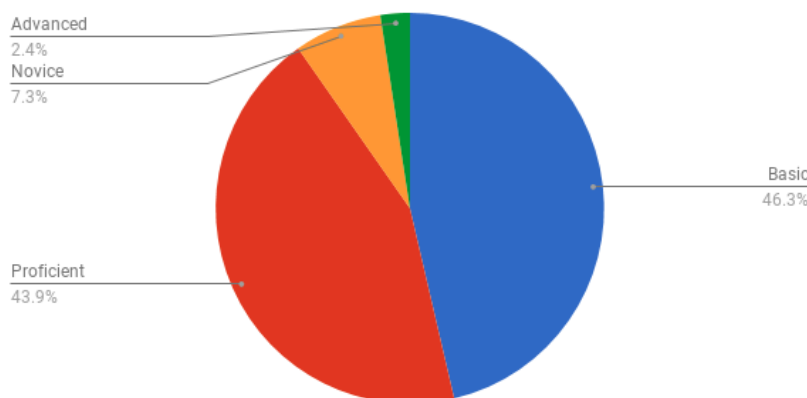
POST - On a scale from 1-5, how comfortable are you now in taking a risk during personal practice?



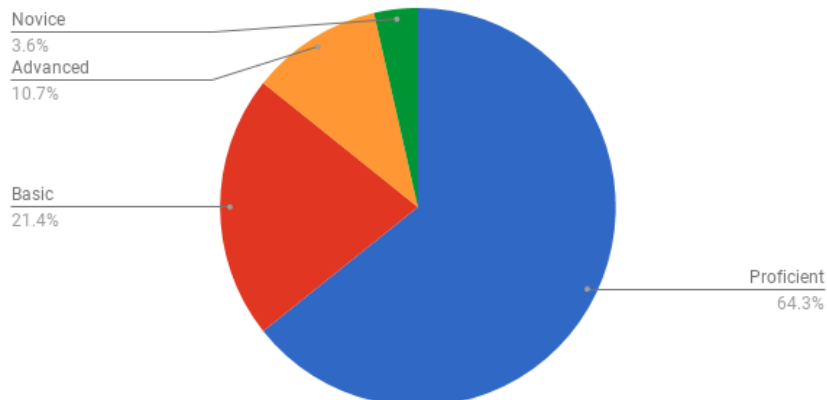
There was a similar increase in students not feeling comfortable with taking a risk at all during personal practice (from 2.4% to 3.6%). However, there was an increase in students feeling very comfortable and extremely comfortable. Peers and teachers have a direct influence on the comfort level when students are taking risks. When students perform and practice on their own, there is a higher percentage of students that are extremely and very confident in taking risks compared to when they are in rehearsal with their peers and teacher.

The data collected from the final Likert Scale evaluation in the post survey was from the Metri Rubric, identical to the preliminary survey. There was significant variety in the responses compared to their preliminary evaluation. Some moved themselves up, some moved themselves down, and some kept themselves in the same category. Learning about what it means to take risks, learning about yourself and how you perceive yourself taking risks to others, understanding what risk taking is to you are all variables that could have influenced their self-evaluation. Overall there was a substantial increase in students' rating from basic to proficient. The basic percentage went down by over 20% while the proficient category went up by over 20%. There was also a significant increase in students' rating themselves as advanced in risk taking from 2.4% in the preliminary to 10.7% in the post.

PRELIMINARY SURVEY - From following categories described below, please choose the one that best represents your status



POST - From following categories described below, please choose the one that best represents your status in risk taking:



Students supported their ratings from the Likert Scales with the follow up questions that followed. In the post survey, students were asked three more clarifying questions after answering the same six questions that were posed in both the preliminary and post surveys:

- In what ways would say this course affected how you view risk taking?
- How has your participation in this class affected the way you might take risks in other classes?
- Has this study affected how you view others, such as your peers, as fellow learners? If yes, in what kinds of ways? If no, please explain.

The first additional reflective question brought many positive responses:

“Orchestra has made me more aware that I can make mistakes and that my mistakes in orchestra don't define me. Whenever I play the wrong note, I know to do better next time and not to worry about it now.”

“It has helped me to be more positive when I mess up and less scared to ask how to fix my mistakes.”

“This course affected how I view risk taking because it showed me that the people in my class would not make fun of me if I made a mistake, so I was more open to taking risks. For example, this course gave me the confidence to sign up for the cello ensemble during I/E.”

“I believe that orchestra has taught me to overcome fear and realize that everyone is too involved in their own risks to even realize other's mistakes. It has made me more productive because of my ability to perform my best despite challenges and mistakes.”

“It has shown me that mistakes are not personal faults and they are just things I need to work on.”

In addition to the positive responses, there was one student who responded, “I don’t think it’s had a major impact.” This student evaluated increased her ability from basic to proficient in the Metri Scale from the preliminary to the post survey. She felt growth but did not see it as a major impact.

The second reflective question had much more variety in responses:

“Though I now see the value in taking risks and making mistakes, I still hesitate to find ways to apply it in other classes. I think that there are less opportunities for benefiting from your mistakes in other classes. For instance, if I incorrectly solve a math problem on a test, I now understand how to solve the problem, but will not have another opportunity to display my ability to solve it. Risk taking allows students to grow and learn, but outside of my orchestra course, there are not as many opportunities for mistakes to be beneficial.”

“This course has taught me not to be afraid to participate and takes risks in other classes. I've learned it's ok and good to ask questions about music if you're unsure because it's the only way one can learn.”

“I feel more confident speaking to a class, since I play viola with a class almost every day.”

“It has made me feel a bit less like a single mistake (or risk) will make or break my academic success.”

“In other classes I may take risks by answering a question that I may not be 100% about.”

“Not very.”

“I don't think it has affected the way I take risks in other classes because each class has its own environment. Some classes I am comfortable with taking risks but in others I am not. To me it all depends on the class and the people in the class.”

Some students saw connections in participation with taking risks in other classes while others did not feel like there was connection. Different environments and perspectives on those environments can determine whether a student feels like taking a risk is allowed, encouraged, or even just simply necessary.

The final additional reflective question in the post survey provided yet another window into the many scopes and perspectives of the students in this specific ensemble and their individual knowledge and understanding before and after the study:

“I guess in a small way I have started to see when others mess up they do the same thing I do, as well as that those who appear to be "better" than I am still make mistakes and are great resources to answer questions and help.”

“I have paid a lot of attention to the way people play in orchestra. I can see the faces they make when they have made a mistake and I realized that I am just like them. We are all there to play music.”

“I'm not sure, I guess i understand the different approaches to music better and understand different people's levels of comfortableness with their instrument.”

“No, I don't believe that some of my peers take orchestra very seriously.”

“It has affected the way I look at my peers in the sense that I understand that risks mean different things to different people. Something I might look at as a big, challenging risk could just be a small risk to someone else (or vise versa). I have to remember to put things in perspective before I make a judgement on the people around me.”

“Yes, it made me realize that when others make mistakes, it is not that big of a deal.”

“This has affected how I view others by allowing me to see that everyone else is still constantly learning new things just like me. If someone is better in orchestra than me I know that at some point they were at my level. It shows me that anything is achievable with practice and the right amount of risk involved.”

“It has not affected how I view others because I always view my peers as people who are trying to learn. I understand that it is hard to take risks so I do not laugh at someone when they do make a mistake.”

Some students seemed to have been already aware of risk taking while others became more aware and others gave responses that indicate their viewpoint on their classmates and how they perceive their contribution or lack thereof to the ensemble.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

This study has helped answer and affirm the benefits of creating a safe environment to encourage and develop risk taking. When students felt like it was ok to make a mistake, they were much more open to making them and making those mistakes known. In addition, they became more comfortable asking their peers and teacher for help. Their ability to take risks as a whole increased as a class. The development and awareness of the classroom environment in combination with the various activities and methods utilized during this study facilitated this increase. However, there were students that were still apprehensive about risk taking. Exploring this to have a better understanding of whether or not their comfort level coincided with whether they took a risk or not would offer much clarity. Does their comfort level inhibit students from taking a risk or does it showcase just the comfort level and not the willingness to take risks?

In addition, how can teachers continue to cultivate this approach while at the same time finding way to explain and develop accurate perceptions of students' and their actions in the classroom? Using creativity, problem solving skills, and social skills to develop more activities for students to not just explore taking risks but also explore how their perception of themselves can have a positive or negative effect on their goals and ambitions. Encouraging a realistic and accurate perspective of oneself, as students and teachers, as well as an openness for change and awareness of others can benefit a student's and teacher's ability to increase their risk taking and in turn their success in their personal goals.

To investigate this further, a follow up survey will be written to be shared with the students who participated in both the preliminary survey and the post survey. Questions would be pointed to help get better insight to how they feel like they grew, did not grow or stayed the same in their perception of their risk-taking ability. Other questions would ask these students

what they felt held them back or motivated them. Was it the activities? Format of the classroom? Was it themselves? Their peers? Their teacher? A combination of two, three or all? Not only is it important for students to reflect on their learning, but it is vital for teachers to evaluate and reevaluate their methods and approaches to ensure the best quality instruction and learning environment for all of their students.

To continue development and implementation of creating safe classroom environment to encourage and establish risk taking, this study will be shared with administration as well as colleagues. Sharing this study with administration and colleagues would provide another opportunity to reflect on this study and the data gathered. Collaborative discussions can prompt new and fresh ideas on methods and approaches to classroom environment as well as instruction. Encouraging and establishing risk taking in every classroom is vital for the 21st Century classroom. It is our job as teachers to ensure we are creating the atmosphere for students to feel and know that they can take risks and find invaluable growth from both their mistakes and successes.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Getting to Know You Sheet (Group)

Name: _____



Interview Questions!

Questions → ----- Classmate ↓	Do you have a favorite season? If so, what is it and why? If no, why not?	Besides the instrument(s) you play, is there an instrument you'd like to learn to play?	What is your favorite Avon Grove memory?	What types of music do you like to listen to the most?	What are you most looking forward to this school year?
Name/Instrument					
Name/Instrument					
Name/Instrument					
Name/Instrument					
Name/Instrument					
Name/Instrument					

Please turn over →

Please circle pieces that you would like to play:

Bohemian Rhapsody

Can't Stop the Feeling (Timberlake)

When I'm Sixty Four (Beatles)

Royals (Lorde)

The Rolling Stones

Please list any pieces you think we should perform this year:

Appendix B - Getting to Know You Sheet (Individual)

Orchestra - Tell me about yourself...

Name: _____ Grade: _____

Do you currently play any instruments in addition to your string instrument?

____ Yes ____ No

- If yes, what instrument(s) and how long have you been playing them?

- Do you take private lessons? ____ Yes ____ No
 - If yes, who is/was your teacher? _____
- If no, are you interested in taking private lessons? ____ Y ____ N

Other interests: _____

Favorite composers, artists, songs, bands, etc.:

Why did you take String Orchestra class? Was there anything specific you are hoping to learn this year?

Appendix C - Rehearsal Procedures and Expectations (from AGHS String Orchestra Syllabus)

Classroom/Rehearsal/Lesson Rules

1. Respect yourself, others, the teachers, instruments and all equipment. Disrespectful and non-professional behavior will not be tolerated.
2. Follow directions quickly and quietly.
3. Actively and positively participate in class.
4. Allow other students to learn at their own pace.
5. Always bring your music folder and PENCIL to class.
6. Stay in your seat or at your stand unless give permission to leave.
7. Cell phones must be turned off and out of sight.
8. No food or drink while playing instruments.
9. Raise your hand if you have a comment, question, or need help. Please do not call out.

Appendix D - Preliminary Survey

Preliminary Survey: Risk Taking in the Classroom

***PLEASE READ BEFORE TAKING THIS SURVEY**

For the purpose of this survey, the definition of risk taking is proactively creating opportunities to prove to yourself that you can do difficult things by allowing yourself to make mistakes, learning from those mistakes and then challenging yourself to achieve more.

AGHS String Orchestra Students - please use your myaghsd.net email address below. Thank you!

*** Required**

1. Email address *

2. How can we create a safe environment for learning in our classroom? *

3. How can we support each other during our learning process? *

4. How do you take risks as a musician? *

5. On a scale from 1-5, how comfortable are you in taking a risk during rehearsals? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 5 - Extremely
☐ 4 - Very
☐ 3 - Moderately
☐ 2 - Slightly
☐ 1 - Not at all

6. On a scale from 1-5, how comfortable are you in taking a risk during personal practice? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 5 - Extremely
☐ 4 - Very
☐ 3 - Moderately
☐ 2 - Slightly
☐ 1 - Not at all

7. From following categories described below, please choose the one that best represents your status in risk taking: *

Risk	Novice	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Risk-taking despite mistakes	The student sees mistakes as serious personal deficiencies rather than as learning opportunities. As a result, he/she is not willing to take risks that might result in mistakes—especially ones that might be public.	The student conceptually understands that mistakes are learning opportunities, but emotionally still views them as personal failures. He/she wrings the odds of failure carefully before taking on challenging problems or publicly sharing ideas or concepts.	The student has enough confidence in his/her abilities to see that mistakes are not personal failures. With encouragement, he/she does take on challenging work. Once invested in such work, the inherent risks become intrinsically motivational to the student.	The student sees mistakes as learning opportunities. He/she at times advocates unconventional or unpopular positions, and is willing to tackle extremely challenging problems without obvious solutions, despite the high potential for failure.

*From *Metzler Creative Rubric*

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Advanced
☐ Proficient
☐ Basic
☐ Novice

Appendix E - Post Survey

Post Study Survey: Risk Taking in the Classroom

* Required

1. Email address *

PLEASE READ BEFORE TAKING THIS SURVEY

For the purpose of this survey, the definition of risk taking is proactively creating opportunities to prove to yourself that you can do difficult things by allowing yourself to make mistakes, learning from those mistakes and then challenging yourself to achieve more.

AGHS String Orchestra Students - please use your myagsd.net email address above. Thank you!

2. How can we create a safe environment for learning in our classroom? *

3. How can we support each other during our learning process? *

4. How do you take risks as a musician? *

5. On a scale from 1-5, how comfortable are you now in taking a risk during rehearsals? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 5 - Extremely
☐ 4 - Very
☐ 3 - Moderately
☐ 2 - Slightly
☐ 1 - Not at all

6. On a scale from 1-5, how comfortable are you now in taking a risk during personal practice? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 5 - Extremely
☐ 4 - Very
☐ 3 - Moderately
☐ 2 - Slightly
☐ 1 - Not at all

7. From following categories described below, please choose the one that best represents your status in risk taking: *

Risk	Novice	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Risk taking despite mistakes	The student sees mistakes as serious personal deficiencies rather than as learning opportunities. As a result, he/she is not willing to take risks that might result in mistakes—especially ones that might be public.	The student conceptually understands that mistakes are learning opportunities, but emotionally still views them as personal failures. He/she weighs the odds of failure carefully before taking on challenging problems or publicly sharing ideas or concepts.	The student has enough confidence in his/her abilities to see that mistakes are not personal failures. With encouragement, he/she does take on challenging work. Once invested in such work, the inherent risks become intrinsically motivational to the student.	The student sees mistakes as learning opportunities. He/she at times advocates unconventional or unpopular positions, and is willing to tackle extremely challenging problems without obvious solutions, despite the high potential for failure.
*From Martin Creative Habits				

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Advanced
☐ Proficient
☐ Basic
☐ Novice

Additional Reflective Questions

Please be as specific with your answers as possible.
 Use examples to support your thinking and answers.

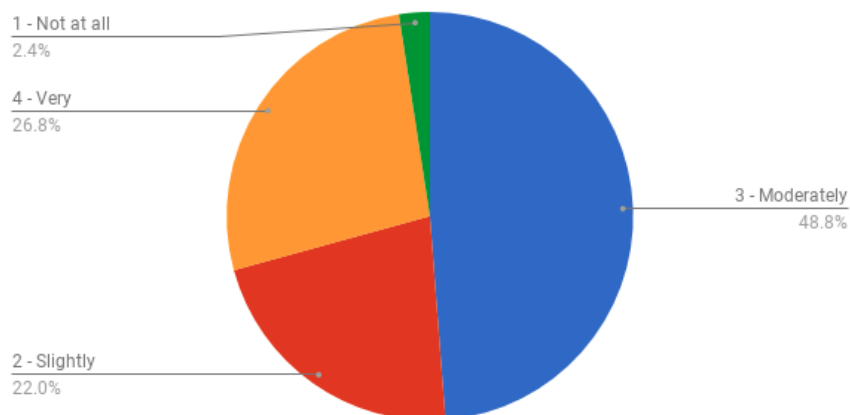
8. In what ways would you say this course affected how you view risk taking? *

9. How has your participation in this course affected the way you might take risk in other classes? *

10. Has this study affected how you view others, such as your peers, as fellow learners? If yes, in what kinds of ways? If no, please explain. *

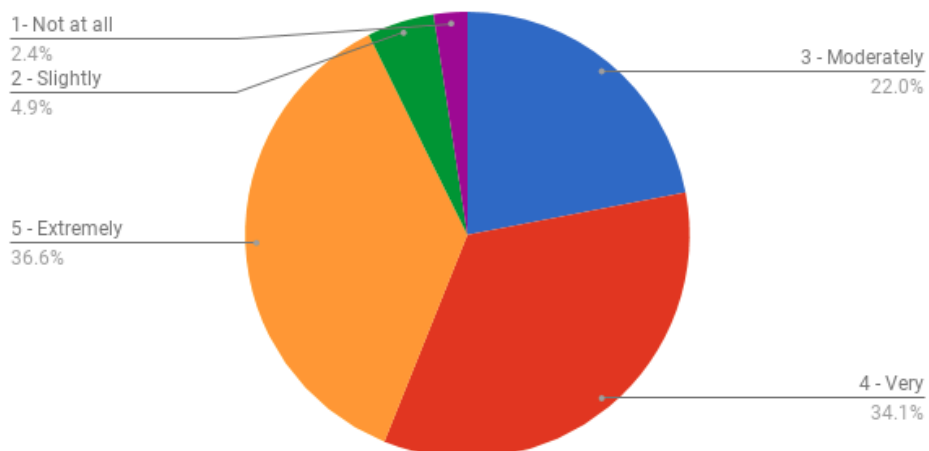
Appendix F - Results from Preliminary Survey Question 4

PRELIMINARY SURVEY - On a scale from 1-5, how comfortable are you in taking a risk during rehearsals?



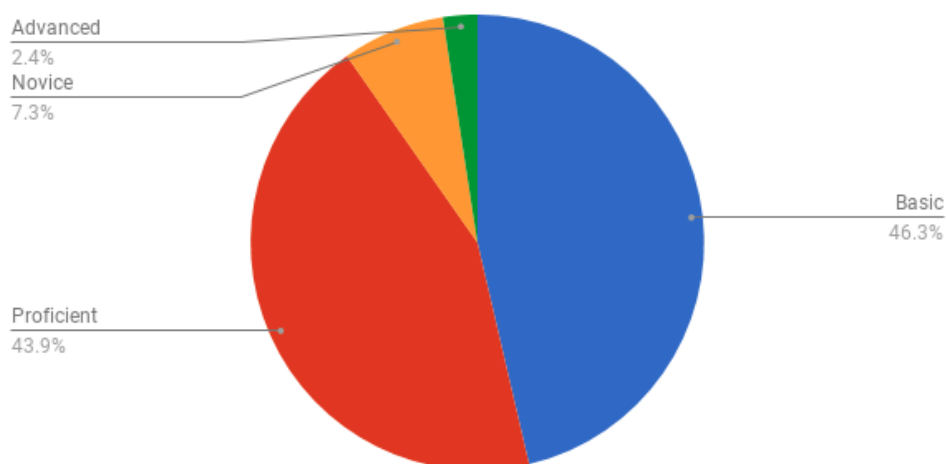
Appendix G - Results from Preliminary Survey Question 5

PRELIMINARY SURVEY - On a scale from 1-5, how comfortable are you in taking a risk during personal practice?



Appendix H - Results from Preliminary Survey Question 6

PRELIMINARY SURVEY - From following categories described below, please choose the one that best represents your status



Appendix I - Student Responses to *Confluence*

Peace	Cultures bonding – two or more cultures coming together to create something new.	War
Self-reflection	Equality	Fight
Self-discovery	Understanding	Sunrise and Sunset
Meditation	Same goal	The Ocean
Sunset	Stronger together than apart	Waves crashing
Finality	We're in this together	Starry River
Closure	We are a team	Merging
Journey	Support each other	Dreaming
Unity	Flowing together	Wonder
Strength	Gliding	Gazing Off
Harmony	Compromise	Another World
Majestic	Blending	Deep waters
Gracefulness	Powerful together	An internal battle
Comfort	Calm	Melancholy
Care	Resolve	Desire for more
Sadness	Comforting	Sacrifice
Death	Dramatic	Loneliness
Despair	Sprouting	Being at peace
Anguish	Moving ahead	Putting difference aside
Expression	Togetherness	Meeting after a long time apart
Emotional	Changing times	Searching for that missing piece
Quiet and peaceful sunrise on a winter morning	Peaceful transitions	Being at peace with loneliness
Acknowledgement of differences	Brotherhood	Relief
Somber	Family	Finding something that was lost
Home	Farewells	Reaching for something in the distance
Relief	Remembrance	A hug
Elegance	Flowing and Movement	Gathering
Support	A stream/river	Community
Coming together	Ying and Yang	Somber
Marriage – two people coming together forever	Falling Leaves	Growth
	A bird flying	Acceptance

Appendix K - Student Created Rubrics

4

	Advanced 4	Proficient 3	Basic 2	Unsatisfactory 1
MUSICAL PERFORMANCE				
<i>Intonation</i>	I performed all of the pitches correctly and in tune.	I performed nearly all of the pitches correctly.	I performed some of the pitches correctly.	I performed very few of the pitches correctly.
<i>Articulation</i>	I performed all of the articulations correctly.	I performed nearly all of the articulations correctly.	I performed some of the articulations correctly.	I performed very few of the articulations correctly.
<i>Dynamics</i>	I performed all of the dynamics correctly.	I performed nearly all of the dynamics correctly.	I performed some of the dynamics correctly.	I performed very few of the dynamics correctly.
<i>Rhythm</i>	I performed and counted all of the rhythms correctly.	I performed and counted nearly all of the rhythms correctly.	I performed and counted some of the rhythms correctly.	I performed and counted very few of the rhythms correctly.
<i>Musicality</i>	I used expressive elements that were written and note written to artfully share the piece's meaning.	I performed nearly all of the written directions for tempo, dynamics, and articulation.	I performed some of the written directions for tempo, dynamics, and articulation.	I performed very few of the written directions for tempo, dynamics, and articulation.
<i>Bowings</i>	I performed all of the written bowings correctly.	I performed nearly all of the written bowings correctly.	I performed some of the written bowings correctly.	I performed very few of the written bowings correctly.

____/24

	Advanced 4	Proficient 3	Basic 2	Unsatisfactory 1
BEHAVIOR				
<i>Leadership Skills</i>	I always provided focused and specific direction as well as opportunities for discussion when needed in a friendly and approachable manner.	I was consistent the majority of the time in providing focused and specific direction as well as opportunities for discussion when needed in a friendly and approachable manner.	I was inconsistent when providing focused and specific direction as well as opportunities for discussion when needed in a friendly and approachable manner.	I did not provide focused and specific direction as well as opportunities for discussion when needed in a friendly and approachable manner.
<i>Patience</i>	I demonstrated patience with my peers during the entire sectional.	I was consistent in demonstrating patience with my peers during the entire sectional.	I was inconsistent in demonstrating patience with my peers during the sectional.	I did not use patience with my peers during the sectional.
<i>Helpfulness</i>	I was helpful to the people in my section during the entire sectional when either I noticed they were struggling and if they asked specifically for help.	I was helpful to the people in my section during the entire sectional only when they asked for help.	I was only helpful to people in my section during the sectional when I thought they needed help, even if everyone seemed they understood the concept.	I was not helpful to the people in my section during the sectional.
<i>Focus & Attentiveness</i>	I was focused and attentive during the whole sectional. If a member of the section was getting off task, I made sure they stayed focused and attentive in a friendly and approachable manner.	I was focused and attentive during the majority of the sectional. If a member of the section was getting off task, I occasionally made sure they stayed focused and attentive in a friendly and approachable manner.	I was not focused and attentive during the whole sectional. If a member of the section was getting off task, I rarely made sure they stayed focused and attentive in a friendly and approachable manner.	I was not focused and attentive at all during the whole sectional. If a member of the section was getting off task, I never made sure they stayed focused and attentive in a friendly and approachable manner.
<i>Staying on Task</i>	I stayed on task during the entire sectional. As one excerpt or piece was finished, I promptly and politely moved on to the next set of excerpts that needed to be worked on.	I stayed on task during the majority of the sectional. As one excerpt or piece was finished, I casually and politely moved on to the next set of excerpts that needed to be worked on.	I did not stay on task during the entire sectional. As one excerpt or piece was finished, I was not ready to move on in a timely fashion to the next set of excerpts that needed to be worked on.	I made no effort to stay on task during the entire sectional. If someone was off task, I didn't care.
<i>Paying Attention to Others</i>	I was paying attention to others during the sectional. As I performed, I attentively watched and listened to others in my section.	I paid attention to others during the majority of the sectional. As I performed, I attentively watched and listened to others in my section the majority of the time.	I did not pay attention to others consistently during the sectional. As I performed, I rarely attentively watched and listened to others in my section.	I made no effort to pay attention to others during the sectional. I never watched and listened to others in my section.

Please provide specific evidence for the above score in BEHAVIOR here:

____/24

Leadership Skills -*Patience* -*Helpfulness* -*Focus & Attentiveness* -*Staying on Task* -*Paying Attention to Others* -

Appendix L - Student Self-Evaluation Performance Critique

Student Self-Evaluation Form

Name: _____

Ensemble Performance Critique

Directions:

The purpose of this exercise is to compare two performances of the same piece. In the first column, write comments about your playing and then about the performance of the entire ensemble. Point out good points and bad points; use specific musical terms. Consider balance, tone, intonation, rhythm, articulation, etc.

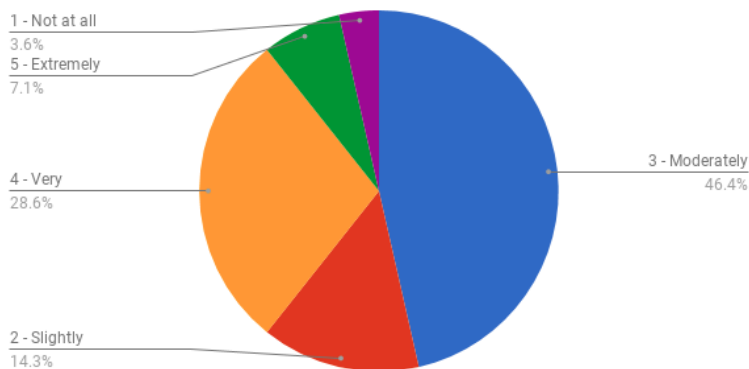
These blocks are for suggestions to improve your playing and the performance of the entire ensemble. "How can we improve? What should we improve?"

In a few weeks, we will perform and listen to the same selection and fill in the second column of blocks to make our comparison.

Selection Performed: _____		Section of Selection: _____	
Comments on how I sound within the ensemble:	Comments on how I sound within the ensemble:		
Comments on how the entire ensemble sounds:	Comments on how the entire ensemble sounds:		
How can I improve the ensemble?	How can I improve the ensemble?		
How could the entire ensemble sound better?	How can I improve the ensemble?		
Score for being SPECIFIC: ____/15		Score for RELATIONSHIPS: ____/15	
Score for SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS: ____/15		TOTAL: ____/45	

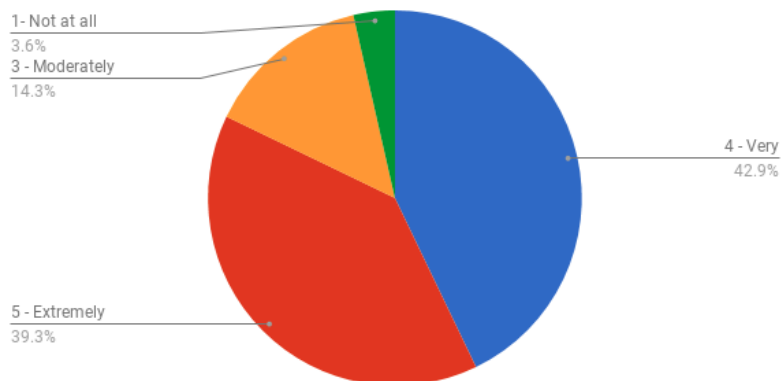
Appendix M - Results from Post Survey Question 4

POST SURVEY - On a scale from 1-5, how comfortable are you now in taking a risk during rehearsals?



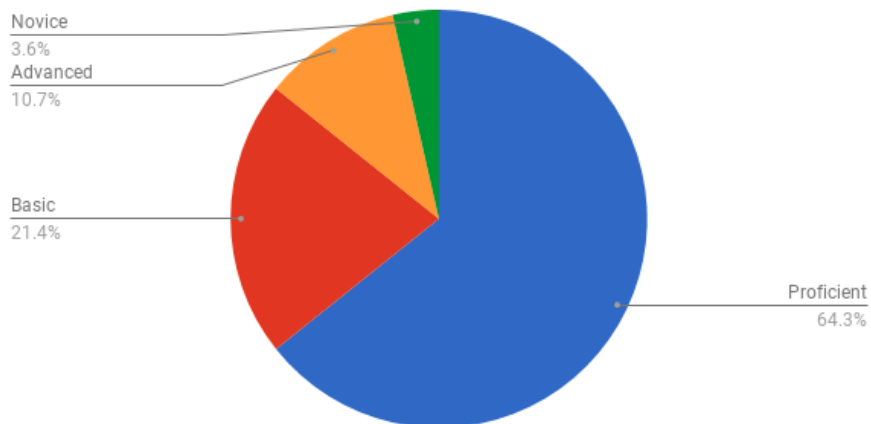
Appendix N - Results from Post Survey Question 5

POST - On a scale from 1-5, how comfortable are you now in taking a risk during personal practice?



Appendix O - Results from Post Survey Question 6

POST - From following categories described below, please choose the one that best represents your status in risk taking:



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