



# OUTCOMES

## Teacher on a Mission

### What do we mean by “outcome?”

Goals, objectives, learning targets, outcomes—these terms are interchangeable. There are many kinds of goals, big and small. There might be a short-range outcome for a particular strategy on a given day, and we might reach that outcome in 10 minutes (or 2 minutes). “Students will be able to play the 16<sup>th</sup> note passage at letter D up to tempo.” Teachers are inventing ad hoc outcomes minute by minute, day by day, as they assess “what’s next” for their students.

But in CMP, “outcome” means something specific: *a long term (e.g. a month or six weeks) focus that is rich, multi-layered, significant, and is naturally derived from a specific piece of music and what students need (as assessed by the teacher)*. When the CMP model is taught, typically Music Selection comes first, before Outcomes. But we can start anywhere on the star, and in practice you very likely might start with an Outcome (based, of course, on an Assessment of what students need) and then go searching for a piece of music to teach it.

It is in the planning of outcomes where the teacher’s role grows in importance. We become less a reactionary “Note-Doctor”, always in triage mode fixing mistakes, and more of a guide with a thoughtful, intentional plan. On the journey of learning, we are out in front of our students, pointing them toward a clear vision of our destination.

### Three Types of Outcomes

#### 1. SKILL

**What your students will be able to DO (technical facility, performance skills)**

**Wouldn’t we teach this anyway? Don’t we teach skills all the time?** Yes, but being intentional and really honing in on a specific skill that this piece teaches well will help students grow in their performance skills, faster. Think of it as a focus for creating *etudes, warm-ups, and exercises*, based on the repertoire. A way to approach a specific skill with intention, to get kids really thinking about it, and giving them tools to help.

You’ll still teach or reinforce *all* the various skills needed to play the piece well. But you will zero in on a skill that this piece really demands. Remember: one concentrated study of an important skill together (with meaningful assessment) is worth *a thousand casual mentions, reminders, and scoldings*. (G. Villasurda)

**Skill outcomes will invariably include a knowledge and/or affective component.** There is always some overlap between the outcome types. There is no skill outcome that is just motor skills—there is always some cognitive and some affective component, too. But if you plan to assess the outcome by having students *perform* (as opposed to write or talk about what they have learned) you are writing a Skill Outcome.

#### 2. KNOWLEDGE

**What your students will KNOW (music history, music theory, interdisciplinary knowledge)**

This is the kind of knowledge that may not show up in students’ performance, but rather in having them speak, write, compose, analyze, compare, critique.

#### 3. AFFECTIVE

**(subjective aspects of music and human experience)**

It would be easy to follow the pattern set up above with “What your students will FEEL”—it would make a nice triptych of “Know, Do, Feel.” But that’s not really what we mean by the “affective.” Music is, of course, a way to feel and to express feelings—to have an “affective response”—but creating affective outcomes is not intended to guarantee that this happens.

In fact, affective outcomes are not intended to make students *feel* anything, but rather, to provide an “education in emotions.” And actually we mean more than emotions—the affective includes values, opinions, desires, wishes, personal knowledge, self-awareness, empathy, and understanding of others.

Affective outcomes are not unique to CMP, but it’s safe to say that nowhere have they been explored or made as *intentional* as in the CMP community.

### The Four Types of Affective Outcomes

If you reflect on a past musical experience that was particularly significant to you, chances are it was because of one (or several) of four factors: the *piece itself* affected you powerfully because of the way it was composed, or there was something unusually thrilling about the *performance* that moved you, or you remember it because of the *people* you were with or the experience of putting it together, or you learned *something meaningful about yourself* from it.

These are also the four basic types of Affective Outcomes (*Shaping Sound Musicians*, pp.36-39):

**1. Composer's Craft**

*What has the composer done, what compositional devices has s/he used, to create the mood or emotional content of the piece?*

**2. Meaningful Performance**

*What can we do, as performers, to shape the mood or affect of the piece, by the way we sing or play it?*

**3. Building the Community**

*How might this piece teach us about our group identity, build our sense of teamwork, create an atmosphere of trust, openness, or sensitivity? (Of course, we can talk about these things at any time. But how much more powerful than a random team-building activity is a strategy about community that's tied to an affective outcome, that's tied to a piece of music?)*

**4. Personal Knowledge**

*What can I learn about myself (or about human nature, or the human experience) by studying this piece? What does the piece offer in terms of teaching me about my own values, opinions, fears, and desires?*

## Tips for Writing

- 1. Use your Analysis of the piece and especially your Heart Statement as a starting point.** One of your Outcomes should connect to your Heart statement. If none do, then either your Heart Statement isn't really what you think is important about the piece, or you're not maximizing its value by creating an Outcome to teach toward it.
- 2. Make sure each Outcome is clearly tied to the piece.** Ask yourself: what is it that this piece teaches better than other pieces? Is there another piece that would teach this Outcome better? If your outcome is "*Students will play in tune*" it may be too broad and not specific enough for the particular value of this piece.
- 3. All three outcomes should be different or focus on different aspects of the piece.** This exercise forces you to consider all the possible things this piece might teach and opens the piece richly and deeply. Of course, in practice, there is often overlap in the way the outcomes unfold.
- 4. Remember: an Outcome identifies the "farthest point" of learning** that your students will experience in studying this piece. If they can accomplish the Outcome in one class period, it's too short-sighted. Think longer-term.
- 5. The Outcome should be transferrable to future pieces.** This is why naming the piece in your outcome, or referring to it specifically, is too limiting. The best Outcome looks beyond this particular piece, toward long-term learning.
- 6. The level of the Outcome depends on your students' abilities.** This is common sense, of course, but bears some thought. A Skill Outcome like *Students will shift smoothly in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> positions* might look too simplistic for a 10<sup>th</sup> grade orchestra, but be pitched at just the right level for 7<sup>th</sup> graders. *Students will read and independently count dotted rhythms* seems more like an elementary or middle school level Outcome. But if your high school choir doesn't read music very well yet, this Outcome might be at just the right level for them. How to know? Consider the richness and variety of strategies you will use and how long it will take to accomplish the Outcome. If it can be taught in a few minutes or even a couple days, it's probably not big enough. Make it larger and richer in scope.
- 7. Words matter.** Be as concise as possible. Just enough words to capture the scope of your outcome, without explaining every strategy included. The more concise your outcome, the easier it will be for you and your students to remember it. And the more thought and word-craft you invest in writing your outcome, the more powerful and focused your teaching of it will be. The expression "I know what I mean—I just can't write it" probably means you haven't spent quite enough time yet, and your thoughts are still a little murky. Push yourself to find just the right verb, and express *exactly* what you think is important for students to actually learn.
- 8. Have a growth mindset for yourself.** Writing effective outcomes takes practice--no one starts out doing it well. *But the act of crafting outcomes is the teacher's art—much more than correcting students' mistakes.* And the more time you spend practicing it, the more focused and intentional your teaching becomes.
- 9. Think bigger than just the concert.** What do we value most about arts education? It's things like *creativity, critical thinking, broad perspective, literacy, analytical skills, interpretive skills, cross-cultural appreciation, open-mindedness*—those kinds of things. Reflecting on these values will enlarge our vision of Outcomes, and act as an antidote to outcomes that are too small, too superficial, or ultimately not significant to our students in the long future of their lives.
- 10. Keep asking "why?"** *Why is this skill important? Why does this knowledge matter? Why is this affective experience significant?* This will push you toward more meaningful, significant outcomes. Remember: "Our end goal, then, is not just a concert (although our concerts can be moving and musically powerful events in themselves). No, our "product", our final outcome, is a kid, whose life and experience has been shaped by studying and playing the greatest music in the world." (R. Swiggum)

## Who has time for this?

Writing outcomes, at least at first, can be a frustrating, time-consuming experience. Finding just the right verb, making sure the outcome is pitched at the right level for your students, and zeroing in on what exactly you want them to know—it's all hard work and **takes time** to master. So why bother?

1. **TIME SAVER** Yes, writing outcomes takes more time at the front end. But it saves huge amounts of time in the ongoing rehearsal process. It gives each class period a clearer focus, it gives you the teacher a long-range plan that means less “making it up as we go.” Best of all, it gives students transferrable skills and knowledge they will apply to future pieces.
2. **ADVOCACY** Having clear, written outcomes gives us a language for advocacy, with administrators and parents. Many administrators will understand the “mystery” of music teaching for the first time, when they see your written outcomes. It provides a common language for professionals (you and colleagues) and a window for parents into what their children are learning, besides just putting on a concert.
3. **VISION** A good outcome allows you to look back after teaching a piece and not be surprised with the result.

## EXAMPLES OF OUTCOMES

Shaping the words of an outcome is important, as it clarifies our thinking. Begin by just jotting down rough ideas for what students might learn from the piece. Then decide which verb(s) best capture the “end point” of their learning. You will likely edit and revise several times. Each of these “first drafts” has an issue that makes it weaker than its final version. See if you can identify them.

### SKILL

Weak: Students will master the rhythms of this piece.

Better: Students will play the two beat triplet accurately.

Strongest: Students will recognize, perform, and notate patterns of 2 against 3.

### KNOWLEDGE

Weak: Students will recognize the idea of a tragic hero in the context of this piece, and analyze the compositional tools used to present the story of Bonnie Prince Charlie as a tragic hero.

Better: Students will analyze the compositional tools used to represent the story of Bonnie Prince Charlie as a tragic hero.

Strongest: Students will explore the idea of the tragic hero, in music and literature.

### AFFECTIVE

Weak: Students will play with an angry sound.

Better: Students will recognize & experience a range of emotions when playing.

Strongest: Students will examine their own attitudes about conflict and resolution.

**Other examples:** It's important to remember that national and state music standards, as well as your own district curriculum, are also examples of outcomes. They do acknowledge what is significant and what we value in music education. So what's the difference? Well, first of all, they are abstract and general. *In the CMP model, your outcomes are tied to specific repertoire.* Secondly, your CMP outcomes were invented by *you*. You wrestled with them—they were not handed to you ready-made. They represent what you value as a teacher, and what you consider important for your students to learn, at this time, with this piece. This is why they get more traction in your classroom.

When writing outcomes is hard, this is good to remember. *We're not writing outcomes for someone else (our SLO, our administrator, or some evaluation)—we are writing them, tailor-made, for our students and for ourselves as teachers.* This is not “busy-work.” It's for us. *It is the very art of teaching.*

## Questions for Discussion

1. Most of our typical “default” outcomes are performance skills. Why is this?
2. In the last thirty years, there have been many education initiatives to address outcomes (“learning targets, standards, objectives, goals”, etc.). Why do you think most of these initiatives had little staying power?
3. Discuss the idea of short term success vs. long term tools. Look at the statement: “I don't have time to teach sight-reading.”